

Clearing the Fog On Spiritual Warfare

by Mark Jarvinen

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

(Ephesians 6:10-20)

INTRODUCTION

A British Colonel named **Lonsdale Hale** was the first to coin the phrase, “**the fog of war**” back in 1896. He used it to describe what he thought was the “**normal condition**” of any battlefield, which was “**the state of ignorance**” in which commanders often found themselves, when attempting to assess the size, strength, and position of both their enemies and their allies.” At best, it seemed as though armies on the battlefield were operating in a fog much of the time and outcomes were determined by which side made the best guesses. **(Sermon Central)**.

Many of us remember back to the early '90's when Iraqi leader, **Saddam Hussein**, bragged that he would launch the “**Mother of all battles**” and defeat American forces and all of their allies in a few short months. Hussein was in the fog of war, however, losing over 100,000 of his own troops, while the fatalities of the U.S. Army and our allies were under 400.

The Apostle Paul was on the front lines of church planting after his conversion to Christianity, as a missionary to the Gentiles. In today's text, Paul writes to the church in Ephesus (and to all Christians) so that they (and we) wouldn't fall victim to “**the fog of war**” when it comes to spiritual warfare. Paul knew from personal experience what it meant to battle against the Devil, his legion of demons and the powers of evil, which he describes in **v. 12** as follows:

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Therefore, let's look at some things Paul shares so that we will not find ourselves in our own “**fog of war**” when it comes to spiritual warfare.

I. BELIEVE SPIRITUAL WARFARE IS REAL.

Talk about spiritual warfare for some today puts Christianity in a bad light and therefore, they would rather not talk about it. They say, “**We're not a people going into battle, we love and tolerate everyone.**” The term, spiritual warfare, for them, feels too archaic and sends the wrong message to society to speak of themselves as “**warriors for Christ,**” or as “**Christian soldiers marching as to war.**” Many think of the devil as a cartoon character, the subject of

jokes, or the mascot of a sports team, in other words, an entity that doesn't really exist. Yet, as we observe the state of the world and pay close attention to what we see and hear, there are telltale signs of the devil and his forces everywhere. We dare not minimize the influence of Satan in the world and even in the Church. Why is it hard for us to forgive others, to pray regularly, to be faithful in church attendance and stewardship, to read our Bibles, to take time to serve others? We seem so distracted. Then notice how we don't get the same kind of distractions and interruptions when we sit down to watch TV or take part in the myriad forms of entertainment at our fingertips. The enemy distracts us mainly when he sees an opportunity to strike a blow against God's Kingdom. **Dr. Warren Wiersbe** once said, ***"The world is not a playground, it's a battleground."*** ***He's right!*** As we search the scriptures, we learn that Jesus took Satan very seriously, as the enemy of our souls and called him such things as ***"murderer, deceiver, and the Father of Lies,"*** to name a few. I'm not suggesting we look for Satan behind every bush, but we must not ignore the fact that he is real and masquerades as ***"an angel of light"*** (***II Corinthians 11:14***).

What can we do?

II. EMPLOY GOD'S DEFENSES.

In **I Peter 5:8**, we learn that our ***"enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*** Paul also knew that Christians must be ready to stop Satan's attacks, because not only does Satan want to destroy creation, he wants to destroy us as followers of Christ. To combat this, the Apostle Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord and put on ***"the whole armor of***

God.” This armor is not made by us. It is a full suit of armor made by God and given to each of us as a gift from Him for our spiritual protection. Each of the pieces of armor spoken of by Paul were part of the armor worn by ancient Roman soldiers and were analogous to the spiritual armor to be worn by Christians to help us stand firm in our battle with Satan.

