

They are not dealing with mules or dogs; they are dealing with fellow human beings.

knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven—Masters (Gk. *kurioi*) must remember the Lord (*kurios*) in heaven. Although the Roman law gave them the right to beat a slave so severely he would die, there was another Court with jurisdiction in the case. Before that Court the earthly masters will stand with their slaves as equals and fellow servants of the Master in heaven.

and that there is no partiality with him—The Greek word for “partiality” is literally “face-taking.” A judge in court of that time would look up to see who the defendant was. If he was a slave, he was given altogether different treatment than a free man, or especially, a master. With the divine Judge, however, a man’s social or economic standing does not matter. His race or nationality do not count. Masters who have been cruel and abusive will no longer have protection from the law. This sobering thought made Christian masters take a whole new outlook toward their slaves.

Study Questions

1. Why should children learn to obey their parents?
2. Is it ever right for a child to disobey? What do you think?
3. Are prosperity and long life guaranteed to every obedient child?
4. Should parents always try to avoid making their children angry? What does verse four mean?
5. It is often asserted that spanking a child will stifle his creativity and self-expression. Will it?
6. What is the difference between physical discipline and child abuse?
7. How does the teaching for slaves apply to any of us today?
8. How will the Lord “make it right” to a slave who was abused and mistreated?
9. What was the masters’ responsibility, and how does that apply to any of us today?
10. Prior to 1860 many Christian people, including Alexander Campbell, owned slaves in America. Is slavery compatible with Christianity? Did these people have a “blind spot” in their perception of Christ’s will?
11. Why didn’t Paul just condemn slavery as contrary to God’s will, and call for an end to it?

Lesson Thirteen (6:10-24)

The Whole Armor of God (6:10-20)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; 16 above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of 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 utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Soldiers of Christ, arise! The eternal Lord is leading forth to victory against the infernal foe! Despite Satan’s schemes and strategies, we can be strong in the

Lord and stand victorious in the day of battle. The secret to success lies in our armor—the whole armor of God.

V. 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might—The Christian's source of power is the Lord. This is why Paul prayed for his readers to experience God's resurrection power in 1:19-20 and 3:1-21. With this power we can face the Satanic hosts and win!

The Greek word for "be strong" means to be "empowered" or "strengthened." Paul used the same word in the beautiful parallel to this verse found in Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." He used the same word to encourage Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2:1). Now, the word applies to us!

The verses which follow picture the Christian not as a gladiator, but as a soldier in an army. The Christian is not intended to defeat the enemy single-handedly, but as part of a united, marching army. This army is the church.

V. 11 Put on the whole armor of God—God supplies everything we will need to fight victoriously. This armor will be itemized in verses 14-17.

There is a very real battle going on between the forces of heaven and hell. He who is not armed and ready may be a casualty of that conflict. Satan is trying to win control of the minds and hearts of men, and we must go forth to oppose him (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Like Timothy, we must be empowered by Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 2:1), be ready to take our share of suffering as good soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3), and fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7).

that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil—Satan opposes us with clever, crafty strategies. He disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14) and is the father of lies (John 8:44). His "wiles" are the same as the "deceitful wiles" mentioned in 4:14 of this epistle. If Satan told the whole truth about his merchandise and its consequences, he would never get a taker. This is why he always gift wraps with glitter and deceit.

Some people seem to think Satan's most dangerous power is some kind of "possession," such as was portrayed in the movie "The Exorcist." They figure that if they can avoid that kind of calamity, all is well. The story is told of a man who went to see "The Exorcist." He was a man who was cheating on his taxes, cheating on his wife, and embezzling from his firm. He came out trembling and frightened, saying, "Whew! I sure hope the devil never gets a hold of me!"

Many a fruitless argument has been waged, speculating on the reality of witchcraft, voodoo, and the

occult. Whatever the extent of Satan's power in these areas, I am convinced they are not the most dangerous weapons in his arsenal. They are diversionary tactics to distract our attention from the real battleground—simple, subtle temptation.

V. 12 For we are not contending against flesh and blood—We are engaged in a spiritual conflict. Our opponents are not merely human, so human strength will not be sufficient. If we were preparing to wrestle a man, we would try to make our bodies strong. For this battle we must make our spirits strong.

but against the principalities, against the powers—The principalities and powers are ranks of angel beings. (See Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col. 1:16; 2:10, 15.) Christ defeated these forces at the cross (Col. 2:15), but the battle must be waged for every individual person to see whether he will accept the victory of the cross for himself.

