

The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

The Believer as a Warrior

Ephesians 6:10-12

***Ephesians 6:10-12** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. **11** Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **12** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*

Introduction

The Apostle Paul now comes to the conclusion of his epistle to the church at Ephesus. His letter is filled with doctrine and teaching to this body of believers in the first three chapters. The last three chapters are chockfull of how to take the teaching and instill it in their lives.

In these next nine verses, Paul prepares them for what waits ahead for them: an unrelenting, prevalent and pervasive enemy.

Prepare for Battle

***Ephesians 6:10** Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

Finally – The Apostle has finished his exhortations to the church and laid out their high calling, duties to perform and responsibilities as Christians. He has painstakingly delivered the doctrines, statutes, commandments, precepts and saving grace of God. Paul stated the importance of submission in each of their roles in the family and society. You can almost hear the hesitation in his voice as he prepares to conclude.

“Finally” can also be viewed as bringing the attention of the readers to what follows. Paul is all too aware of the strength and power of the enemy that they face.

“...my brethren” – Paul uses the term as a regenerate fellowship of believers (both Jew and gentile).

“...be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” – The Apostle Paul studied at the feet of Gamaliel, a Pharisee and well known Rabbi or teacher of the law. As such, Paul would know his Jewish history and the idea of encouraging the brethren to “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” could be reminiscent of the instruction by Moses to Joshua before he was to engage in taking the Promised Land. “Be strong and of a good courage” were the words of Moses to Joshua (Deuteronomy 31:23; Joshua 1:7)

The word “*strong*” means “cause to be able, give strength, or become strong.” This is the same word used in Acts 9:22 concerning Paul becoming able to stand against opposition.

Acts 9:22 But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

From the time of Saul’s conversion, he was in what is termed “close, hand-to-hand” combat with the enemies of God. Think about the change that came over him. Remember that Saul hated the new believers of Jesus.

Acts 9:1-2 But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. (ESV)

Later, Saul’s name was changed to Paul and he gave a short autobiography in his second epistle to the church at Corinth in reference to the false teachers they have listened to.

2 Corinthians 11:22-27 Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. 23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. 25 Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Paul was an experienced warrior of God and he knew a little something concerning the real enemy of the church, Satan. He willingly threw himself into the battle for Christ and never looked back.

But Paul was keenly aware that believers who called themselves Christians for a long time, are not necessarily *strong* Christians. Some get saved and remain in the “nursery” for their whole lives and

their faith remains weak. But the opposite is also true. Some Christians, allow the Holy Spirit to take control of their lives and they gain immediate *strength* and their faith grows right away.

The way a believer becomes strong is “*in the power of his might.*” It is the Holy Spirit working within the believer; teaching, admonishing, praying for them, and leading, where the believer gains strength.

Look back at the first chapter of Ephesians;

Ephesians 1:17-19 *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,*

The believer must be conditioned before you can be dropped in the middle of a battle. Saul was under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit for three years in Damascus (Galatians 1:17-18)

When I went into the service, I was 6’1” and 136 pounds. I was scrawny. But after being conditioned in boot camp, I came out 164 pounds having muscles where I never had before. I was becoming *strong*.

Put on the Armor

Ephesians 6:11 *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

“*Put on the whole armour of God*” – The city of Ephesus was under the rule of Rome, and as such there were Roman soldiers attached to this important sea port. The soldiers were everywhere and people just came to accept that they would be present and they went about their lives. I remember the second time I visited Paris, France. Two days before we flew into the city, the French had spoiled a plot to blow-up one of the embassies (I don’t remember which one). Everywhere soldiers were visible in their battle fatigues, fully armed and prepared to fight against any intrusion. They were dressed in body armor, helmets, boots and rifles and pistols. It was an intimidating picture of readiness. Much like the pictures we see of our soldiers in their battle ready clothing on TV.

Paul wants the believers of Ephesus to be properly conditioned and battle ready.

“...that ye may be able to stand – It is impossible to involve yourself and withstand the enemy without being properly outfitted for the task ahead. Paul continues to use military terms here. “Stand” was a military term meaning to take up an attitude and stance against the enemy; “maintain, resist, and hold the position, and offer no surrender.”

“...against the wiles of the devil.” – “Wiles” comes from the Greek word μεθοδεια (methodeia) means to follow after, to practice deceit. It also has the idea of plans that are well laid, such as in art, skill, or cunning. This word is only found in the book of Ephesians (Ephesians 4:14 and here). Therefore we can take this to mean that the devil, using deceit and cunning plans will attempt to persuade, deceive and damage the Christian.

