

“Ephesians”

Fall Series 1

Lesson 10

“Ephesians 6:10-24”

Objective: To understand the message that Paul meant to convey to his audience and then to come to understand what that message means for us today as those living in the 21st century. We will seek to ascertain what this message means and to determine how we are intended to live our lives as those who are disciples of Christ in our modern context in light of the message it contains.

Materials: We will begin by examining carefully the Greek text of Ephesians, examine other early translations such as the Syriac Peshitta, and any other sources along with the historical setting of the first century Roman world that can help us to understand the original meaning. We will then examine early interpretations and understandings and examine commentaries and modern interpretations to enlighten our understanding for our contextual situation.

Procedures

1. We will begin by translating the text from Greek into English
2. We will examine the contextual setting and seek to understand as much as we possibly can about the historical, cultural and social settings in order to understand the message.
3. From here we will seek to find out how to best apply the calling that Paul has for the early disciples to our modern contextual framework in order to do our very best to live as disciples of Christ in our modern era.
4. We will seek to understand the attitudes that we are called to have as disciples and to reflect not only the actions that are the calling of a disciple, but also to learn how to form our attitudes to reflect our calling as followers of Jesus Christ.

Translation

Ephesians 6:10 **Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength. ¹¹ Put on the complete armor of God to be able to stand against the craftiness of the devil. ¹² Because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world ruler of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore, take up the complete armor of God, in order that you might be able to resist on the wicked day, and having done everything to stand. ¹⁴ Stand, therefore, wrapping your waist in truth and put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and put on the feet whatever equipment will make you ready for proclaiming the good news of peace. ¹⁶ Above all taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish the burning missiles of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. ¹⁸ Through all prayer and supplication, praying at all times, in the Spirit. Unto this, being watchful in every perseverance, and entreaty concerning all the holy**

ones, ¹⁹ and on my behalf, in order that a message might be given to me, opening my mouth in boldness to make known the mystery of the good news, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, in order that, in Him, I might speak boldly just as it is necessary for me to speak. ²¹ In order now that you might know how and what I am doing, Tychicus will make known to you everything. He is the beloved brother and the faithful minister of the Lord. ²² Whom I am sending to you for this purpose, in order that you might know how we are, and encourage your hearts. ²³ Peace be to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with you all, the ones having undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lesson

As we conclude this series focusing on this great epistle of Paul he leaves his audience with instructions that are crucial for their well-being, and then essential instructions to give them the possibility of being able to stand firm. I think it is critical that we are reminded of some of the words of Paul as he began this second section of his letters. In Ephesians 4:1-5, we have these words of admonition that are reinforced and reiterated by what he wrote afterward. **4:1 Therefore, as the prisoner in the Lord, I urge you to walk as worthy of the calling for which you have been called,** ² **with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,** ³ **making every effort to keep the oneness of the Spirit** in the bond of peace. ⁴ **There is one body and one Spirit,** just as also you were called in one hope of your calling, ⁵ **one Lord, one faith, one baptism,** ⁶ **one God and Father of all,** who is above all and through all and in all. ⁷ **But each one of us was given favor (*χάρις - charis - grace*) according to the measure of the gift of Christ.**

There is contained in these words the calling to **walk as worthy of the calling for which you have been called** This is

a critical admonition that seeks to challenge the audience to step into their place as God's children and to step into the act of God's redeeming His creation and especially of the redeeming of His image-bearing children (human beings). His children are called to live as they were created to be and they are, in Christ, empowered by God's Spirit to live as they were created to live. The calling is for Gentiles and Jews, as one conjoined people of God, to live into the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit that God has sent as the transformative instrument of change into the midst of the cosmos. The understanding of Paul appears to be that where the Spirit is at work it will be apparent that God's transformative power will be initiating new creation. Thus, the call to the recipients of God's great gift is to express gratitude and honor to God by acting in alignment with His Spirit. This alignment will mean that those who are recipients of the Spirit will be continually in the process of transformation. No one that has been touched by the Spirit of God remains unchanged.

