1 The practice of spiritual warfare in St. Paul: prayer, the Word and abiding “in the Lord”

1.1 Abstrakt

Paul does not propose a magical system or a technique for manipulating spiritual powers. His image of “spiritual warfare” is shaped in a christological and ecclesial perspective: believers are to “put on the full armor of God” and “be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of his might” (Ef 6,10–11). The text Ephesians 6:10–20 combines grammatical and theological nuances of the call to receive God’s power (ἐνδυναμοῦσθε), the notion of being “in the Lord” (en Kyríō / en Christō) and the imagery of the “full armor” (panoplía tou Theoû), which has its roots in the image of God-Warrior of the Old Testament (Isaiah). From Paul’s perspective the struggle has a “already, but not yet” character: Christ’s victory is accomplished, yet the Church must endure and repel the active resistance of defeated powers. Important for understanding this pericope is the distinction between theology and demonology: knowing the names of the powers is not the goal; demonology is subordinated to christology, ethics and the spirituality of the community. The text emphasizes the communal dimension, practices such as prayer and the Word, and warns against demonizing people.
Keywords: spiritual warfare, Ef 6,10–20, ἐνδυναμοῦσθε, en Kyríō, panoplía tou Theoû, union with Christ, Isaiah, demonology, community, prayer, the Word.

1.2 Introduction: thesis and its qualifications

Paul does not offer Christians a system of magical safeguards, a catalogue of secret names, or a complicated procedure for acquiring dominion over the spiritual world. He does not teach how to manipulate invisible powers. He calls, however: “Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the full armor of God” (Ef 6,10–11).

Two elements of this formula must be qualified. First, the label “technique” is only a metaphorical shorthand: Paul rejects the logic of technicality understood as a method by which a person automatically achieves a spiritual effect. Prayer and the Word are not Christian equivalents of an incantation or magic formula. Second, “abiding in Christ” does not mean passivity. Union with Christ is concretized in moral and spiritual life: living in truth; righteousness; faithfulness to the gospel of peace; faith; awareness of salvation; obedience to the Word of God; persistent prayer; vigilance; solidarity with the community; courage in preaching the Gospel.

The most accurate version of the thesis is: Paul does not oppose demonic powers with Christian magic or an elaborate ritual technique. The only source of effective defense is the victorious power of God granted to believers in their union with Christ. Prayer, the Word, faith, truth and righteous living are not alternative sources of power, but concrete ways of participating in Christ’s victory.

1.3 1. The basic text: Ef 6,10–20

The Greek text begins with the words:

Tou loipoû, endynamoûsthe en Kyríō kai en tō krátēi tēs ischýos autoû.

Literally: “Finally: be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of his might.”

Next the author commands: endýsasthe tēn panoplían tou Theoû — “put on the full armor of God.” The goal is: pròs tò dýnasthai hymâs stēnai pròs tàs methodeías tou diabólou — “that you may be able to stand

against the wiles of the devil." The subsequent text outlines the scope of the conflict: "for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Ef 6,12).
The response is not an attempt to learn the names of these powers. The text immediately returns to the image of the armor and the elements that determine the opportunity for resistance: the armor of God; steadfastness; standing; truth; righteousness; peace; faith; salvation; the Word; prayer. Demonology is therefore subordinated to christology, ethics and the spirituality of the community.

1.4 2. A note on the authorship of the Letter to the Ephesians

Church tradition attributes the Letter to the Ephesians to Paul. Contemporary exegesis remains divided: some scholars defend the Apostle's direct authorship; others point to the involvement of a secretary; many consider the letter the work of a disciple developing Paul's theology; some see it as a circular letter addressed to the communities of Asia Minor, not only to Ephesus. The discussion focuses on stylistic and textual elements: a different style; very long sentences; a developed vision of the universal Church; a close literary relationship with the Letter to the Colossians; the absence of the name Ephesus in the earliest manuscripts of the letter.
Regardless of the resolution, Ef 6,10–20 belongs to the canonical Pauline tradition and remains deeply consistent with the Apostle's earlier texts: "the armor of light" — Rz 13,12; "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" — Rz 13,14; "the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet the hope of salvation" — 1 Tes 5,8; "the weapons of righteousness" — 2 Kor 6,7; "the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh" — 2 Kor 10,4. Ef 6 is not an alien addition but an expanded synthesis of Paul's essential themes.

1.5 3. Endynamoûsthe — not "produce strength," but "let yourselves be strengthened"

1.5.1 3.1. Grammatical form

The verb ἐνδυναμόω — endynamoō means: to strengthen; to grant power; to make able; to enable to act. The form ἐνδυναμοῦσθε — endynamoûsthe is an imperative in the present tense in the middle-passive voice. It can be understood in several ways: passively — "be strengthened"; medially — "draw strength," "strengthen yourselves"; theologically — as a combination of God's action and human reception.
The context speaks against a purely reflexive meaning: the call does not command "make strength for yourselves." The source of power is the Lord. The imperative does not command producing it, but receiving and remaining within its reach. In a single word grace meets responsibility — because the power comes from God; responsibility — because a person must accept it; continuity — because the present tense suggests perseverance in this strengthening; communality — because the verb is plural. This is not a command addressed to a solitary specialist in spiritual warfare, but to the whole community.