The angel beings which serve Satan are apparently those angels who joined a rebellion against God in heaven (2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6), and were cast out.

against the world rulers of this present darkness—Satan is called the "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4), and the "ruler of this world" (John 14:30). He and his hosts do not have greater power than God over the affairs of men, but what power he does have is concentrated here. That portion of the world under his influence is called "the present evil age," from which Christ has set us free (Gal. 1:4).

against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places—The battle of the ages takes place in the "heavenly places" (see 1:3). We cannot see or hear the battle, but we can certainly feel it going on within us, and around us. The demons of hell throw themselves into this battle with total abandon, knowing they have nothing more to lose. We must face our foe with total conviction, knowing we have everything to gain.

V. 13 Therefore take the whole armor of God—This is the second time our armor has been called the "whole" armor of God. Every piece of equipment must be put on, or it will not be effective.

that you may be able to withstand in the evil day—While there may be reference to a final, conclusive day of battle, the "evil day" probably refers to this present age, when "the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16). This "evil day" is any day and every day we are challenged by our Satanic foe.

and having done all, to stand—When a battle is over, only one army is left standing on the field. The other army lies dead or has fled in retreat. After Satan has fled in defeat from our Christian army (James 4:7), we will stand with the Captain of our host in victory.

V. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth—As Paul writes these words he is probably chained to a Roman soldier (see verse 20). He uses the armament of that soldier to illustrate his point, listing each piece in the order a soldier would put it on.

The Christian soldier must begin with truth. It is just as vital to him as the heavy leather belt and skirt were vital to the legionnaire. Since Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44), we can hardly expect lies to serve us well for the Lord.

and having put on the breastplate of righteousness—The next piece donned by the Roman soldier was his breastplate. Molded of shining metal, it protected his heart, lungs, and other vital organs.

God's soldier has a breastplate of righteousness (see Isaiah 11:5 and 59:17). This protection is not only the innocence imputed to us in the heavenly ledgers, but also the righteous state of our lives. Imputed righteousness cannot be separated from righteous living (1 John 3:7).

V. 15 and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace—The Roman soldier wore hobnailed sandals, giving him secure footing on any terrain. The sandals were also designed for mobility, for the Roman army was renowned for its ability to march great distances in a short time.

The "good news" of peace is the "equipment" (or "preparation" or "readiness") of the Christian soldier. It is his firm foundation and his impetus for travel.

V. 16 above all taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one—The word for "shield" is closely related to the Greek word for "door." While some armies used a small, round shield, the Roman armies used a large, rectangular one. This shield was as wide as a man's body and as much as four feet long. A row of Roman soldiers with these shields formed a solid wall. The shield was constructed of alternating layers of bronze and oxhide, so as to be impervious to flaming arrows.

The Christian's shield is his faith. Whenever Satan hurls his projectiles of doubt, despair, or temptation at us, our faith gives us victory (1 John 5:4).

V. 17 And take the helmet of salvation—The Roman soldier wore a metal helmet to protect him from fatal blows to the head. The Christian's protection against fatal blows is the hope of salvation (1 Thess. 5:8). The worst an enemy could do is kill us, but eternal salvation turns that into a wonderful victory.

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God—The Roman sword, unlike the large Thracian weapon, was short enough to be effective in close-quarter, hand-to-hand combat. For the Christian, the

Holy Spirit has supplied the word of God, which is sharper than any two-edged sword (Heb. 4:12). The sword of the Spirit is the only offensive weapon of our armor. God's Word is not viewed as a repository of knowledge laid away on a shelf, but an active weapon. It is especially the preached and proclaimed "word" (Gk. *rhema*) that Paul has in mind.

Many improper uses have been made of the sword of the Spirit. Some of these perversions are listed below:

CHRISTIAN CUTLERY

(or What You Can Beat Your Sword Into)

Pocket Knife—Used chiefly for idle whittling.

Hunting Knife—Used chiefly for skinning whatever has been trapped.

Fencing Foil—Used energetically, but only for the exercise and entertainment of both parties.

Bowie Knife—To be thrown at whatever gets too close for comfort.

Switch-blade—Very sharp, used to take money from people.

Kitchen Knife—For chopping things up to make them palatable.

Dagger—Used on friends and acquaintances, in the back.

Jackknife—Not a true knife at all, but a gymnastic feat performed before an appreciative audience.

Sword—Close-quarters weapon of the warrior, used to slay the enemy, whether the old man of sin or the Man of Sin.

V. 18 Pray at all times in the Spirit—The soldier must maintain contact with his commanding officer. Prayer keeps us in tune with the Lord and his purposes. Perhaps prayer should even be considered a part of our armor, for a consistent prayer life shields us from the onslaught of doubt and despair, and strengthens us against temptation.

Paul told the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). God wants his children to pray regularly, consistently, and frequently.

with all prayer and supplication—"Prayer" is the general word for communication with God. It includes all aspects of asking, praising, and giving thanks. "Supplication" is a more specific word, indicating a special request or entreaty made to God.

