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If you've watched the news recently you will know there is a war going on, doesn't there always seem to be a war going on somewhere? Well the war that our news broadcasts currently are following is in Syria. Between the government and the rebels. It's a terrible war as all war is terrible. Fighting, bombings, death and destruction and the result is that there are currently 13 million Syrian refugees who have fled this war.

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But that is not the only war that is going on. There is also the war on terror. Ever since the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001, there has been a different type of war going on. In his inaugural address in January 2009, Barak Obama said, "Our nation is at war, against a *far-reaching network of violence and hatred*." This war is not in one place, one country, it's in every place and every country. A war that we're fighting at great cost against an almost undefined enemy, a network of violence and hatred.

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But there is also an even bigger war than the war on terror that is going on that is not being reported by the media or even acknowledged by our society. For it's a spiritual war. And it is the war that Paul ends his letter to the Ephesians discussing. It's an unseen war. It's a behind the scenes war. It's a war between God and the devil. And that war touches us all almost every second of every day.

For to be a Christian is to slap bang in the middle of a war zone. Between two strong and mighty powers. Before we became Christians we were on Satan's side but God stole us from him and Satan wants us back. Friends being a Christian then is not for the faint hearted. It's not for the cowardly. It is not for the wimp. Because it's not a playground out there, it's a battleground. And if you want to walk in humility, if you want to live in unity, if you want to grow in maturity, if you want to have Jesus central in all you do, then you will be attacked.

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Now this warfare has been referred to a number of times already in the book of Ephesians and it would be good to have a quick Tiki tour through Ephesians to understand the context. Back in Ephesians 2:1,2 Paul says "*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient*".

There is a ruler of the kingdom of the air. Satan. And he is now at work in those who are disobedient. Wow, he is working overtime right now isn't he? There is a spiritual force behind every act of evil. There is a strategy from Satan to defeat his enemy God. And he has lots of willing conscripts. Look with me at Chapter 4:17. "*So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God*".

It's a *dark world out there*. It's a world that *prefers* darkness to light. Because Satan loves the

darkness for the darkness hides his real intentions. He wants to use that darkness to get his claws into us, into the followers of God. **Slide 7** So Paul will say in 4:26 *"In your anger don't sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and don't give the devil a foothold."*

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Satan is looking for chinks in our armour. He is looking for a foothold into our lives. He wants to sow division, dissension, discord amongst us. So that means that according to 5:15 we need to *"be very careful then how you live... not as unwise but as wise... making the most of every opportunity... because the days are evil"*. Do you see what is happening? We are in the middle of a war zone! There is a battle raging all around us. And so Paul before he ends his letter is warning us in Ephesians 6 ¹⁰ *"Finally, be strong in the Lord & in his mighty power."*

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1. Power (verses 10-12)

¹¹ *"Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*

¹² *"For our struggle is not against flesh & blood but against the rulers, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"*.

So we need to know our enemy, know how powerful he is. Paul tells us in verse 12, that Satan is powerful. There are rulers, authorities, powers in this dark world and spiritual forces of evil in the spiritual world under his control. And they're no pushovers.

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He's powerful *and* he's wicked. He's not known as the Evil One for nothing. For he wants to oppose everything that is good and pure and honourable - everything from God that is. He may at times disguise himself as an angel of light, but he is a liar, he is a roaring lion, he wants to devour and destroy the good things that God gives his people.

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Powerful, wicked & cunning. He's a schemer v 11 reminds us that. He has his plans, his ways, his subtle approaches. He has been described as a wolf in sheep's clothing. He seems like he is one thing, when in truth he is another. He prefers to work in darkness, so that people can't see him for what he really is. But he's smart & uses all sorts of tricks to fool us humans.

That's the sort of world that we live in. It's a *dark world*. With a battle going on, whether we like it or not. Whether you know that he is there or not. In previous generations we all believed that the devil existed now there are even many Christians who don't think he is real. And he loves that. For he can do his best work if we don't acknowledge his presence. For think about it. How often do we think about the devil in our everyday lives? How often do we assess our enemy? How often we do we try and understand his plans?

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As a new Christian I read CS Lewis Screwtape Letters and it opened my eyes to what Satan was trying to do in my life. How he will try and tempt me, get his claws into me, take a hold of my life. If you have never read it, find a copy quick smart and if you haven't read it in a while, read it again. We should know your enemy.

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But it is even more important to know that he is a defeated enemy. He has been defeated once & for all by Jesus Christ. Jesus was raised to life on the third defeating death, defeating Satan and now Jesus is seated at the right hand in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority, power and dominion. Yes Satan has power. Yes Satan has spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms but he is still under Jesus control. Jesus is the name above all names.

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And Jesus is showing the world and the heavens who is boss through his leadership of the Church. Ephesians 3:10 *“His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm.”* What an incredible thought. That through the Church, Jesus is proclaiming the power of the gospel. Through his people, Satan is reminded again and again that he is fighting a losing battle.