1.5.2 3.2. The paradox of the passive imperative

"Let yourselves be strengthened" is a paradoxical command. One must act precisely by consenting to God's action in him. It is neither spiritual self-sufficiency nor passive waiting without any response. Paul's stance contains both elements: active obedience together with a radical acknowledgment that the source of effectiveness lies beyond the human being.

1.6 4. “In the Lord” — en Kyríō

1.6.1 4.1. Not merely “thanks to the Lord”

The expression en Kyríō can mean: in the Lord; thanks to the Lord; in the sphere of his lordship; in union with him; through participation in his life and victory. “In the Lord” is not merely a pious addition to the command “be strong.” It designates the place, source and manner of strengthening. The believer does not stand before power as an independent subject equipped by Christ with autonomous energy. He stands in Christ and as a member of his Body.

1.6.2 4.2. Paul’s formula “in Christ”

The formula en Christō — “in Christ” is one of the key soteriological designations in Paul. It denotes a new sphere of existence and belonging. The person “in Christ”: died with him; participates in his resurrection; has received the Spirit; has been justified; belongs to the new creation; is a member of the Body; has been transferred under a new lordship; has access to the Father; participates in Christ’s victory. Paul’s “in Christ” is close to the Johannine “abide in me,” although the language and emphases of the two traditions are not identical.

1.6.3 4.3. Christ not only gives the armor — he determines its content

In Rz 13,12 Paul says: “Let us put on the armor of light.” In Rz 13,14: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” In Ga 3,27: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Therefore “putting on the armor of God” can be understood as a development of the baptismal “putting on Christ.” The armor is not a set of spiritual items existing beside Christ — it is participation in who he is and what he has accomplished.

1.7 5. “In the power of his might”

In Ef 6,10 the set of power-designations combines three terms: dynamóō — to strengthen; krátos — power, dominion, effective supremacy; ischýs — strength, capacity to act. The expression en tō krátēi tēs ischýos autoû can be translated: “in the power of his might”; “in the strength of his power”; “through the overpowering strength of him.”

1.7.1 5.1. Allusion to Ef 1,19–23

The same designations appear earlier when the author speaks of “the immeasurable greatness of his power” working toward believers. This power is that by which God raised Christ from the dead, seated him at his right hand, exalted him above every ruler, authority, power and dominion, subjected all things under his feet and made him head over the Church. Ef 6,10 therefore does not introduce a new kind of power. Christians are to be strengthened by the same divine might that was revealed in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. This is the foundational basis of the struggle: believers do not attempt to achieve victory on their own, but are to persevere within the victory already accomplished in Christ.

1.8 6. The victory accomplished and the ongoing struggle

The Letter to the Ephesians bears the characteristic feature of tension between “already” and “not yet.”

1.8.1 6.1. Christ has already triumphed

- has been exalted above the powers — Ef 1,20–21;
- all things have been subjected under His feet — Ef 1,22;
- believers have been raised with Him — Ef 2,5–6;
- have been seated with Him “in the heavenly places” — Ef 2,6;

- the Church reveals to the powers the wisdom of God — Ef 3,10.

1.8.2 6.2. The powers still operate

- the devil sets traps — Ef 6,11;
- there is an "evil day" — Ef 6,13;
- "the evil one" hurls flaming darts — Ef 6,16;
- believers struggle with the spiritual powers of wickedness — Ef 6,12.

There is no contradiction here, but a "already, yet not" structure: the ultimate outcome has been decided; the enemy no longer has the right to final dominion; history has not yet reached the fullness of victory; the Church must endure amid the resistance of defeated yet still active powers.

1.8.3 6.3. The aim is to hold the position

Eph 6 four times appeals to the verb "to stand": stēnai — to hold one's ground (v. 11); antistēnai — to resist (v. 13); stēnai — to hold one's ground (v. 13); stēte — stand (v. 14). The emphasis is not on acquiring new "spiritual territories," but on: not yielding; perseverance; maintaining faithfulness; refusing to return to former domination. The repeated "stand" makes the pericope a summons to faithful resistance rather than to triumphalist expansion. Christians do not manufacture victory, but remain in participation in Christ's exaltation.

1.9 7. "The full armor of God" — panoplía tou Theoû

1.9.1 7.1. Panoplía

The noun πανοπλία — panoplía denotes the full equipment of a heavily armed warrior. It consists of pan — "all" and hoplon — "weapon, instrument of war." It is not a single protective talisman nor a single practice. The whole existence of the believer is to be shaped by God's equipment.

1.9.2 7.2. "The armor of God" — given by or belonging to?

The genitive tou Theoû — "of God" can mean: the armor given by God; the armor that belongs to God; the armor worn by God Himself, in which God clothes His people. The third understanding is significant because of the Old Testament background of the image of God-Warrior.

1.9.3 7.3. It is the armor of the Divine Warrior

In Isa 59:17 God: puts on righteousness as a breastplate; puts on the helmet of salvation; clothes Himself in garments of vengeance; goes out to redeem the people. In Isa 11:5 the Messiah bears: righteousness as a belt; faithfulness as a waist-band. In Isa 49:2 the word of the Servant of the Lord becomes a sharp sword. In Isa 52:7 the feet of the messenger bringing good news of peace appear.