One of the prime indicators of that process of transformation is seen in the "oneness," the "unity," of God's

people, which is also a reflection of the nature of God Himself.¹

This unity is an indicator of the presence of God's powerful love.


Paul knows that one of the things that the Devil will seek to do is to divide the people of God, to destroy "unity" and "oneness."² A divided kingdom will fall,³ but we know that God's Kingdom will not fall, therefore this must also mean that God's kingdom will not be divided. Unity is a sign of the presence of God's Spirit at work.

Paul begins this second section of his letter, in chapter 4, speaking of "unity," of "oneness." He then will challenge his audience with words that will promote and strengthen that "oneness." Paul is certainly aware that the devil knows that it is far easier to defeat a divided enemy. This is one of the many tactics used even by human provocateurs to insure their victory in battle. They first seek to divide their opponents forces and to foster dissension and disunity. This was a common and consistent tactic used by the

¹ John 17:21-23 21 I pray they will be **one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. I pray that they also will be in us, so that the world will believe that you sent me. 22 I've given them the glory that you gave me so that they can be **one** just as we are **one**. 23 I'm in them and you are in me so that they will be made perfectly **one**. **Then the world will know that you sent me and that you have loved them just as you loved me.** CEB.

² Matthew 12:25 - **Because Jesus knew what they were thinking, he replied, "Every kingdom involved in civil war becomes a wasteland. Every city or house torn apart by divisions will collapse.** CEB.

³ Mark 3:24-25 - ²⁴ **A kingdom involved in civil war will collapse.** ²⁵ **And a house torn apart by divisions will collapse.** CEB.



English against the Scottish people in their many conflicts. It proved to be an incredibly effective strategy.

The devil knows this strategy, and that it is incredibly effective; he uses it because it works. If you look at the history of the church, you will find the footprints of Satan everywhere sowing the seeds of discord and disunity. Even in our own fellowship we can see the effectiveness and the results of this strategy of Satan. When the movement that became the churches of Christ began as the disciples of Christ it began as a **unity movement** calling people to a unity that the early founders of this movement thought would initiate the return of Christ as this unity spread and exploded across the globe. Sadly, this has not yet happened, instead our movement now stands, as do so many that came before, and since, in tatters, in fragments, divided and weakened by disunity and dissension. Instead of being a force for unity we have so often become a force for further disunity and division.

These ancient words of Paul are as relevant for us today as they were the first day that they were written. We have a problem with unity today. Our country is divided, our people are divided,

our churches are divided, and the plans and initiatives of the devil are working amazingly well. I don't know how you feel about this, but it deeply concerns me and I believe that it is not what we are called to be about as a people called to "oneness," or "unity," and called "to walk in manner worthy of the calling of Christ." Paul challenges his audience, which still includes us, to something better, something greater, something more in alignment with what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ. He does not call us to weakness, complacency, and hand-wringing. He calls us to: 6:10

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength.

The calling here is not to be "strong" in our own strength, but to **"be strong in the Lord and in the might of His strength."**

It is in living into this calling that we will be able to stand; to stand in unity with the Lord and with His followers. Such unity defies common sense, human understanding, scientific theories and all other forms of human invention. The source of this strength is supernatural in nature; it comes from God and is delivered through His Spirit to those who are recipients of His gracious gift through the intervention of Jesus Christ in his birth life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus stands at the right

hand of God, the creator, the Almighty, the Father of all. Paul challenges his audience (which today includes us) to focus on these things in order that we might be able to stand. What does it mean to “be strong in the Lord?” “Being strong is an exhortation to faithfulness. Such fidelity opens one up to a volatile existence. Faithfulness to God will bring ridicule from society.... Such devotion is not passive theological *laissez faire*; it is an active engagement with evil (6:12). This lifestyle requires and demands spiritual strength in an enduring struggle.”⁴

It was common in classical society to employ military imagery and this is what Paul does here.⁵ This concept finds its fullest expression in the imagery of God as the Divine Warrior, which has its roots in the ancient Near East.⁶ Paul writes to his audience that they are to: **11 Put on the complete armor of God to be able to stand against the craftiness of the devil.** There are a number of implications to what Paul writes here. 1. There is an indication that they are going to need protection from attack.