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When the Allies landed in France on D-Day on 6th June 1944 they won the decisive battle of WW2. From then on Germany was a goner. But the war kept on going for another 11 months before Berlin surrendered. During that time there were some fierce battles, there were many deaths on both sides but both sides knew what the final outcome would be.

Likewise Christ decisively defeated Satan on the cross but he will not completely destroy him and his power until he returns in judgement. Until then Satan is like a wounded warrior, he is doing as much as he can to take as many people out with him. He will keep on struggling with God’s people whenever he can. But our ultimate victory is not in doubt because of the Cross. So we should be strong in the Lord and his mighty power. For with us is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Yes we are in the middle of a war zone against a strong and cunning enemy but the victory has already be won by Jesus.

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2. Power and then Put on the full armour of God.

¹³ *“Therefore put on the full armour 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”.*

Our goal is not to fight our enemy, that’s Jesus job and he has done a magnificent job already in defeating him. Our job is to survive, to hold our ground, to stand firm together. So over the coming verses 3 times Paul tells us to stand. So in verses 11, 13, 14 the picture that Paul paints is of a soldier standing firm against an oncoming enemy.

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Now I have never been to war but I can imagine that when the opposing army is coming at you, it would be really difficult to stand your ground. In the ancient days arrows would be coming at you right, left and centre, today it would be machine guns or tanks firing at you and the temptation would be either to charge forward or run backwards. But to stand in the midst of enemy fire would take great courage.

But we might be standing but we are not defenceless because we are able to stand because we have previously put on the full armour of God. Not our own armour but God’s armour. God has provided us with all that we need. So the armour then is not something we have to do for ourselves, it is something that God has already given to us. We just need to put it on.

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We put on **God’s armour**. Here Paul draws very heavily on the OT, especially Isaiah. For example in Isa 42:13 we read *“The Lord will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior & he will stir up his zeal, with a shout he will raise the battle cry & will triumph over his enemies.”*

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In Isaiah 11:4-5 we hear that God *“will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, with the breath of his lips, he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist”.*

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Later in Isaiah 59:15-17 we hear these words *“the Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice... so ...He put on righteousness as his breastplate & the helmet of salvation on his head, he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.”*

You get what Paul is saying, the armour that we are to put on is none other than the armour that God has put on previously to win his mighty victories. The weapons that are at our disposal are none other than the weapons that God himself has won many a mighty victory. So put on the full armour of God. Every bit of it, so there is no chink in your armour, no weakness that the devil may exploit, no obvious target. Put on the full armour of God.

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In the ancient myth, Achilles' mum dipped him in the river of Styx to make him unbeatable, but as she dipped him she grabbed him by the heel. So that was the one point that he became vulnerable. It was his Achilles Heel. But with God's armour, we do not have an Achilles' heel, we don't have any chinks in our armour. That is if we put it all on.

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So what will help defend us from our enemy? Paul talks firstly *about the belt of truth*.¹⁴ *“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist”*. For the best defense against Satan's lies is to know the truth. I was once told that when bank officers are trained to pick the counterfeit notes that are in circulation they aren't given examples of fakes, instead they are encourage to touch and to feel and examine the real thing.

If we are going to stand up under temptation we must know the truth and be people who are determined to buckle on the truth around our waists. Which means evaluating everything we read or are taught. Do you do that to what I say? Do you go home and ponder these things in comparison to God's truth the Bible? We should be tightening our belts so that we are not slack when it comes to working out the truth.

We will need the *breastplate of righteousness*. The soldier's breastplate covered his front & back and protected his vital organs. So we wear the breastplate of righteousness not when we hide behind our own righteousness but in Christ's righteousness. It was his holiness that gets us to heaven so when we are condemned by Satan for not being good enough we can agree with him and remember we are only made holy by what Jesus has done for us.

Then we make sure we have the right shoes on. No they are not Vans or Nikes or Converse or Birkenstock, the shoes that Paul is talking about is those ready to spread the *gospel of peace*. We have to be ready to tell others the good news. We have to be ready to go on the offensive, not just to always be on the defensive. And I have found that when I place myself in a situation to tell others about Jesus, it actually makes me think through my faith more and helps me grow in my trust of God and depend upon his power even more as well.

Belt, breastplate, shoes & *the shield of faith*. The Roman soldier used his shield to stop the fiery arrows & darts that were hurled at him. And mark my words there will be many such darts thrown at the Christian. Darts of doubt, disobedience, lust, fear, riches will be thrown at us right, left & centre. To be able to cope we have to hide, hide behind the shield of faith, God himself will be the one who protects us. His promises are dependable. In the end we know, we know that God will always be on the winning side.

Put on *the helmet of salvation*. For if God has chosen you, before the creation of the world then he won't let you go. If God has sent Jesus to die for your sins, then he is serious about you being a part of the Kingdom. If God has given us blessing after blessing then you need those truths to fill your head, to protect you when you feel low or down or discouraged.

Lastly we need the *sword of the Spirit*, which is the Word of God. It is God's word that we will need in our hand to hand combat. God's word will defend us when Satan's accusations come. As I saw on someone's fridge once, "When Satan reminds me of my past, I remind him of his future." God's word is a great defense as well as helpful to use when we attack. We need to read it, meditate on it, memorise it and then trust it.