Therefore the most probable source of the image is not merely the observation of a Roman legionary, but the Old Testament picture of God and the Messiah as Warrior. Intertextual connections with Isa 11; 49; 52; 59 are widely recognized. Believers do not construct their own armor: they are admitted to share in the armor of the Divine Victor.

1.10 8. We do not wrestle against "blood and flesh"

Ouk éstin hēmîn hē pálē pròs haîma kai sárka. Literally: "Our struggle is not against blood and flesh."

1.10.1 8.1. Pálē — wrestling

Pálē denotes a wrestling contest, direct close struggle. The image differs from a battle fought at a distance. The author mixes metaphors: the wrestler fights up close; the soldier is equipped with full armor; the basic

task remains to stay on one's feet. This conveys the existential character of the struggle. The enemy's attack is not a remote metaphysical theory: it touches thinking; desires; relationships; faith; the unity of the Church; moral endurance.

A practical conclusion follows: Paul's spiritual warfare has a personal and social dimension, but it cannot be an excuse for demonizing persons. One must warn against the easy shifting of blame for human weaknesses or conflicts onto "demons" and against reducing ethical and pastoral problems to a schema of possession. Demonology in the service of the Church should be subordinated to Christology, moral responsibility, and care for the community.

1.10.2 Methodological note on the authorship of the Letter to the Ephesians

- Traditionally the Letter to the Ephesians is ascribed to the apostle Paul; contemporary exegesis and literary criticism have, however, taken up discussion regarding the question of authorship and the letter's context. This analysis reads the image of the spiritual armor within the ecclesial and theological perspective of the text, remaining sensitive to historical-literary nuances of authorship, without altering the essential contents of the theological program described in the Letter.

1.10.3 8.2. The human being is not the ultimate enemy

- The expression "blood and flesh" refers to human beings in their earthly frailty. Even when evil manifests itself through concrete, visible agents — persecutors, false teachers, unjust institutions, political violence or religious manipulation — one must not identify the person with the demon.
- This statement rules out instrumental use of the language of spiritual warfare as justification for: hatred, violence, demonizing opponents, persecuting those who think differently, or political aggression carried out under the banner of religion.
- Characteristic of Pauline ethics is opposing evil while simultaneously "contending for the person," not against his personhood; the community should respond to evil by protecting dignity and fraternal bonds.

1.11 9. "The deceitful schemes of the devil"

- In Ef 6,11 the expression methodeíai tou diabólou appears. The noun methodeía means: deceit, crafty method, planned intrigue, a systematic way of deceiving, an ambush.
- The devil does not limit his activity to glaring manifestations; his basic strategy often consists of subtle and crafty things: lies, accusation, division, spiritual pride, apparent piety, fear, despair, lust, false teaching, absolutizing earthly power or turning the Gospel away from the cross toward domination.
- This analysis explains why the armor is constructed primarily of truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation — these elements correspond to the specific modes of operation of the adversary.

1.12 10. Belt of truth

- Greek perizōsámenoi tēn osphýn hymōn en alētheíā: "girding your loins with truth."

1.12.1 10.1. Alētheía

- In the Letter to the Ephesians alētheía embraces multiple nuances: the truth of the Gospel (Ef 1,13), the truth that is in Jesus (Ef 4,21), truthfulness (Ef 4,25) — in other words, life free from falsehood.
- Correct doctrinal formulas alone are not sufficient if the life of the community is based on manipulation, concealing guilt, false testimony, ambiguity or religious propaganda. Falsehood gives the devil a "place" — tópos — in the community (cf. Ef 4,25–27: the command to reject falsehood and not to sustain anger, leading to: "Do not give the devil a place").

- A simple direction for spiritual warfare follows from this: its beginning does not lie in knowledge of demonic mysteries, but in radical truthfulness and cleansing the life of the community from falsehood.

1.12.2 10.2. Truth as rootedness in Christ

- The belt stabilizes the entire equipment; analogously the truth of the Gospel secures the remaining elements of spiritual life. Defense against temptation does not consist in psychological autosuggestion, but in a life cinched by the truth about who God is, who Christ is, what the cross accomplished, who believers have become in Christ and what the real status of the defeated powers is.

1.13 11. Breastplate of righteousness

- Greek endusámenoi tòn thṓraka tēs dikaiosýnēs.

1.13.1 11.1. The meaning of dikaiosýnē

- Dikaiosýnē in the Letter has a rich semantic range: righteousness given by God (justification), God's faithfulness, and also proper conduct and life in accordance with the new creation. One need not force a sharp contrast between the sense of gift and the ethical sense — in Ephesian theology a person is saved by grace and at the same time created in Christ for good works (cf. Ef 4,24: "in righteousness and holiness of truth").
- The breastplate of righteousness therefore includes both the identity received from God and honest living corresponding to that identity.

1.13.2 11.2. Sin as a gap in the defense

- This does not mean that a single sin automatically gives the demon full power; Paul rather indicates that persistent tolerance of falsehood, injustice, theft, destructive anger, impurity, greed or contempt stands in contradiction to spiritual resistance.
- One cannot effectively resist "the father of lies" while consciously building life on falsehood — enduring sins become "gaps" in the spiritual defense of the community and the individual.

