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**Main Idea:** As the Epistle comes to a close we are given encouragement and warning. We are to have a strong faith in our Lord, trust in His Mighty Power; we are to trust in Him, not in ourselves. We are to prepare for life's battle against the evils and hostilities, seen and unseen. Therefore, we must prepare ourselves by thinking like soldiers in battle so we can resist and stand against evil and the powers of darkness. We are to stand our ground with the Truth of God's Word, know God's Word and be ready. We are to be a people of integrity. Our shield is faith. Our confidence is that God is working and be assured of our salvation and the contentment of the peace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, we can not only be prepared, but endure attacks from our enemy, human and spiritual. We must, at all times, be in prayer. Prayer is the prime tactic and communication platform of our battle. We must allow the Word of God to impact us wholeheartedly!

### Contexts and Background:

There is a war going on and we are in it! Paul describes the conflict we all may face and gives exhortations. He uses the metaphor of Greek wrestler who must face an opponent. He must study the weaknesses and condition himself properly for the match. Paul's outline of a Christian's enemy is also like that of a general giving a prewar pep talk and reminders for the battle describing the purpose of the uniform. Paul's people would be very familiar with these illustrations. Our lives on this earth is foreign; we are sojourners waiting for our true home to come in eternity. Meanwhile, God is with us here, too. Emmanuel.

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Be strong.* Roman soldiers must stay in formation, rely on their training and--above all else--stand their ground and never retreat. They had various formations of interlocking shields; if one soldier broke ranks, it jeopardized all the others. They also gained strength in one another. These are all direct applications for a real Christian, as our strength is in the Lord and the help of fellow believers (1 Thess. 5:8).
- *Mighty power / power of His might.* Meaning bodily strength, signifying we are not in this alone when we face opposition (Eph. 1:15-23; 2:4-6; 3:16-19).
- *Full armor of God.* Paul gives a description of *Roman Battle Gear* as an image of the weapons Christ gives us to use. When we face the opposition to God as His children, we may come to blows. We put on a new set of spiritual clothes, battle gear. Thus, God acts like a warrior and calls us to war. No weapon shall defeat us when we have the armor of God. This was also the image many Jewish people wanted in a Messiah (Isa. 54:17; 59:17; Song of Sol. 5:17-20; Col. 3:10).
- *Stand against.* We do so like a soldier ready for battle by our purity and integrity, in God's peace by our trust and obedience. The closer we are to Christ, the closer we are to contentment and what is really important in life. Because His peace allows for wisdom and strength, it promotes us to love and forgiveness too (Col. 3:15-17).
- *Devil's schemes / whiles.* He is the slanderer, and appeals to our pride and our lust for materialism, power, and the flesh. Our response to Satan's lies is God's true Truth and our character (Rom. 8:31-34; Eph. 2:8-9; 4:25; 5:9; 1 John 4:1; James 4:7).
- *Flesh and blood.* This may refer to Human corruption, false teachers, powerful, political figures and people of wealth and power. Most people assume our main enemy is the government, overlords, dictators, but these are usually the puppets of the evil one. Even though we may admire, envy, or fear people in

leadership, they too are mere people, while Jesus is Lord and thus Superior. All we really need to do is to submit to God (Isa. 55:8-9; Luke 8:11; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 6:10-17; Col. 1:15-20; 1 Pet. 1:22-2:3)!

- *Rulers, against the authorities, against the powers.* Satan may be the "ruler" of the earth, with tyrannical power, but God is God and is still King and in charge! You are asked to choose between them (Eph. 2:1-10).
- *Dark world / Darkness.* This refers to sin and the ways of the world that are meaningless and hopeless. Christ is the Perfection; He has the power and authority to be the Light and shatter the darkness on our behalf (Isa. 29:15; 47:10; 2 Cor. 3:15; 4:4-6; 6:14; Eph. 5:8-14; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:9-14; 1 Thess. 5:5).
- *Spiritual forces of evil.* Our spiritual enemies, Satan and the world's kingdom are totally without the light of truth, peace and love. The nature of many of our battles is spiritual--Satan at work in others' lives, even ours, influencing, conniving and manipulating. Remember, we have the power to submit to Christ instead. Our battle is won in prayer and submission to Christ a Lord (Gen. 32:22-32; Dan. 10:10-21; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 4:3; Col. 1:13; Eph. 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; 1 John 2:9-11).
- *Heavenly realms/places.* Where God is. In Paul's time, there was no distinction between what lies outside of the atmosphere and what is heaven and the various levels of it. This, in context, showcases Who and What Christ is, Who redeems us, as Christ was raised from the dead, He also raises us out of sin by His victory over death and makes us to be eternal with Him. It also means we are purposed and governed by and by Christ for His glory (Eph. 1:3-6; 22; 2:6; 3:10).
- *Day of evil.* Usually this refers to a day of judgment or testing. It can also refer to a period of intense tribulation many Christians have experienced since the early Church (Amos 6:3; Dan. 12:1; Rom. 8:22-23).
- *Stand your ground.* Accomplish, withstand or finish the task as victors with what God gives us. The victory of Christ is given to us! This can be applied to sin, disease, pride, spiritualism, or spiritual warfare (Isa. 14:12-14; John 12:31-33; Col. 2:15).
- *Belt / fastened / Girdle of truth.* The leather apron around and under the armor that protected the abdomen, holds up the armor and the sword. It protects our vital areas, as a seatbelt harness protects a race car driver. Truth holds our lives together, and it defends against arrogance and ignorance and give us conviction and confidence (John 14: 6).
- *Breastplate of righteousness.* Leather overlaid with metal that protected the vital organs, only used in battle, not normal wear. This protects our hearts from immoral behavior and other areas that may cause death if we are wounded. Doing right will protect our hearts from evil. We can stand up against false accusations and persecution, being protected by the righteous character of Christ imputed to us. Allow Christ to give you the power--His power to resist temptation, and then follow His character (Rom 4:6-11; Phil. 3:9)!
- *Feet / shoes fitted / with the readiness / peace.* Roman soldiers wore sturdy sandals with extra leather strapping that went up the ankle, so they would not worry what they stepped on. Feet that are prepared with the Gospel of Peace are protected by taking a stand, which is faith in our beliefs, by His grace. This is our firm footing confidence, stability and steadfastness in Christ for life's battles (Isa 52:7; Eph. 2:14-17).
- *Gospel of peace.* Irony, the peace of Christ ready's us for battle.
- *Shield of faith.* Large wooden rectangular shields four feet long that covered the soldier's body that could interlock with other shields. Also, covered with leather that was wetted to put off flaming arrows. Our faith in God will help protect us from the evil and the intimidation we face; we need to be interlocked with others for group protection, making us invincible.

