

Ephesians – The Armour of God

Review:

This brings us to our final message in this series on Ephesians. Paul has established securely the relationship with God and each other in the church at Ephesus. They have no doubt of being “in Christ” and “in church” as believers. Paul has led them to a place of unity with God and each other thereby leading them forward into maturity. Paul gives very clear directions as to how the church in Ephesus is to walk out their faith.

- They are not to walk as the Gentiles do... **Eph 4:17**
- They are to walk in love... **Eph 5:1**
- They are to walk in light... **Eph 5:8**
- They are to walk in wisdom... **Eph 5:15**

Paul carries on with the church in Ephesus by giving some practical direction as to how unity and maturity can be seen in the relationships between wives and husbands, children and parents and slaves and masters. In these foundational relationships for a healthy church there is to be submission, love and obedience. Holiness is what Paul calls the church in Ephesus to live and it will not be easy. It will be a constant battle on several fronts for which the church must be appropriately equipped. Our own selfishness is confronted by the Spirit of God. The world clamours for our attention. And Satan is actively opposing God and God’s people. All the devil’s powers are focused on destroying the unity of the church. As well, the enemy will stop at nothing to cripple the maturity of the Body of Christ. Therefore, Paul concludes his letter to the Ephesian believers with this exhortation:

Eph 6:10-20

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 saints.

¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, 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.

Several introductory thoughts come to my mind as we look at this passage of Scripture.

1. Firstly, although the Christian life is full of spiritual blessings in Christ, our Christian life is also a spiritual struggle. There are problems we all face in all sorts of aspects of life. At times we suffer and find ourselves persecuted for righteousness. The blessings and the brawls are all a part of our walk with Jesus.
2. Secondly, we must be cautious of two extremes in the Body of Christ today. One – Satan causes everything bad. Two – Satan is not personally involved in everything bad. One group sees a demon under every bush while the other crowd does not believe in demons. Both views are very troubling to the Christian walk.
3. The Bible is clear that Satan is a created being but also a controlled being. In other words, Jesus is Lord and far above all rule, authority, power and dominion. Satan is neither omnipresent nor omniscient and therefore has a limited ability in this world.
4. Lastly by way of introduction, God provides for us spiritual armour and weapons but believers must put them into action by faith and obedience. Spiritual maturity is by no means automatic; it is not based on seniority in the faith or by intelligence. Paul tells us that maturity becomes evident when our unity with God and each other is expressed in submission, love and obedience towards each other.

Be strong in the Lord:

Paul states to us **“be strong in the Lord.”** This is the same kind of language Paul used when he said, **“be filled with the Spirit.”** In both passages we are told to continually or ever be filled with the Spirit and to be strong in the Lord. This exhortation by Paul to the church in Ephesus was significant. Every moment of every day there were encouraged to be filled and be strong in the Lord. Why is this so important? Two reasons come to my mind. With regards to the filling of the Holy Spirit we need to be constantly filled because we live in a world that is a spiritual desert. We tend to leak the blessings of God out of our lives; after all we are only earthen vessels with a few cracks here and there. Secondly, the spiritual battle we are in is constant and the moment we step away from our strength in the Lord we give the enemy the upper hand.

Paul uses three Greek terms for power in verse 10 alone. We are to be strong or empowered or enable in the Lord – this is the first word. Then Paul tells the believers we are strong **IN** the mighty deeds and strength of God. Whenever we think of strength or power in the Scriptures, we must remember that God is the source of all. God is often described as a warrior in the Old Testament. Joshua encountered the “Captain of the Host”. **Isaiah 42:13** tells us that the **“Lord will march forth like a mighty hero; he will come out like a warrior.”** The power of God is meant to be an ever present spiritual blessing for his people. The one catch is this – we must engage and embrace the power of God just as we must engage and embrace the filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives...

The Armour of God:

It is now time to look at Paul's next command to the church in Ephesus. He tells them to **"Put on the full armour of God."** Paul tells them *it is God's armour*, helping them to understand that their victory is in Christ and that they must cooperate with him. How do the Ephesian believers cooperate? By answering Paul's urgent call to put on God's armour. This is a decisive act of their will. God provided the spiritual equipment they needed, but the believers must take advantage of it and apply it to their daily lives.

How does this relate to us today? We may be "born-again", saved and justified believers, but this does not remove us from the spiritual struggles and temptations we face today. The presence of the "new man" does not automatically mean the removal of the "old man." If Satan cannot stop people from getting saved, he will attempt to keep Christians in disunity and immaturity. Therefore we must daily put on God to help us against the temptations of the devil.

We must remember that the church in Ephesus was surrounded by dark spirituality. They were to be constantly putting on God's armour so that they would be able to resist the devil and his demons. The language Paul uses for "standing firm" again reminds us that the church in Ephesus was encountering a daily spiritual struggle against the devil's schemes. Just as in war, each side has a strategy or method to overthrow the other. The church in Ephesus was to stand against the enemy, to hold their position spiritually and relationally and not giving up ground to the enemy.

The Struggle:

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.

Paul now reminds the church that our wrestle or struggle is not against one another, but against the devil and his demons. The implication is simple. The struggle is life or death because we know that the devil comes only to **"steal and kill and destroy."** The fight we are engaged in was either a military or athletic metaphor and is only found in **Eph 6:12**. It literally refers to hand-to-hand combat. Paul is telling the church in Ephesus the Christian life is tough!