1.14 12. Shoes of the Gospel of peace

- Greek hypodēsámenoi toùs pódas en hetoimasíā tou euangelíou tēs eirēnēs.

1.14.1 12.1. Hetoimasía

- The term can mean readiness, preparation, a stable foundation or the ability to undertake a task. Two main interpretations: readiness to proclaim the Gospel and the stability given by the received Gospel of peace — both senses complement one another: the Gospel provides a lasting foundation and at the same time makes the person ready for witness.

1.14.2 12.2. The gospel of peace in the warfare text

- It is paradoxical that the warrior receives the "Gospel of peace." In Ef 2,14 Christ is "our peace": through the cross he destroys the wall of hostility, unites Jews and Gentiles, creates one new man, and reconciles both sides to God in one Body. Therefore a spiritual practice that produces hatred, contempt, division, obsession with enemies, or a cult of violence contradicts its own Gospel.
- One cannot overcome the powers of division by destroying the peace of Christ; the footwear of peace requires building unity and receiving the reconciliatory character of the cross.

1.15 13. The shield of faith

- Greek: analabóntes tòn thyreòn tēs písteōs.

1.15.1 13.1. Thyreós

- This was a large shield protecting a substantial part of the body; the name remains connected with thýra — door — because of its rectangular shape. In group combat shields could form a shared protection — this reinforces the communal sense of the image (cf. protective formation).

1.15.2 13.2. Faith

- Pístis means trust in God, fidelity, clinging to Christ, and the content of confessed belief. The shield is not a magical barrier, but an attitude of trust in the faithfulness of God.

1.15.3 13.3. The flaming darts of the evil one

- Greek phrase: tà bélē tou ponēroû tà pepyrōména — "the flaming darts of the evil one." Metaphorically these may be: temptations, accusations, blasphemous thoughts, fear, despair, deceitful suggestions, persecutions, sowing divisions, or false interpretations of events.
- The text does not list all the darts; it emphasizes, however, that faith can "extinguish all" — not because a person possesses extraordinary resistance, but because he trusts in God's victory and faithfulness.

1.16 14. The helmet of salvation

- Greek: tēn perikephalaían tou sōtēríou déxasthe — "receive the helmet of salvation."

1.16.1 14.1. "Receive"

- The verb déchomai indicates taking up something given. Salvation is not a helmet forged by ascetic effort; it is a gift the believer is to receive.

1.16.2 14.2. Protection of the mind

- The helmet naturally evokes protection of the head — the awareness of salvation counters accusation, a sense of hopelessness, fear of rejection, the conviction that the adversary has the last word, and spiritual despair. In 1 Tes 5,8 Paul calls the helmet "the hope of salvation": it is not merely the recollection of past conversion, but an eschatological hope that protects against paralyzing fear and accusation.

1.17 15. The sword of the Spirit — the Word of God

- Greek: tēn máchairan tou Pneúmatos, hó estin rhēma Theoû — "the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

1.17.1 15.1. Máchaira

- Máchaira denotes a short sword or fighting knife, used for close combat. It is the only unambiguously offensive piece of equipment, though it also serves to parry blows.

1.17.2 15.2. The genitive "of the Spirit"

- "Sword of the Spirit" can be understood as a sword given by the Spirit, belonging to the Spirit, an instrument used by the Spirit, or the Word effective through the action of the Spirit. It is not a "sword of the religious person": the effectiveness of the Word comes from the Holy Spirit.

1.17.3 15.3. Rhēma Theoû

- Rhēma means a spoken word, message, a concrete utterance or proclaimed proclamation. One should avoid an artificial opposition of lógos — the whole Bible — and rhēma — a private, spontaneous word

revealed to an individual; Koine Greek does not maintain such a technical dichotomy. In Ef 6,17 rhēma Theoû most likely refers to the Word of God as the Gospel, the revealed message, truth recalled and spoken in a concrete situation, God's promise applied under the Spirit's action.

1.17.4 15.4. The Word is not a spell

- The effectiveness of the Word does not depend on magical parameters: a specified number of repetitions, perfect pronunciation, secret intonation, an esoteric formula, "automatic energy of letters," or mechanically quoting a verse. One can recite a biblical text without faith, understanding, and obedience — then the words become an object of magic, not an instrument of the Spirit.
- The Word becomes the "sword of the Spirit" when: it comes from God, proclaims Christ, is understood in truth, is received in faith, exposes falsehood, leads to obedience, and is used according to the Spirit's intention, not to manipulate God or people.

1.17.5 15.5. Example of Jesus' temptation

- Although Ef 6 does not directly refer to the temptation in the wilderness, there is a clear similarity: the tempter employs a distorted interpretation of reality, Jesus responds with the Word of Scripture and remains in filial obedience to the Father. Mere citation of Scripture, however, is not infallible — the devil also quotes Psalm 91; decisive is a faithful understanding of the Word in relation to God.

1.18 16. Prayer — not an addition, but the atmosphere of the whole armor

- Ef 6,18: "Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication, keeping alert with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."

1.18.1 16.1. Is prayer the seventh element of the armor?