⁴ Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, in the Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary series (Macon GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Incorporated, 2012), p. 171.

⁵ Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 171.

⁶ Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 172. Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*, HDR 9 (Missoula MT: Scholars Press, 1976).

2. Ordinary human armor is not going to be sufficient to help them stand against the attacks that they will encounter. 3. Their enemy is to be understood as an enemy that stands in the spiritual plane of existence. 4. He will not attack them in a straight forward, easily recognizable, manner.

He, the devil, he will be crafty, scheming in his attacks in such a manner that the intent will be to deceive (μεθοδεία - *methodeia*). The word Paul uses here is a word that is derived from the Greek word *methodos* (μέθοδος) that carries the basic meaning of the “pursuit of knowledge.” The reference here is meant to refer to the machinations, the attacks, of the devil. These are cunning attacks.⁷ Paul makes it clear that those who are followers of Jesus are going to come under the cunning, crafty, attacks of the devil. **¹² Because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world ruler of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.** The nature of these attacks are that they come not from the natural world, but

⁷ Wilhelm Michaelis in Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. and ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. V (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), sv. μεθοδεία, page 103.




from the supernatural, the spiritual world, from the great powers of this realm.

Because of the nature of these attacks, the ordinary weapons or defenses that might counter the consequences of ordinary human attacks will not be effective. For the book of Ephesians, the devil is to be understood as the source of evil in the world. It is because of this, that there is a need for spiritual armor. Without this armor, the spiritual and the physical existence of the human beings is under imminent threat. The fight that is being encountered by Paul's original audience, and that is still being endured is not with human, earthly, adversaries, but from those of the spiritual realm. These adversaries cannot be defeated by earthly means alone, therefore, there is the need to "put on" the full armor of God.⁸ This is the only place in the Pauline corpus where believers are explicitly said to be in a battle against evil, spiritual powers.⁹

The human beings of the ancient world were very much aware of heavenly, spiritual, forces and they sought to combat

⁸ Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 173.

⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, in the Word Biblical Commentary series, Vol. 42 (Dallas TX: Word Books, Publisher, 1990), p. 443.



them in various ways that included resignation to fate, magical practices, and initiations into the mystery cults. These powers have been in fact defeated by Christ, and yet they continue to persist in seeking the defeat and destruction of the followers of Jesus. They seek to thwart the advance of the gospel before the ultimate and final subjugation of these forces. The word used here for “struggle” (πάλη - *pale*) usually refers to a “wrestling match,” and some have made the suggestion that it should maintain that force here.¹⁰

The question is what difference does any of this make for me today? The reality is that the same forces, the same issues that faced the original audience of Paul still effect us today. These same forces are arrayed against you and me, today, and these forces love remaining hidden, and they love it when people contend that they do not actually exist. This means that they can conduct their agenda without fear of retribution, interruption, or even detection. They love it when we, blame the evil in this world on human beings and we are divided against one another; labeling each other as diabolical and shouting insults at one another in a

¹⁰ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, pp. 443-444.

way that means we do not have even the potentiality of unity. Paul knows of this danger, and he knows how to counter this danger; and he calls for those that follow Christ to take up his instructions in a manner that will promote unity, fight evil, and will help us to focus on the power of God and especially the spiritual aspect of our existence. Unity is a tremendous weapon against the forces of evil. Where godly unity grows, evil withers and slinks into the darkness.

