

Supernatural Strategies for Spiritual War Ephesians 6:17-20

Introduction

NJFK—Roman Soldier Figurine

17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, **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, **19** and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

1. Helmet of Salvation (17a)
2. Sword of the Spirit (17b)
3. Pervasive Prayer (18-20)

1. Helmet of Salvation (17a)

and take the helmet of salvation,

1 Thessalonians 5:8

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

That considers salvation (rescue, deliverance, healing) with a view toward our final future deliverance. We will be saved.

But it is also correct Scripturally to say that we have been saved, looking back to the moment of our conversion. And it is right to say we are being saved, for God is at work in us even now through the Holy Spirit applying His deliverance in the process of sanctification—becoming more and more like Jesus. So here Paul calls it just “the helmet of salvation,” which would take in past, present, and future aspects of our salvation.

Salvation is a gift by the grace of God. Supernatural deliverance. God’s saving us is our ultimate protection. And knowing we are His saved ones protects us in the spiritual war we fight.

Many of Satan’s assaults go after our minds. He is master of deception. A head-wound is serious in battle, so we need head protection.

2. Sword of the Spirit (17b)

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

Roman soldiers sometimes used a large, two-handed sword capable of splitting an enemy in two. But here Paul refers to the Roman soldier’s most useful offensive weapon, a

short sword very useful in close combat—for stabbing, slicing, deflecting—very maneuverable

Note that Paul calls this weapon the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit gave the Word. The Spirit uses the Word to regenerate us and sanctify us. The Spirit uses the Word to convict and convince those who have not trusted Jesus as Savior yet.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Paul often uses the word *logos* to refer to the Scriptures. John uses *logos* to refer to Christ Himself as the Word. But here Paul uses *rhema*, which instead of referring to the word of God in general, refers to particular utterances from God that fit the specific occasion. The ability to use the particular words of God that fit the situation is a powerful weapon in the hand of a Christian warrior. That ability requires time in the Word and familiarity with it enough to make application where it is needed.

Christ Himself used Scripture this way to fight Satan's temptation. Significantly, Satan was

using Scripture, too, but twisting it out of context for evil use.

3. Pervasive Prayer (18-20)

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,

Paul does not call prayer a weapon or a piece of armor. Sometimes we refer to it as the weapon of “all-prayer.”

Think about what prayer is, what prayer means. It is talking to God. It is a call for help from God. That means that *the battle against Satan is in fact too much for us to handle on our own. We dare not fight this battle by ourselves, even with our armor strapped on. We must have God fighting alongside us. For ultimately the battle is the Lord's.* We fight with all our might, but we are trusting Him to win the battle on our behalf. And prayer calls on Him to do just that.

At all times—not just sometimes

With all prayer and supplication—not just a prayer here and there; not just coming to God in general, but also with particular requests

Keep alert with all perseverance—don't ever give up, no matter what; be watchful, don't fall asleep

Making supplication for all the saints—not just some of God's people; they all need prayer

Ephesians 6:19-20

¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Courage

Bold freedom of speech—often used of the apostles when filled with the Spirit for sharing the gospel

More important to Paul than freedom from prison was freedom of speech while in prison.

Of all the people on the planet, you would think Paul wouldn't need people to pray that he'd be bold and courageous in proclaiming the gospel—the mystery that both Jews and Gentiles are part of the people of God, the body of Christ

He had suffered much for preaching boldly. The suffering he'd encountered was not easy to endure. It would be tempting just to shut up, to keep your head down, to avoid the trouble.

He is an ambassador, but he's in chains.

He prays that words will be given to him. He could talk easily enough, but he wanted to say exactly the right thing.

Even though God used Paul to write half the NT, he still needs prayer to make the gospel clear.

Colossians 4:3-4

³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Sometimes we think that a veteran of gospel witness, or seasoned preacher or theologian, doesn't need God's help to proclaim the gospel well whenever it is time to do so in season or out of season. Not so. As one who has preached tens of thousands of sermons for more than 30 years, I always feel the great need for God to help me say what ought to be said boldly and clearly.

Writing from house arrest in Rome, awaiting an audience with Caesar, Paul asked the saints in Ephesus and in Colossae to pray for him this way. God answered their prayer. Dr. Luke, who had been traveling with Paul,

describes what happened in the last words of the book of Acts.

Acts 28:30-31

³⁰ He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, ³¹ proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

Conclusion

Make sure you have salvation protecting your head. See to it that you become skillful in handling the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. And never stop calling out to God to help you in the fight. You are clothed with the Lord's armor. You need the Lord's strength. The battle is the Lord's.

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