- Formally prayer is not compared to another piece of equipment; syntactically the participle proseuchómenoi — "praying" — connects with the preceding commands. Prayer can therefore be understood as: the way of receiving the armor, the spiritual atmosphere of the whole struggle, an expression of dependence on God, and an activity accompanying all elements of the equipment.
- In practice it is not enough to symbolically "put on" truth, righteousness, or faith; all elements remain effective only when immersed in a prayerful relationship with God, which gives them proper meaning and direction of action.

1.18.2 16.2. The fourfold universality of prayer

- (Heading preserved according to the source — the further development discusses the fourfold dimension of the universality of prayer in the text, following the exegetical line present in the Letter.)

1.18.3 Paul's prayer practice: outline and features

The text gathers descriptors of totality: in every prayer; at all times; with all perseverance; for all the saints. From this synthetic summary the basic features of Paul's prayer emerge: it is diverse, continual, persevering, communal and — which requires special discussion — conducted "in the Spirit" (en Pneúmati).

1.18.4 Prayer "in the Spirit" (*en Pneúmati*)

The term en Pneúmati does not refer solely to emotional intensity. Prayer "in the Spirit" for Paul denotes a series of related but distinguishable marks: prayer stirred by the Spirit, conforming to God's will, enacted in the new access to the Father, rooted in sonship, and transcending human inability to pray. In Rz 8,26

Paul states that the Spirit comes to the aid of our weakness because we do not know how to pray. Hence the effectiveness of prayer does not depend on the perfection of the person praying; the Spirit himself upholds the Church's prayer and makes it participation in God's action.

1.18.5 Methodological note on authorship of the Letter to the Ephesians

In further reading it is worth recalling that the authorship of the Letter to the Ephesians is the subject of research and discussion in biblical studies. In the analysis below we will refer to the text within the framework of the traditional attribution to the Apostle Paul, while remaining sensitive to possible questions of authorship that do not change the fundamental theological intuitions contained in the text.

1.19 17. Prayer is not incantation

1.19.1 The logic of incantation and its rejection

In magical practices the formula is often treated as effective because of precise wording, a secret name, a specific number of repetitions, an appropriate time, a ritual object, knowledge of the rules of the cosmos, or the coercion of a spirit or deity; the aim is to achieve a predictable effect by mastering an invisible mechanism. Paul's concept of Christian prayer stands opposed to this and presupposes: a personal relationship (with Christ and the Father), grace, sonship, trust, God's freedom, the intercession of the Spirit, submission to God's will, and the communion of the Body of Christ. Prayer is not meant to force God into action; it is participation in his action.

1.19.2 "In the name of Jesus" and magic

The distinction is also made clear in the narrative of Acts, where the attempt to treat the name of Jesus as a borrowed word of power ends in failure. The sons of Sceva try to use the name of Jesus technically: "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul proclaims" (Dz 19,13). This example illustrates the contrast between Paul as an instrument of God's action and exorcists treating the name of Jesus like a sonic talisman. In the narrative's light "the name of Jesus" rather signifies his person, authority, lordship, belonging to him and action in accordance with his will — not a magical formula.

1.19.3 Paul and ancient magical practices

The environment of Asia Minor in which Paul operated was familiar with amulets, curse tablets, protective spells, formulas invoking gods and demons, lists of secret names, astrological hours of activity, ritual objects and techniques of binding or loosing — in extreme expressions also with practices of exorcism. Ephesus in particular was associated with the so-called Ephésia grámmata — formulas ascribed protective or compelling power. In this context the passage in Ef 6 stands out for its restraint: it does not give names of the principalities, the number of their hosts, the spheres they govern, the hours of activity, appropriate fragrances or protective objects, nor does it propose a secret cipher or a formula guaranteeing mechanical victory. Instead Paul proposes theological and spiritual means: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God and prayer. This is not poor magic — it is a decisive rejection of the magical model of reality.

1.19.4 Ostrzeżenie przed demonizowaniem ludzi

It is also important to make an honest distinction: not every difficulty, not every disorder or conflict should be described as demonic activity. Demonizing people (ascribing evil to them by immediately accusing them of possession or demonic manipulation) is a pastoral and theological error. One must recognize specific

presences of spirits, but also ordinary weaknesses, mistakes and social conditions that require unraveling in the context of the community, pastoral discernment and often ordinary help.

1.20 18. Czy Paweł w ogóle praktykował egzorcyzm?

1.20.1 Brak podręcznika egzorcyzmów w listach

In the authentic letters of Paul we do not find a description of an exorcism performed by him nor a systematic handbook of liberation. The Acts of the Apostles, however, shows concrete cases of intervention.

1.20.2 Przykład z Filippi — Dz 16

In Philippi Paul addresses a "spirit of Python": "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" (Dz 16,18) — and the spirit leaves immediately. From this scene one can draw the following observations:

- Paul recognizes the presence of a spirit;
- he does not engage it in dialogue nor ask for a name;
- he does not employ magical objects or ritual procedures;
- he does not appeal to his own human power;
- he issues a short, decisive command;
- he acts in the name and authority of Jesus Christ.

1.20.3 Granice znaczenia Dz 16

However Dz 16 should not be abused as a pattern for all forms of spiritual warfare. It does not show:

- the daily method of spiritual struggle for every Christian,
- commanding all the "principalities" over a city,
- a prayer program against territorial spirits,
- ritual examination of the demonic hierarchy,
- the mechanical effectiveness of the formula spoken in the name of Jesus itself.