In light of this, Paul instructs his audience to: ¹³ **Therefore, take up the complete armor of God, in order that you might be able to resist on the wicked day and having done everything, to stand.** The protection, the armor that Paul calls for the followers of Jesus to take up, is armor that will provide protection from these spiritual forces. This armor will enable them to stand on the “wicked day.” As you might expect, there is a great deal of dispute as to what Paul actually means by what he says here in terms of the wicked, or evil day. There are four main competing interpretations: 1. Some hold that this is a reference to a particular time of special trial and tribulation that will immediately precede the end of the world. Some even go so far as

to be totally literal and they believe that the warning here is in reference to a single evil day that comes immediately before the return of Christ.¹¹

Others believe: 2. That this is a reference to any time of crisis, or time of temptation. 3. Some see this a reference to the whole of this present age. 4. This final position attempts to focus on the strengths of the first and the third interpretation and this is the one that Lincoln prefers in his commentary.¹² There are a number of passages in the Old Testament that speak to the idea of a great day of evil and darkness.¹³ This is also a common theme in other ancient Jewish literature outside of the Bible.¹⁴ There are also references to a day that might fit this description in other places in the letters of Paul.¹⁵ Lincoln sees what Paul says here as being connected with this day, but he also recognizes that

¹¹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 445.

¹² Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 445.

¹³ cf. Amos 5:18-20 - **Doom to those who desire the day of the LORD! Why do you want the day of the LORD? It is darkness, not light; 19 as if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or sought refuge in a house, rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake. 20 Isn't the day of the LORD darkness, not light; all dark with no brightness in it?** CEB. Daniel 12:1 - **"At that time, Michael the great leader who guards your people will take his stand. It will be a difficult time—nothing like it has ever happened since nations first appeared. But at that time every one of your people who is found written in the scroll will be rescued.** CEB.

¹⁴ cf. *1 Enoch* 50:1-2; 55:3; 63:8; 96:2; 99:4; *Jubilees* 23:16-25; *Testament of Levi* 5:5; *2 Apocalypse of Baruch* 48:31; *Apocalypse of Abraham* 29:9; *1QM* 1:10-13.

¹⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

whatever day we are currently in brings struggles against the powers of darkness that indicate a need for this armor. “What is all important is that believers should stand firm. Every action should be geared toward this end.”¹⁶

“These oft-quoted verses constitute the heart of the matter where the details of what the whole armor of God consisted of are stated explicitly.”¹⁷ The first of these instructions has to do with “truth.” We live in an era and a cultural setting that has very often concluded that, “truth” is relative, or is only in fact truth as seen from a certain perspective. Perhaps, the reality is that truth is harder to recognize than we have often believed, as well as to clearly communicate. If that is indeed the case, then the truth could perhaps be right before a person and they might not recognize it. As I looked at the commentaries that I have on my shelf for help in explaining what Paul here means when he uses this word “truth” (ἀληθεία - *aletheia*) what I found was a lot of waffle and diversion. I wonder how we are to strap something

¹⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, pp. 445-446. There is also an interesting passage from *Wisdom* that has affinities with what Paul wrote in his letter. *Wisdom* 5:17-20 - ¹⁷ **For his weapon, the Lord will take his zeal. He will arm creation itself for the fight against his foes.** ¹⁸ **He will put on justice as his body armor. He will strap on honest judgment as his helmet.** ¹⁹ **He will take up holiness as a shield that can never be beaten down.** ²⁰ **He will sharpen his fierce anger into a sword.** CEB.

¹⁷ Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, p. 174.

around our metaphorical waist when we do not even seem to know what it is? ¹⁴ **Stand, therefore, wrapping your waist in truth and put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

I looked up the ways that this word for truth is used in Greek to see if I could find some clarity and the definitions that I found there of course include “truth,” but also such things as “reality,” and “sincerity.” I also found this incredibly interesting passage, (at least interesting to me) in the Old Testament that uses this word that Paul uses here as a translation of the Hebrew word *Thummim* (תְּמִיִּם) as in the *Urim* and *Thummim* placed in the chest piece of Aaron, in the High Priestly garb.¹⁸ The *Urim* and *Thummim* were used by the High Priest when enquiry of the Lord was needed. There is considerable debate with regard to the source of this translation in the Old Greek Translation (the Septuagint), which is commonly understood to be a third century translation of the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament). Some have seen the translation in the Old Greek translation as “truth” to be a reference to the pendant worn by the Egyptian chief justice, but this theory has been largely disputed

¹⁸ Leviticus 8:8 - **And he put on him the oracle, and he put on the oracle the explanation and the truth (*Thummim* in the Hebrew Bible).** NETS. **Then Moses placed the chest piece on Aaron and set the Urim and *Thummim* into the chest piece.** CEB.

and has not been widely considered credible. Van Dam believes that the translators of the Old Greek translation had some expectation that they actually understood something of the nature of the *Urim* and *Thummim* in a way that informed their translations.¹⁹ In other words, their translation is not an anomaly or a fluke.