- 1) **The Belt of Truth** - protects us from Satan’s deceitful lies. Just as a belt holds our core together, so too does God’s truth protect our spiritual core, holding together everything we do. This speaks of God’s Word, the Truth. If we lose sight of Scripture being true, which includes the precious Gospel of our salvation, we lose everything.
- 2) **The Breastplate of Righteousness** – speaks to the fact that we are people who have received by grace through faith the righteousness of Christ as God’s free gift to us on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ. Having received this free gift of a right standing with God, we also receive a new desire to live right and serve others while still knowing that Christ’s forgiveness is real when we fall short. This breastplate, like a uniform, identifies whose team we’re on, that of Christ, and not the world. We’re reminded here of Joshua’s words to the Israelites as they were given the choice of whether or not to enter the promised land. He said in **Joshua 24:15** – ***“But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD!”***
- 3) **The Shoes of Peace** - Strangely enough, when a person is hit by a car, often their shoes are knocked off. Satan wants to **“knock us off our feet,”** so to speak. He will do anything to

get us fussing, fighting, and complaining against one another. Satan knows it's hard to move around on a battlefield without shoes. Furthermore, when we're fighting with one another our witness of the "***gospel of peace***" is undermined.

4) The Shield of Faith - The Bible tells us that doubt and disbelief are killers. When we get weary and put down our shields of faith, the Devil is able to hit us with his fiery darts of doubt, despair, disappointment, and depression. When we put down our faith in Christ, the Devil starts picking us off one by one.

5) The Helmet of Salvation – We must remind ourselves that we are not our own but have been bought or redeemed by the precious blood of Christ into a new life. It is then that we are to allow the Holy Spirit to protect and renew our minds. I guess you could say we need Holy Spirit head-gear to redirect our thinking around the fact that we are children of the King, and belonging to Him, we no longer wear the head-gear of carnality and sin, but the head-gear of grace, mercy, and love – the mindset which is consistent with our salvation.

In addition to employing the five defensive weapons in the armor of God, in order to clear the fog concerning spiritual warfare, we are to:

III. EMPLOY GOD'S OFFENSIVE WEAPONS.

1) The Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God -

Pastor Ernie Arnold makes an observation here, which had never occurred to me before and is worthy of note. **There is no piece of armor mentioned in the full armor of God to protect our backsides.** Pastor Arnold suggests that the reason for this is that we

are to be following Jesus and Jesus is not retreating. **Jesus won the war against sin, death, and the Devil on the Cross and is not interested in retreating.** Furthermore, he says that when we're retreating, with no protection for our backsides, we are an open target for the Devil. As soldiers in God's Kingdom, we are advancing. We make our advance using the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. It makes sense that the better we know God's Word and apply it to our lives, the more well prepared we will be to live in the grace of God's salvation and share the gospel with others. The Devil also knows that when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the Son of God defeated him each time with Scripture. God's Word will send the Devil on the run. The application for our lives is obvious. God's Word is powerful in our warfare with Satan. Let's be people of the Word.

2) Praying in the Spirit – Prayer

Paul ends this passage with a call to prayer. Prayer is essential communication on the spiritual battleground of daily life. Just think what a great line of communication does for an army in battle: a) to respond much faster to changing situations, b) to position their resources and manpower more strategically, c) to maintain a higher degree of unity and readiness, and d) to enhance the likelihood of victory. Paul knew that unless people were praying for him he was not going to make it on the mission field.

The Great Archbishop of Canterbury of the mid 20th Century, **William Temple**, stated that although he didn't fully understand all the ins and outs of prayer, he did observe that the more people prayed: the more they noticed God at work in their midst, the more they reflected God's image in their own lives, and the more they loved

others. **(Sermon Central)**. Why do you think that the one service that the Devil does his best to get rid of in churches is the prayer meeting? Think for a moment. What were the disciples doing when Pentecost fell? They were praying in one accord. What was the church doing when an angel came to rescue Peter out of prison? They were praying together.

CONCLUSION

What a wonderful suit of armor the Lord has prepared for each one in His army. Let us put on our armor and clear the fog of spiritual warfare, marching onward, fully equipped to engage the enemy, whose sole purpose is to thwart the advancement of God's Kingdom. That said, remember that ultimately the war has already been won. Our victory is assured through Christ Jesus our Lord. **A-men.**