It is a concrete intervention toward a person truly afflicted by a spirit, not a universal model for solving all spiritual difficulties.

1.20.4 Egzorcyzm a stała obrona duchowa — rozróżnienia praktyczne

In Pauline interpretation it is useful to keep the distinction between different situations and appropriate responses. This can be expressed in clear pairs:

- Konkretna obecność ducha w człowieku ⟶ rozkaz w imię Jezusa — Dz 16,18.
- Codzienna pokusa i zwodzenie ⟶ wiara, prawda, Słowo, czujność.
- Konflikt z mocami kosmicznymi ⟶ trwanie w Panu i przywdzianie zbroi Boga.
- Fałszywa nauka ⟶ głoszenie prawdy Ewangelii.
- Podział wspólnoty ⟶ przebaczenie, miłość, pokój.
- Prześladowanie ⟶ wytrwałość i modlitwa.
- Własna słabość ⟶ łaska Chrystusa (zob. 2 Kor 12,7–10).

From this perspective not every spiritual struggle is an exorcism; not every temptation requires "contacting" a demon; not every crisis is evidence of the activity of a specific spirit.

1.21 19. Słowo jako proklamacja zwycięstwa

In Paul's writings "the Word of God" most often appears as the proclaimed Gospel — the Word that works in people.

1.21.1 Słowo przyjęte wiarą

In 1 Tes 2,13 Paul says that the received Word of God "works" — energeîtai — in believers. Its efficacy does not lie in the sound of syllables, but in the operation of God's power in the person who receives the Gospel in faith.

1.21.2 Wiara rodzi się ze słuchania

Rz 10,17: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." The Word does not serve only to defend one who already believes; it brings a person out from under the rule of unbelief, because it reveals Christ and builds a living response of trust.

1.21.3 Słowo Chrystusa ma mieszkać we wspólnocie

Kol 3,16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Realizing this involves not merely individually memorizing quotations to use in the fight against temptation, but the presence of the Word in the life of the whole Body: through teaching, admonition, psalms, hymns, spiritual songs and thanksgiving. The Word dwells communally, in liturgical memory and formation.

1.22 20. Modlitwa jako uczestnictwo w misji

Paul's prayer concludes the image of the armor with a remarkable missionary gaze: "And for me, that utterance may be given me when I open my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains" (Ef 6,19–20). This is a surprising closing of the soldier-image: the commander addressing the army is a prisoner, dependent on the prayers of others and asking not for his own release but for courage to proclaim.

1.22.1 Apostoł potrzebuje modlitwy Kościoła

This request shows the absence of a cult of the spiritual leader as autonomous and self-sufficient. Paul does not demand extraordinary, spectacular means, but the simple gift of the community: prayer for the right word, open mouths, courage and faithfulness in the mission. The aim of the struggle against the powers is not fascination with the warlike metaphor, but the continuation of proclaiming the Gospel: the powers may bind the messenger's hands, but they cannot bind the Word.

1.23 21. Wspólnotowy charakter walki

1.23.1 Imperatywy w liczbie mnogiej

All the main commands in Ef 6,10–20 appear in the plural: be strengthened; put on; take up; stand; pray; be watchful. The text does not construct the image of a lone warrior waging a private spiritual war. The subject is the Church — the Body of Christ.

1.23.2 Dlaczego wspólnota jest konieczna?

A solitary person can misrecognize a situation, confuse fear with spiritual discernment, absolutize personal visions, fall into obsessive focus on evil, lose perspective, neglect ordinary duties or misapply Scripture. The community provides correction, discernment, prayer, sacramental rootedness, pastoral responsibility and support in perseverance.

1.23.3 Jedność jako forma oporu

In Ef 4 the author calls for keeping "the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." The devil acts through lies, anger, theft, destructive speech and lack of forgiveness. Therefore a reconciled community is not only a place of struggle against the powers; its unity itself constitutes a practical form of resistance against strategies of disruption and division.

1.24 22. Trwanie w Chrystusie nie jest biernością

Union with the Victor does not mean passivity. Two false interpretations should be rejected.

1.24.1 Bierność kwietystyczna

The extreme quietist position teaches that one should do nothing, that one should not discern, that one should not resist temptation — it is enough to "give everything to Jesus." Yet Ef 6 contains numerous imperatives: put on, take up, resist, stand, pray, watch, persevere. Grace does not eliminate action; it enables proper action.

1.24.2 Aktywizm samowystarczalny

The opposite extreme consists in the conviction that victory depends solely on the intensity of human effort, on one's psychological endurance or spiritual techniques. The Pauline perspective is instead a synthesis: human action is not a substitute for grace, but is filled by it — it requires dependence on God's power, the intercession of the Spirit and life within the community.

1.25 Zakończenie

Throughout this panorama three interrelated elements remain important: the communal character of spiritual struggle, the centrality of the Word as transforming power, and prayer understood as participation in God's mission, led and sustained by the Spirit (en Pneúmati). These means — not magical formulas, but sacramental-theological practices of life in the Body of Christ — form the framework of Paul's response to the presence of evil and spiritual threats.