The Old Greek Translation apparently followed an understanding on its own that linked the *Urim* and *Thummim* as connected to “lights” and “perfections.”²⁰ In truth, I am frustrated by lack of attempts by Ephesians commentators to speak to what Paul actually meant here. Perhaps it could be said that this is because it is just obvious, but if so, why not state the obvious as is so often the case? Instead, I see it as more a matter of avoiding the issue altogether. The question remains, what did Paul mean to communicate here? I think there are several things that he likely intended to communicate: 1. He meant to challenge his audience to pursue the truth. 2. I think he believed this was a possibility and that the source of truth could be found with God and the

¹⁹ Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim* (Winona Lake IN: Eisenbrauns, 1997), pp. 67-71; 133-136.

²⁰ Cornelis Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim*, pp. 133-136.

message that He communicated. 3. I also believe that there was intended to be a connection between truth and the other elements of armor listed by Paul, especially with righteousness. Many translations speak here of the “belt of truth.” A belt, for the ancients was not simply a device meant to hold up their pants. A belt was a place for tools of battle to be hung, such as a sword, but the fact is that Paul does not actually use the word for “belt” in Ephesians 6:14 at all.

Instead, Paul literally tells his audience to “prepare themselves by wrapping truth around their loins” (περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ) without using any of the actual words for “belt.” What he is challenging them to do is to protect themselves from the onslaught of these spiritual forces having truth wrapped around their middle, around the center of their bodies, their loins. Paul could have easily used the word for “belt” but instead he chose to leave it out. The focus here is not upon the piece of armor but upon the “truth.” Perhaps it is the case that since moderns have so much trouble recognizing this that is a part of the reason they have so little protection from the schemes of the forces of evil and are so easily tricked into falling for the devil’s

schemes. So often we have been taught that “truth” is relative and so therefore, does not really exist so we have often given up even the search for truth much less using it as a protection from evil.

The next item in the list of Paul is described as “righteousness” (*δικαιοσύνης - dikaiosunes*). This is a term that is sometimes used to indicate fulfillment of the Law, or what is proper, and “just,” before God.²¹ Who defines justice for you? Paul calls those that are “sealed with the Holy Spirit” to live a life that reflects God’s creative power at work in their lives. This means that they will live into, not the letter of the Law, but the intent. They will fulfill the intent of the Law as God always intended it to be fulfilled; not out of obligation or duty, but because of the transformative and creative power of God, through His Spirit that is at work in their very soul. They will be people that reflect the nature of their Lord Jesus Christ. They will be champions of “truth” and “righteousness,” not just in words, but from the core of their being.

They will be people that are prepared and ready for proclaiming the “good news” that brings peace between Jews and

²¹ Isaiah 26:2 - **Open the gates and let a righteous nation enter, a nation that keeps faith.** CEB.; Matthew 3:15 - **Jesus answered, “Allow me to be baptized now. This is necessary to fulfill all righteousness.”** CEB.

Gentiles, because the dividing wall has been torn down and removed.²² ¹⁵ **and put on the feet whatever equipment will make you ready for proclaiming the good news of peace.** The people of God do not just sit idly by and simply exist. Their priorities are aligned with the purposes of God and His kingdom. This compulsion is related to God's agenda of redeeming creation. Those who put on the armor of God do so in order to be a part of what He is doing. Their focus is His focus. They enter the fray, fighting a battle that is beyond their ability, beyond their strength, so they need this armor in order to be able to continue to be a part of this conflict against the forces of evil.