Paul describes *reality* of the battle and then takes us to the *realm* of the battle. In Ephesus there was many Gnostic false teachers who had confusing beliefs about angels and demons, thinking that salvation was only possible by secret spiritual passwords given by angels. As well, there were Jewish rabbis who thought angels were jealous of God's love and attention to mankind and therefore were hostile to angels in general.

To some degree Paul is giving answers to the confusion surrounding the spiritual realm. There are principalities or authorities that are unseen and spiritual that are dedicated to oppose believers.

There are powers and spiritual forces of evil *in heavenly places* which are also fanatical about destroying God's people. The term "spiritual forces of evil" was used in Ephesus by astrologers who believed that angels were associated with stars and planets. Paul clearly tells the church that these spiritual powers and forces are demonic in nature. This leads us to the next point of Paul's message to the church in Ephesus. The battle is real. The realm is in heavenly places. Therefore you need real protective covering.

The Armour of God:

Many different interpretations of the armour have been given. There is a strong possibility that Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesian church while he was imprisoned at Rome surrounded by Roman guards. Therefore when we consider the armour of God it is likely to be seen in light of the Roman outfit for war. I believe that Paul, in summing up his message to the church in Ephesus is using this picture as a way of reminding and reinforcing spiritual truths. **"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."** As we consider this, what are the divine resources we have been given?

- **The belt of truth.**

The enemy is out to distort truth with his lies. He is the master of 90% truth – 10% lie.

We are to believe the truth of God and his redemptive purposes in our lives (**Eph 1-3**).

We are to put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, Paul has warned, for we are all members of one body (**Eph 4:25**). Openness and honesty are to be our way of life. The enemy will through at us misunderstanding and hidden motives that divide.

- **The breastplate of righteousness.**

We are righteous in God because of Jesus Christ. One of the enemy's schemes is to get us to question this righteous and try to get us to help God. Or he tries to condemn us because of our short-comings. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

As well, Paul tells us **"There must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed"** (**Eph 5:3**) among God's holy people. Righteous living is essential, guarding the very heart of our lives in community. The church in Ephesus and the church of today need to live out spiritual righteousness in Christ by holy living.

- **The Gospel of peace.**

One of the chief strategies of the enemy is to conquer and divide. He seeks to separate relationships within the church thereby exposing areas of personal weakness in our lives. These weaknesses become the point of his attack.

Therefore, more than once in this letter Paul has stressed how the Gospel brings peace, reconciling us to God and making us one. In Ephesians, Paul exhorts the church to **“make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”** When unity is maintained, Christ’s church is enabled to move in full submission and responsiveness to its Head. When unity is maintained there is no gap in our armour, personally or corporately.

- **The shield of faith.**

Faith is essential to walk in relationship with God and to please him fully. Therefore the enemy is consistent in causing doubts and unbelief to assault our lives. Paul tells us the enemy throws unseen flaming arrows to pierce our hearts with confusion about God’s faithfulness towards his people.

When we maintain a confident hope in the reality and power of God our trust extinguishes the flaming missiles of doubt. In and of ourselves we are totally dependent upon God. Our trust is in God, who “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work in us” (**Eph 3:20**).

- **The helmet of salvation.**

Have you ever doubted your salvation? Have you ever doubted God’s ability to save you in this or that circumstance? The enemy hates God’s saving grace. This becomes another area of the Satan’s attack. The mind is a battlefield and the enemy knows it. Satan attempts to distort our relationship with God by clouding our minds with uncertainty. Does God really love me?

Salvation has brought us a new life and identity confirming the love of God in our lives. By keeping our identity as Christ’s sons and daughters constantly before us, our perception of life is transformed. The width and length and height and depth of God’s love for us is known and experienced by the power of salvation.

- **The sword of the Spirit.**

Another of Satan’s schemes is to get us out of the Word of God. When he can discourage our reading and studying of Scripture we lose our strength and guidance in the Lord. 5

Why does Paul explain here that the sword is “the Word of God” (**Eph 6:17**)? It is because, in all of Ephesians, Paul has not discussed Scripture as he has the other elements of our armour. This vital tool is needed for us to wage our spiritual warfare. It is interesting to note that this is the only offensive weapon listed. The Word of God is a powerful weapon in the hand of believers. It was Jesus himself who used this tool while being tempted by Satan.

In Conclusion:

Paul ends this passage of Scripture with an exhortation to pray. The church in Ephesus was in a battle and in it all, on all occasions, Paul exhorts them to pray. Prayer is another powerful spiritual weapon in the spiritual battle which is the Christian's daily life in this fallen age. He tells the church in Ephesus to pray **"in the spirit"** which can be understood in several different ways.

- It may refer to the Spirit praying for believers... (**Rom. 8:26–27**)
- Christians praying in spiritual power (**Jude 20**).
- Or parallel to **John 4:23** "in spirit and truth".
- The key point Paul is making is simple; effective, fervent prayer is impossible without the Spirit's involvement!
- **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 saints.**

Paul requested prayer for himself but for personal issues but for proclamation of the gospel. He wanted the ability to speak well and without fear as he preached the mystery of the Gospel.

- **¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, 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.**

In Application:

As we conclude our series in Ephesians, we can take heart from Paul's last words. We are in a spiritual battle and if we give in or up for a moment the enemy will take advantage of our situation. We are given the exhortation to stand and having done all to stand. What are we to stand upon - Truth and Righteousness and Peace and Faith and Salvation and the Word of God.

We are reminded as well to pray as we walk in God and overcome the enemy.

Let's pray...