1.26 24. Źródło obrony: zjednoczenie z Chrystusem jako nadrzędna perspektywa

At the outset let us recall the formula that begins the military section in the Letter to the Ephesians: "Be strengthened in the Lord" (Ef 6,10 in the Polish translation: "Be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might"). A critical note about the authorship of the Letter to the Ephesians: this text is traditionally ascribed to Paul, although in scholarship various opinions appear concerning direct authorship; regardless of this historical dispute, the theological perspective of the text — union with Christ as the point of reference for the spiritual struggle — remains the core of its message.

The claim that union with Christ is "the only effective defense" must be understood in a precise sense — not as a denial of the significance of intermediary means, but as an indication of the source of their power. This union refers to the source of victory: the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ. Without this source, actions become spiritual activism rather than participation in God's power.

This does not mean that:

- prayer is unnecessary;
- the Word is unnecessary;
- the sacraments are unnecessary;

- ethical life is unnecessary;
- communal discernment is unnecessary;
- psychological or medical help is unnecessary;
- concrete protective measures denote a lack of faith.

All these means can be appropriate and necessary, yet they do not possess autonomous power apart from Christ. Their meaning and efficacy derive from participation in His victory.

One may distinguish the following categories showing how Paul distributes emphases:

- Level: content
- Source of victory: the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Christ
- Sphere of security: being "in Christ"
- Agent of strengthening: God through the Spirit
- Equipment: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the Word
- Ongoing practice: prayer and watchfulness
- Historical subject: the community of the Church
- Goal: perseverance and the proclamation of the Gospel

Union with Christ does not replace the means listed; it gives them meaning and effectiveness.

1.27 25. Ritual and magical ritualism: limits and exegesis

The thesis "Paul does not recommend complicated rituals" must be read with attention to the distinction between rite and magical logic.

1.27.1 25.1. Paul does not reject all ritual

Paul knows and practices elements of Christian liturgy and rites:

- baptism;
- the Lord's Supper;
- communal prayer;
- the laying on of hands in the apostolic tradition;
- liturgical assembly;
- psalms, hymns and spiritual songs;
- blessings;
- gestures of reconciliation and communion.

Pauline Christianity is not a non-ritualistic spiritualism: the rite exists in the context of relationship to God and to the Church.

1.27.2 25.2. Magical logic is rejected

Paul opposes the logic that turns a rite into a magical technique, understood as:

- procedural automaticity (a rite operating independently of faith and conversion),
- an attempt to control God by correct performance,
- seeking prestige and effect in the performer rather than in God,
- treating a sacrament or formula as a bearer of power independent of relationship with God.

Sacrament and prayer orient the person toward God's free action; magic, however, attempts to enclose spiritual reality within a controlled procedural device.

1.28 26. What Ef 6 does not command: limits to explicating the text

On the basis of the text alone one must not make of Ef 6 a source for practices of an esoteric character. On this basis one cannot regard as Pauline norms:

- searching for the names of "territorial spirits";
- assigning a concrete demon to every city;
- conducting dialogues with the principalities;
- commanding all powers over a country;
- creating detailed spiritual maps;
- ritually "closing portals";
- constant uttering of commands toward unspecified demons;
- treating every conflict as a manifestation of possession;
- mechanical use of biblical quotations;
- the conviction that a greater number of formulas guarantees greater power.

Ef 6 does not command addressing the archai and exousiai directly; it commands addressing God. This is an important distinction: the object of prayer is God, the object of attention is Christ, and the goal of action is faithfulness to the Gospel — not the acquisition of esoteric knowledge about the enemy.

To this must be added a clear pastoral warning: do not demonize people. Not every evil, conflict, or suffering is a manifestation of possession or demonic activity. Paul does not encourage stigmatizing neighbors and immediately labeling them demonic; on the contrary, his logic leads to discernment, discipline, and communal care.

1.29 27. Prayer and the Word in Paul's thought — theological and practical functions

1.29.1 27.1. Constant prayer

"Pray without ceasing" (1 Tes 5,17). This does not mean continuous verbalization of prayer, but a lasting orientation of life toward God — a permanent disposition of the heart.

1.29.2 27.2. Persevering prayer

"Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" (Rz 12,12). Prayer does not automatically remove tribulation, but it allows one to endure it without losing hope.

1.29.3 27.3. Prayer against anxiety

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Flp 4,6). The effect of prayer is the peace of God, which will "guard" hearts and minds — Greek verbs such as phrouréō (phrouréō: to guard, like a garrison) emphasize the military metaphor of protecting the inner life of the person. Prayer is therefore also understood as a form of spiritual watch.

1.29.4 27.4. The word of the cross

In 1 Kor 1,18 the "word of the cross" appears as a contrast: for those perishing it is "foolishness," for those being saved — "the power of God." The most powerful Word is not a formula against demons, but the proclamation of the crucified Messiah.

1.29.5 27.5. Non-physical weapons

In 2 Kor 10,4–5 Paul's "weapons" have God's power to demolish strongholds: human arguments, pride contrary to the knowledge of God, thoughts disobedient to Christ. Warfare by means of the Word is a struggle for true knowledge, freedom of thought, conversion and obedience — not for the psychological destruction of an opponent.

1.30 28. A practical model of Pauline spiritual warfare

On the basis of Ef 6 and the entire Pauline corpus one can formulate the following structure of practice:

1.30.1 28.1. First recognize the accomplished victory

Christ has already:

- died;
- risen;
- been exalted;
- been given dominion over the powers;
- made believers members of his Body. The struggle therefore begins from the Gospel, not from panic.

