

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

FIGHTING AGAINST DARKNESS!

Read Ephesians 6:10-17

Introduction

Before you were a Christian, you just gave into the temptations and then suffered the consequences of your sins. Now as you begin to stand against those temptations, you are beginning to realize the real source of them – Satan himself. This struggle against temptation and evil is not really against people. It is against the unseen evil spiritual world of the demonic. But you can stand your ground when you equip yourself with the tools God has given you. In this passage, Paul spells out for the Ephesians the nature of the battle and describes how to find the strength to resist the temptations we will face. Finally, he leaves the Ephesians a strong exhortation to pray – for prayer is one of their chief weapons and comforts in the battle.

The call to stand against the devil.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” (vv10-11)

Paul starts this section with the word: “Finally” - This comes at the end of the letter – a letter in which Paul has carefully established our place in Jesus, and then the basics of the Christian walk. This is his last section dealing with that walk. For Paul to write “finally” here means that he speaks in light of all he has previously said.

- In light of all that God has done for you.
- In light of the glorious standing, you have as a child of God.
- In light of His great plan of the ages that God has made you part of.
- In light of the plan for Christian maturity and growth He gives to you.
- In light of the conduct God calls every believer to live.
- In light of the filling of the Spirit and our walk in the Spirit.
- In light of all this, there is a battle to fight in the Christian life.

The detailed teaching of spiritual warfare in this passage presents two essential components. First, you must be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Then, you must put on the whole armour of God. The two are essential, and much teaching on Christian combat neglects the first. If you take a weak man who can barely stand and put the best armour on him, he will still be an ineffective soldier. He will be easily beaten. So, equipping for Christian combat must begin with the principle, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Before a soldier is given a gun or shown how to fire a missile, he goes through basic training. One great purpose for basic training is to build up the recruit’s physical strength. It is as if the army says, “Soldier, we are going to give you the best weapons and armour possible. But first we have to make sure that you are strong and that you can use what we give you.”

When Paul refers to “the power of His might”, this shows how to get this strength. This does not happen just by saying the words. It is not an incantation or a spell. You can’t just walk around saying, “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” over and over and it will happen. Those kinds of mental games can accomplish something, but it certainly wasn’t what Paul meant here.

1. Might is inherent power or force. A muscular man's big muscles display his might, even if he doesn't use them. It is the reserve of strength.
2. Power is the exercise of might. When the muscular man uses his might to bend an iron bar, he uses his power. It means that the reserve of strength is actually in operation.

God has vast reservoirs of might that can be realized as power in our Christian life. But His might does not work in me as I sit passively. His might works in me as I rely on it and step out to do the work. I can rely on it and do no work. I can do work without relying on it. But both of these falls short. I must rely on His might and then do the work.

The command for the whole armour of God.

The armour of God will be explained more fully in the next passage; but here the emphasis is on the **whole** armour of God. God gives the believer a full set of equipment, and He sends us out into battle with everything we need at our disposal.

This ancient Greek word for armour is used in only one other place in the New Testament. In Luke 11:21-22, Jesus speaks of the strong man who is fully armed but is stripped of all his armour when a stronger one comes and defeats him. We know that Jesus disarmed all principalities and powers (Colossians 2:15). This armour is of God both in the sense that it is from Him, and in the sense that it is His actual armour. In the Old Testament, it is the Lord who wears the armour (Isaiah 59:17). He now shares that armour with us. Equipped with God's armour, no wonder we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37).

We express the strength we have in God by standing against the wiles of the devil. Satan's schemes against us come to nothing when we stand against them in the power of God.

The fact of spiritual warfare.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (v12)

Paul did not call the believer to enter into spiritual warfare. He simply announced it as a fact: we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but (we do wrestle) against principalities and so forth. You are in a spiritual battle. If you are ignorant or ignore that fact, you probably aren't winning the battle.

The fact that our real battle is not against flesh and blood is forgotten by many Christians, who put all their efforts in that direction (fighting flesh and blood). Paul's idea here is much the same as in 2 Corinthians 10:3-4. Reading from the Amplified version, it reads:

“For though we walk in the flesh [as mortal men], we are not carrying on our [spiritual] warfare according to the flesh and using the weapons of man. The weapons of our warfare are not physical [weapons of flesh and blood]. Our weapons are divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.” (AMP)

Paul used a variety of terms to refer to our spiritual enemies. We should regard them as being on many different levels and of many different ranks, yet they all have one goal: to knock the Christian down from their place of standing.

Ephesians 6:11 tells us that all of our warfare is combating the wiles of the devil. At the end of the day, it is completely irrelevant if the particular opponent we face is a principality, a power, or a ruler of the darkness of this age. Collectively, they are all members of spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. They are all part of a spiritual army that is organized and established into ranks and is under the headship of Satan who comes against us.