To that end keep alert with all perseverance—The original meaning of "keep alert" was to "pass a sleepless night," as in 2 Cor. 1:27. Our captain Jesus Christ often prayed far into the night (see Matt. 14:23-25; 26:36-45). He said men "ought always to pray and

not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). Paul urged us to “persevere,” or continue steadfastly, in prayer in Rom. 12:12 and Col. 4:2.

making supplication for the saints—Here is still another reminder that Christians are never isolated from the rest of God’s family. Even when separated by time and space, we can be united in our prayers for one another. A Christian who wants to operate only on the “Just You and Me, Lord” level has failed to understand God’s will. We are integrally involved with the other members of the body. If one member hurts, we all hurt. If one member rejoices, we all rejoice. If one member has a need, we all make supplication.

V. 19 and also for me—Paul is not hesitant to request prayers for himself. And well he might need prayer in his own behalf, we would think, since he was imprisoned and facing the prospect of death. However, as you continue this verse, see what it was Paul wanted them to pray for.

that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel—Paul did not crave relief or release; he craved boldness and an opportunity to proclaim the gospel (Col. 4:3). Though we rarely remember it, the most fearless preacher of the early church often felt “weakness” and “much fear and trembling” (1 Cor. 2:3). God answered his prayer for boldness, and he will answer yours, too!

The “mystery of the gospel” Paul wanted to proclaim was no longer a secret. It was God’s plan for salvation, now openly revealed (Eph. 3:3-5, 9).

V. 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains—The very thought of an ambassador being put in chains is contrary to all sense of fairness and all the conventions of warfare. Even the most hostile nations respect the freedom and safety of an ambassador, giving him “safe conduct.” However, the forces of Satan recognize no standards of decency.

Even so, Paul did not lament his fate nor complain about his invidious treatment.

that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak—Paul spent at least two years in this confinement, according to Acts 28:30-31. He spent this time “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ **with all boldness.**” Paul was chained, but the gospel was not! His imprisonment in Rome had only served to advance the gospel, which now spread throughout even Caesar’s elite praetorian guard (Phil. 1:12-13).

Final Greetings (6:21-24)

21 Now that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful

minister in the Lord will tell you everything. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

23 Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying.

V. 21 Now that you also may know how I am—Paul apparently did not want to clutter up this epistle with too many items of purely personal interest. Questions regarding how Paul was getting along would be answered by his personal courier.

Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister—Tychicus was a disciple from Asia Minor (where Ephesus is located) who traveled with Paul on part of the Third Missionary Journey (Acts 20:4). 2 Tim. 4:12 mentions that Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus while Paul stayed in Rome. (This may have been on another occasion.)

Tychicus not only carried this epistle, but also carried the epistle to the Colossians (Col. 4:7-9) at the same time. He also accompanied Onesimus, the runaway slave, back to his master (Col. 4:9), carrying the epistle to Philemon.

V. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose—Paul knew how distressed the Christians of Asia Minor were because of his imprisonment. It was especially for their encouragement that he sent Tychicus to tell them first hand how things were going.

V. 23 Peace be to the brethren—Paul’s epistles always begin with a word about “peace” and usually end with “peace” as well. Peace is well-being of the soul. It is the state in which we live when our alienation from God has ended (Eph. 2:1-8). Peace is a dominant theme of Ephesians and the word appears eight times (1:21; 2:14, 15, 17; 4:3; 6:15, 23).

and love with faith—Faith and love seem inseparable in the Christian life (See 1 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 5:6; Eph. 1:15; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8; etc.) Faith is also dominant in this specific epistle and appears eight times (1:15; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13; 6:16, 23).

from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ—The fatherhood of God is stated in every chapter of Ephesians (see notes on 1:2). Reference is made to the Lord Jesus Christ, or simply the Lord, twenty-four times. You can see that Paul is using his final greeting to reinforce the key ideas of what he has written.

V. 24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying—“Grace” begins and ends all of Paul’s epistles. Paul uses the word twelve times in this epistle. It is both the basis of our salvation (2:8) and

the privilege of our service (3:8 and 4:7). Poor and wretched sinners who love the Lord Jesus can come to God for forgiveness—and find him smiling! This is the meaning of grace.

Study Questions

1. What is the Christian's source of strength? Where in Ephesians does Paul tell us about it?
2. Why must we put on the "whole" armor? Examine each piece to see how we would be defenseless without it.
3. How does the devil operate? What are his "wiles"?
4. How is it possible to wrestle with renegade angels and spiritual hosts of wickedness?
5. What are the parts of armor and the significance of each? Can you recite them from memory?
6. How is it possible to pray all night? What on earth is there to talk about?
7. What was Paul's prayer request from prison? Why did he request that?
8. Who was Tychichus?
9. What dominant themes are stated again in the last two verses?
10. What have you learned from the study of Ephesians? How do you view God and his plan for salvation? How will your life be changed as a result of this study?