



The Battle Plan
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The battle plan of a believer starts with an awareness of the enemy, confidence in our abilities, and submission to God's authority.

As he closes out his letter, I believe that the apostle Paul is teaching this truth in three parts:

- Perception – awareness of the enemy
- Preparation – confidence in our abilities
- Prayer – submission to God's authority

Perception

¹⁰ A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. ¹² For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

- *Epouranios* (ep-oo-ran'-ee-os) - "heavenly places"
 - Same word used in Ephesians 1 – God has *"blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."*
 - Same "sphere of spiritual activities".
- Paul reminds us that there is a war happening in this realm. There is an opposition to the "spiritual blessing" that we have received.
- It is important that we pause and really take in the reality of this. Too often, we can read through the back half of Ephesians – these imperatives – and approach them as a "10 ways for a better life" list – moralism. In actuality Paul reminds us that there is something greater – other worldly – that we are a part of.
- What does the Bible say about this spiritual enemy?
 - 1 Peter 5:8 says, *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*
- What do we do?

Preparation

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. 16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- Let's look at this preparation segment in two parts. Stand and hold up
 - When we "stand our ground" we dig in our heels – we don't get pushed backward. We're ready to move.
 - When talking about these visual elements it's helpful to understand how it would be heard to the people of that time.
 - Belt of truth – the idea of "girding" or tying around the waist is associated with tying up long robes and designates a readiness for action. The truth of what we know of God holds all of these other pieces in their place.
 - Body armor of God's righteousness – breastplate – reflecting God's righteousness
 - Shoes/readiness of the Gospel of peace – "so that you will be fully prepared"¹
 - The next three elements Paul says to "hold up". We're on the move. Moving into battle.
 - Shield of faith – shields were not only used defensive (in v. 16). They were used to advance armies. Interlocking
 - Helmet of salvation – Identity as Jesus.
 - Sword of the Spirit – The sword is the word of God and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Greek word used for "word" does not mean the Bible. *Rhema* (ray-ma) refers to a teaching or prophetic utterance or, more specifically, to the gospel.²
 - That Jesus suffered so that we can take up this sword and swat down the enemy by His power.
 - Romans 5:8 - *11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.*
 - The Holy Spirit is the power that drives every blow to the enemy. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is a part of every battle that we face.
 - And this same gospel has the ability to pierce to the core of our hearts. That's the sword that Hebrews 4:12 is showing us.

Prayer

¹ Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1996), 342.

² Snodgrass, 344.

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

19 And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. 20 I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

- If we are not fighting against flesh and blood armies, then do not fight with flesh and blood weaponry?
- Paul understood the power of prayer.
- "Alignment of wills"

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