The devil is a shrewd and devious enemy who will attempt to find the weak spots in the protection of the believer. He is diabolical and will use any method in order to win. He has no morals or scruples when it comes to winning.

Perceive the Foe

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

“For we wrestle not” – this is a wrestling term meaning to “throw or swing” an opponent in an attempt to get them down and hold them to win the contest. Paul’s use of the negative, “not”, sets the mood that the battle, the “wrestling match”, is not

“...against flesh and blood” – “flesh and blood” is an alternative expression for men or human beings. Paul is not saying that there are no enemies of the brethren among men. After all there was great persecution in the first century A. D. from Rome and the Jews. But, as bad as their struggle against man is, they are not the greatest enemy of the Christian.

The preceding verse presented the “whole armor of God” versus the “wiles of the devil.” The enemy of every believer is in the spiritual realm, and therefore their warfare is not of this earth. Satan and his followers are the enemy of every Christian. The Apostle Paul says that the way to victory over Satan and his minions is to “put on the whole armor of God” and “stand” (v. 11).

This is Paul’s focus, believers must understand there is a much larger foe than mortal man.

Note: People in general seem to want to put Satan on the same level as God, as if the devil is the counter part of the LORD, but it is important to remember that Satan is a fallen angel, not a god¹. When talking about his power, we must be careful in not overstating his power. Satan has great power, but it is not on the level of God's power. Satan and his demons exist in the spiritual world. The phrase "god of this world", or "god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:4) indicates that Satan is a major influence on the actions, opinions, and views of the majority of people. The devil's influence is seen in the world view on many subjects including philosophies, and education (just look how the theory of evolution is considered a fact by every high school and college text book). All the false religions of the world are under his control and have sprung from his lies and deceptions.

Satan is called the "prince of the power of the air" in Ephesians 2:2. In John 12:31, he is the "ruler of this world". These titles and many more identify the power that he possesses. To say, for example, that Satan is the "prince of the power of the air" is to signify that in some way he rules over the world and the people in it. But he only has the powers that God allows. Therefore, his powers are limited (see the book of Job. Satan could only do to Job what God would allow).

“...*but against* – Now that we know that the battle is not with mortal man, but is a spiritual battle to fight against the whiles of the Devil, he now lists the opposition.

Note: Anything of God is copied by Satan. In the scriptures we read of “principalities and powers” of the angels of God (Ephesians 1:21, 3:10; Colossians 1:16). It would make sense then that the devil copies that hierarchy with the fallen angels (Romans 8:38, 1 Corinthians 15:24; Colossians 2:15). Sorcery was practiced some of the Christians in Ephesus (Acts 19), so Paul warned them of the threat of evil spirits. If there is a “kingdom of light” then there must be a “kingdom of darkness”

There appears to be four ranks of the spiritual enemy. Throughout the scriptures we read of evil spirits, and there is the idea that they have ranks. The first rank is:

principalities” – the word means, chief, beginning, corner, first estate.

“...against powers” – authorities.

“...against the rulers of the darkness of this world” – world rulers

“...against spiritual wickedness in high *places*” – fallen angels, demons, and Lucifer himself.

J. Vernon McGee identifies each of these levels of Satan's army.

¹ Satan was first called Lucifer and he lived in heaven. Lucifer was a high ranking “anointed cherub” (Ezekiel 28:12-14). He was cast out of heaven for his desire to “be like the Most High”. (Isaiah 14:12-14)

We have said that these powers are organized. *Principalities* are the demons who have the oversight of nations. They would correspond to the rank of generals. *Powers* are the privates who are the demons wanting to possess human beings. The *rulers of the darkness of this world* are those demons who have charge of Satan's worldly business. *Spiritual wickedness in high places* are the demons in the heavenlies who have charge of religion.

Satan has a well-organized group, and his organization is manipulating in this world right now. The heartbreak, the heartache, the suffering, the tragedies of life are the work of Satan in the background. He is the cause of the great problems that are in the world today.²

Conclusion

The object of Paul's discussion concerning the spiritual warfare, is not to fill us with apprehension and panic, but to arouse and energize the believers into action.

What keeps Christians from using the full armor of God's power? (Barton & Comfort, 1996)

1. The world has dulled our senses. We don't really understand the danger or recognize the power of Satan and his helpers.
2. Perhaps many are not properly conditioned or equipped with the correct weapons. Many would be warriors have not truly experienced the power of God in their lives.
3. Without the proper weapons and the proper training in the use of those weapons, no soldier of Christ can be battle ready.
4. My biggest fear is that the army of God has become complacent. They live in comfort and consider themselves as being miles away from the battle lines.

Robert C. Crowder

² McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 5, p. 279). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.