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It was Jesus who used the word of God to deal with his 40 days of temptation in the desert. It was Martin Luther the great reformer who once wrote "*For more than a week I was close to the gates of death & hell.*" Satan kept on telling him again & again that God was no longer being good to him. But he answered with those words he wrote in the hymn A mighty fortress is our God. "*The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him, his rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure, one little word shall fell him.*" One little word from the word of God is strong enough to defeat the entire power of Satan.

Friends don't think it's *up to you*. Call in the big guns. God's big guns. And put on the full *armour of God* so that you can take your stand *against* the *devil's schemes*. Because in the end, it's not *your battle*. But God's battle. It's not your armour. It's his armour. And so it's his salvation, his faith, his peace, his word, his truth that will make all the difference.

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3. Power, put on and finally Prayer

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.*" The final piece to the puzzle of this spiritual battle is prayer. Prayer is to pervade every aspect of this fight. Talking and listening to our commander in chief is the key to our spiritual victory.

Most Christians pray sometimes, with some prayers and some degree of perseverance, for some of God's people. But to replace the word "some" with "all" in each of these expressions would be to introduce us to a new dimension of prayer. Paul says we should pray in the Spirit on all occasions. Even prayer is a joint activity between us and God as it is Spirit filled prayers that he wants. It is spirit filled prayers he wants **on all occasions**.

Not just sometimes. Not just before dinner or before we go to sleep but on all occasions. Paul says elsewhere "*pray continually*". You know mums tells me that they always have their kids on their mind. No matter what they are doing or their kids are doing, their children are always on their thoughts. In the same way the Lord should always be on our lips. Whether we are actually saying words or not, we should continually be talking to God in prayer.

Pray on all occasions with all kinds of prayers. Confession, Thanksgiving, intercession, praise, adoration, meditation, song, supplication. There are many ways to pray and we should be making the most of **all of them** not just some of them. Always keep on praying. Not just for a day or a week or a season but for the whole of your life. George Mueller once prayed for two men's salvation for over 50 years. When asked why he persisted when God had as yet

not answered that prayer he said *“Do you think God would have kept me praying all these years if he did not intend to save them?”* Both were converted around the time of his death!

All occasions, all kinds of prayers, always praying for all the Lord’s people. Not just myself, my family, my friends, even my Church family but all the saints worldwide. Wow you won’t be able to do that in a minute or two will you? You won’t be able to do that without a prayer plan, a prayer strategy, a structure that will widen your prayers beyond how you currently pray. But think about it, the battle is not just about you. The battle is worldwide & so one way that we can help others in the fight of their lives is to pray for them. To pray that they might put on the full armour of God. To pray that they will stand despite the onslaught. To pray that they might know they have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

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And Paul ends by saying pray for me that I might have courage and clarity. That the word of God might go out in a clear and unadulterated form and that the preachers like Paul, that evangelists like Apollos, that leaders like Peter might keep serving God no matter what the cost is they have to pay. Friends the key to the battle is prayer, personal prayer. The key to the battle of the church is prayer, corporate prayer. The key to the battle of the evangelism of the world is prayer, you and I praying together at all times in all ways. Praying that the work of the devil might be restrained and that the victory of Jesus might be proclaimed.

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American preacher Billy Sunday once said, "I know that the devil is real for two reasons. #1, because the Bible says so. And #2, BECAUSE I’VE DONE BUSINESS WITH HIM." Friends right now people are doing business with the devil. In recent times some of you have been struggling with the battle that is going in in your life between God and Satan. Just in recent times I have heard about the dangers of people being involved in ouija boards. I have heard the devastation of people opening themselves and their family to the devil. Of dreams where Satan has spoken to people about his desire to destroy their lives. Of the dangers of devil worship from some Asian cultures and from drugs. The devil is real and he is active.

But I have also seen people who have been in the midst of this war still standing because no matter what Satan throws at them, they know and have experienced the fact that God is the ultimate victor. And when I was in my darkest time in my life when I felt the war around me was beyond my ability to cope. I was only able to stand because of other people’s prayers. And on the really tough days when I felt that my strength was not enough to go on I was taught to start each day by praying on the armour of God.

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Have you ever done that? Lord, now I buckle your truth around my waist, no matter what lies are thrown at me today from Satan I will look to your truth. Lord give me the breastplate of righteousness so I don’t trust in my own goodness but wholly trust in your goodness given to me today. Lord help me to spread the gospel of peace this day as I share the prince of peace with the people around me. Lord can I hide behind your shield of faith because the devil will be throwing his flaming arrows again at me today, like he did yesterday. Lord may I have your salvation close to me at all times and may your word which is sharper than any double edged sword penetrate right to my soul today so I can live for you and for you alone.

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Today Paul is calling us to arms, to fight a mighty battle. Just remember who has already won you the victory. It is the Lord Jesus. So today & every day put on the full armour of God.

The Armor of God

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.

Final Greetings

²¹ Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. ²² I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

²³ Peace to the brothers and sisters,^[c] and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.^[d]