- *Flaming arrows.* Arrows dipped in pitch and set on fire, a weapon of terror, set our confidence in the faithfulness of Christ (Phil. 1:6).
- *Helmet of salvation.* Metal headgear only used in battle. It protects our lives from the devil's lies, because it is one thing that we can never lose. This is our confidence, and His faithfulness that He gave us salvation that Satan cannot take away. It protects our minds from indifference and false beliefs, and misguided advice from friends and the media (Isa. 59:17; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:8).
- *Sword of the Spirit.* Usually over two feet long, along with pikes, the main close range offensive weapon to cut, stab and slash the enemy. God's Word gives us our main confidence that holds up the rest of our weapons. This allegory helps protect us from what tempts us, and it will cut to the hearts of those who hear the Word of God. Jesus defeated Satan during His time of temptation by quoting the Word; so should we (Matt 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13)!
- *Word of God.* Meaning the teachings of Jesus Christ, clarified and uncompromised true Truth of His Word now found in Scripture (at this time, it was oral and in letter form; now we have it in the Old and New Testaments) as well as the words, character, and precepts of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. How He lived and what He taught must also permeate and engage us--what He taught and modeled and how we are learning and responding to Him. We are to learn and employ what He has for us. It is not just enough to know; we must also be. Learn it, know it, be it, and do it. This is our study, for internalization that transforms, and gives application (John 14:16; 16:13; 20:31; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 12:13; Col.1:15-20; 3:15-19; Eph. 5:14; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 3:16).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Real, spiritual warfare has more to do with the battle of the will than what we see in movies or from false teachers. God's desire is for us to be formed in Jesus Christ as LORD for our battles. Satan wants us to be centered on anything but that; he wants us to be disobedient and distorted to the things of God. God wants us surrendered and dependent with faith upon Him. This is the battle; this is where the line is drawn, where what we choose will determine whether we serve Satan or Christ. There is no in-between, no middle ground, and no other choice for us to accept.

God wants you to overcome Satan; you do not have to believe in Satan's deceptions and lies. Not only can we resist Satan, but we can actually overcome him! Revelation 12:11 says "*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death.*" Jesus has already overcome Satan by His triumph on the Cross, and that victory has been imparted unto us! If you have confessed your sins under the shed blood of Jesus Christ, you have been cleansed and are no longer under the control of Satan. This is called the *Testimony of Jesus*. It refers to the testimony that Jesus bore by His work and involvement. Christ's blood and sacrifice prevails when we accept it and use it as our main artillery. Our unwavering faith in Christ, by whom and what He has done, is too much for Satan to handle; he cannot stand against the goodness of Christ. Thus, when we are in Christ, we prevail; Satan has already lost and has been defeated (Rev. 1:2, 9; 12:11; 19:10).

**Church Leadership Tip:** We must make sure our value system is based on God's true Truth! Not the worlds or the lies of culture! We are to be the influencers of culture not the receivers. This is where the church is weak and prone to attack. (Isaiah 54:17; Ephesians 6:10-18)

**The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?

3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

***Additional Questions:***

1. What is the armor of God? What does this mean for you that God provides this tool?
2. How does the peace of Christ ready us for battle?
3. What are some of the things Satan wants us to be centered on? What has allured you? What have you done to combat the devil's tactics?
4. What encouragements and warnings have you been given? How do the two go together?
5. Look over each piece of a Roman soldier's battle gear from the passage. How does each one help you when trials come? How do they work together?
6. Why must we stand our ground with the Truth of God's Word?
7. What have you done to prepare for life's battle against spiritual warfare seen and unseen?
8. How many times have you prayed before facing temptation?
9. This passage implies that our purity and integrity help us in God's peace and life's battles. What can you do to grow more in this area?
10. Why would God ask us to prepare ourselves by thinking like a soldier in battle? Have you done this? What were the results?
11. What can your church do to help you and others become strong faith in our Lord, and trust in His Mighty Power?
12. What can you do more to know God's Word and be ready for whatever in life comes your way?