1.30.2 28.2. Remain in the new identity

Do not allow the enemy to define you by past sin, fear, accusation, weakness, a momentary temptation or an experience of suffering. The believer's identity is located "in Christ."

1.30.3 28.3. Remove consent to falsehood and injustice

Truth and righteousness are not mere moral adornments: they are a fundamental form of resistance against the enemy's power.

1.30.4 28.4. Guard unity and peace

Divisions, lack of forgiveness and destructive anger give the enemy space to act; the unity of the Church and peace are thus a practical form of defense.

1.30.5 28.5. Respond in faith to accusation and fear

Faith does not deny real threats; however, it refuses to confer upon them final status. Faith allows one to see the larger perspective of God's rule.

1.30.6 28.6. Use the Word according to its meaning

The Bible is not a set of magical passwords. The Word is meant to expose falsehood, to judge even our own attitudes, to lead to repentance, to recall Christ's victory and to shape practical action.

1.30.7 28.7. Pray in the Spirit

Prayer should be directed to God, persevering, sober-minded, communal, rooted in the Gospel and open to God's will.

1.30.8 28.8. Persevere, instead of seeking spectacle

Often the greatest victory is to remain faithful: not to lose faith, to refuse revenge, to preserve truth, to forgive, to continue proclaiming the Gospel and to calmly fulfill one's vocation.

1.31 29. Correction and evaluation of popular theses

- Thesis: "Paul does not recommend complicated rituals"

- Evaluation: accurate with respect to the struggle with the powers; in Paul's letters there are no esoteric instructions, catalogs of demons, or magical procedures. This does not, however, mean rejection of baptism, the Eucharist, communal prayer or other liturgical forms.

- Thesis: "His technique is abiding in Christ"
  - Evaluation: metaphorically accurate, yet the word "technique" can be misleading. Abiding in Christ is relationship, participation and identity, not a method guaranteeing automatic results.
- Thesis: "Be strong in the Lord — in the strength of his power"
  - Evaluation: this is a central truth of Ef 6,10. The passive form in the Greek text («dajcie się umacniać…») emphasizes that the believer receives power which he does not produce himself.
- Thesis: "Union with the Victor is the only effective defense"
  - Evaluation: true on the level of source and theological foundation; one must nevertheless stress that this union takes concrete forms — truth, righteousness, peace, faith, the hope of salvation, the Word, prayer and communal perseverance — and one must not oppose Christ to these means, for precisely they are the ways of participating in Christ.

1.32 Synteza: modlitwa, Słowo i wspólnota

Zakończenie: modlitwa, Słowo i wspólnota jako sposób trwania „in the Lord"

All the elements of the pericope — the call to receive God's power (ἐνδυναμοῦσθε), belonging "in the Lord" (en Kyríō / en Christō), the image of the panoplías, and the concrete means of resistance (truth, righteousness, the peace of the Gospel, faith, the awareness of salvation, the Word, prayer) — form a coherent spiritual-theological program. It is not a magical technique but a way of participating in the victory accomplished by Christ, which must be preserved through faithfulness, prayer, obedience to the Word, and the solidarity of the community. The struggle continues, but its character is defined by the parados „już, ale jeszcze nie" ("already, but not yet"): Christ has already conquered; the Church is to stand, endure, and, in the name of that victory, repel the activity of the defeated powers, without neglecting ethical and pastoral responsibility toward people.

1.33 Synteza teologiczna — przeciwieństwo logiki magicznej

Pauline practice of spiritual warfare is grounded in a radical reversal of the logic of magic. Where magic asks "by what method will I gain control over an invisible power?", Paul asks: "how am I to remain faithful to Christ, who has already defeated all powers?" Magic focuses on special knowledge, mysterious names, technical instruction, and an effect dependent on the practitioner. Paul, by contrast, focuses on the Lord — His resurrection power, the armor that belongs to God, the truth of the Gospel, righteous living, peace, faith, salvation, the work of the Spirit, and prayer for the whole Body.

Ef 6 realistically names the opponents: the devil, his schemes, archai, exousiai, the rulers of darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness, the fiery darts of the evil one. Yet after naming them the text does not command that they be the center of spirituality. A healthy Pauline demonology recognizes the enemy but does not allow him to occupy the center of spiritual life — the center remains in Christ.

The deepest safeguard, then, is not knowledge of the enemy but belonging to Christ. Spiritual warfare consists primarily in refusing to abandon that space: do not abandon truth for falsehood; do not abandon righteousness for advantage; do not abandon peace for hatred; do not abandon faith for fear; do not

abandon the hope of salvation for despair; do not abandon the Word for ideology; do not abandon prayer for self-sufficiency; do not abandon the community for solitary spiritual heroism.

The fullest articulation of Paul's call therefore sounds not merely as "Be strong," but as an invitation: allow the Risen One to impart to you the power by which He Himself was exalted above all Dominions and Powers. Put on His truth, righteousness, peace, and salvation. Abide in faith, use the Word in the Spirit, and pray for the whole Body. Do not attempt to win the victory by your own method — stand firm in the victory that already belongs to Christ.