Stand Your Ground

“Therefore, take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (v13)

Paul introduced the idea of the whole armour of God back in Ephesians 6:11. In the following passage he details the specific items related to the armour of God. In this verse, he simply states what the main purpose of spiritual warfare and the armour of God is. Without the strength of God and the protection of spiritual armour, it is impossible to stand against the attacks of spiritual enemies.

God has given His people a call, a mission, a course to fulfil. Satan will do his best to stop it. When he attacks and intimidates, we are to stand. It is plain that this is Paul’s emphasis in Ephesians 6:11 and 6:13. We do the Lord’s work and stand against every hint of spiritual opposition.

How do we stand?

All in all, there is a lot indicated by that one word, stand.

- It means that we are going to be attacked and we must stand against it.
- It means that we must not be frightened because we are standing.
- It means that we must not droop or slouch; nor be uncertain or half-hearted in the fight (no self-pity is allowed).
- It means that we are at our position and alert as this is not purposeless standing.
- It means that we do not give even a thought to retreat as that can be fatal.

The spiritual armour to have.

“Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (vv14-15)

We can only stand when we are equipped with the armour God has given us in Jesus Christ. Each aspect of this symbolic armour answers to a specific dynamic within the Christian life that enables us to stand against spiritual attack.

Truth is symbolically represented as a belt which both protects our abdomen and gathers up our garments so that we can fight effectively. Strictly, the belt is not part of the armour, but before the armour can be put on, the garments underneath must be gathered together.

Righteousness is represented as a breastplate which provides essential protection for the most vital organs. We can no sooner battle against spiritual enemies in our own righteousness than a soldier can effectively fight without his breastplate. This is not our own earned righteousness, not a feeling of righteousness, but a righteousness received by faith in Jesus. It gives us a general sense of confidence, an awareness of our standing and position.

The **preparation of the gospel** is represented as the protective shoes (or sandals) worn by Roman soldiers. No one can fight effectively or effectively go about his business without this equipment. Preparation is a word meaning “a prepared foundation.” The gospel provides the footing for everything we do. However powerful the rest of your body is, if you are wounded in your feet, you are easy prey for the enemy.

The idea of preparation is really readiness. We must be mobile, flexible, and ready with the truth. This is a place to have in the Christian life, to live in constant readiness and flexibility.

The spiritual armour to take.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (vv16-17)

The phrase “above all”, really has the idea of “in addition to the previous,” and it applies to each of the three pieces of armour that follow. It isn’t the idea that these parts of the armour are more important than the others.

Ephesians 6:13-14 tells us of armour to have. Some of the armour we must wear all the time and have as a standing foundation. Therefore, having comes first. We must be rooted in the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the “combat boots” of the gospel. Yet now Paul will deal with aspects of the armour we are to take at the necessary moments of spiritual warfare and opportunity.

Faith is represented as a shield, protecting us from the fiery darts of the wicked one, those persistent efforts of demonic foes to weaken us through fear and unbelief. The shield Paul describes is not the small round one, but the large, oblong shield that could protect the whole body. In ancient warfare, these fiery darts were launched in great numbers at the beginning of an attack. The idea was not only to injure the enemy, but to shoot at him at all sides with a massive number of arrows, and thus to confuse and panic the enemy. Thoughts, feelings, imaginations, fears, and lies – all of these can be hurled at us by Satan as fiery darts. Faith turns them back.

Salvation is pictured as this kind of helmet, protecting an essential part of the body. A soldier would be foolish to go into battle without his helmet. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 speaks of the helmet of salvation in connection to the hope of salvation. The helmet of salvation protects us against discouragement, against the desire to give up, giving us hope not only in knowing that we are saved, but that we will be saved. It is the assurance that God will triumph. One of Satan’s most effective weapons against us is discouragement. When we are properly equipped with the helmet of salvation, it’s hard to stay discouraged.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: The idea is that the Spirit provides a sword for you, and that sword is the word of God. To effectively use the sword of the Spirit, we must regard it as the word of God – which is the word of God. If we are not confident in the inspiration of Scripture, that the sword really came from the Spirit, then we will not use it effectively at all.

When we study the Bible for its principles and truths, we can stand against Satan's lies. When Jesus was tempted during the 40 days he spent in the wilderness before beginning his ministry, he answered Satan's half-truths with Scripture (Luke 4:1-13), and so stood his ground against the Tempter. Reading the Scripture often, studying it, and committing it to memory are all ways keep this sword sharp, so when we are attacked, we'll be able to respond.