This conflict requires us to be: ¹⁶ **Above all taking up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to extinguish the burning missiles of the evil one.** The evil one will not take this attack on his work lying down, he will attack. Those that are involved in this conflict face real danger. This danger is more than we as humans are capable of resisting in our own strength. We must take up the protective "shield of faith" (**trust - πίστεως -**

²² Ephesians 2:14-16 - **2:14 Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us.** ¹⁵ **He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace.** ¹⁶ **He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.** CEB.

pisteos). We must “believe in,” “trust in,” God. This is the only way that it is possible for us to resist the onslaught of the devil, who is far more powerful than we are. However, in the power of God’s protection we are enabled to stand. This is a central concept of the Good News. The Good News is that God is greater than all that opposes Him. He has overcome, and He has done this through Jesus Christ.

Paul seeks to remind his audience of what God has done in Jesus Christ. God has brought salvation and He continues His redemption of creation.²³ **17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** It is important to note the focus on both protection, and offense; with the “sword of the Spirit” we are given the means to go on the offensive, to attack the forces of darkness and evil. The connection is made with the “word of God.” The “word of God” is powerful and effective.²⁴ The importance of the “word of God” is

²³ Romans 8:19-21 - **19 The whole creation waits breathless with anticipation for the revelation of God’s sons and daughters. 20 Creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice—it was the choice of the one who subjected it—but in the hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from slavery to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of God’s children.** CEB.

²⁴ Hebrews 4:11-12 - **4:11 Therefore, let’s make every effort to enter that rest so that no one will fall by following the same example of disobedience, 12 because God’s word is living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It penetrates to the point that it separates the soul from the spirit and the joints from the marrow. It’s able to judge the heart’s thoughts and intentions.** CEB.

of critical importance in the plan of God, and in the process of redemption. Those things that are from God are imbued with His power and with His Spirit. God gives us the means to victory, to be a part of what He is doing. He invites His children into His redemptive initiative for humanity, and for all of creation.

Salvation stands continually upon the head of the follower of Jesus, victory is assured because of what He has done.

Paul challenges his audience to be in continual communication with God, through “prayer and supplication.”¹⁸ **Through all prayer and supplication, praying at all times, in the Spirit. Unto this, being watchful in every perseverance, and entreaty concerning all the holy ones,** A part of this conflict of faith is conducted in persevering and entreating God on behalf of others. A part of what Paul calls upon his audience to do is to look out for each other, to think about one another, to lift up one another in prayer. Notice the focus here. This is critical. So often in our understanding of salvation today, we have changed the focus so that salvation has such a tremendously individual orientation. There is certainly an individual element in that we have decisions to make on an individual basis, but salvation is not



something that we can do on our own, it is a “team” sport, we are a part of God’s team, or we fail.

So much of the focus of this letter has been upon what God has done. He is the source of the power of salvation. It is God who empowers the creative act that redeems and sustains us. In this redemptive action those that trust in God are transformed and created anew as something different, something that is the work of God.²⁵ We need each other, we are to help each other, and not even Paul felt that he did not need this help. He wrote asking for prayers for himself, ... ¹⁹ **and on my behalf, in order that a message might be given to me, opening my mouth in boldness to make known the mystery of the good news, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, in order that in Him I might speak boldly just as it is necessary for me to speak.**


The great apostle, Paul, pleads with his audience to make “entreaty” to God so that he might be “bold.” His focus, his goal in life, is to proclaim the “mystery of the good news:” What an incredible request. This man, who is in prison because of his proclamation of the Gospel, is concerned about being even bolder

²⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:17 - **So then, if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!** CEB.

than he was. He pleads in his letter for his audience to intercede with God on his behalf for boldness (*παρρησία - parresia*). Paul pleads that he will be “outspoken.” With every fiber of his being Paul wants to proclaim with clarity and boldness the “mystery of the good news.” Paul understands his purpose in life, and he embraces it with his every breath and then pleads for even greater boldness.

As Paul concludes his letter, he addresses his audience with warmth and a sense of sincere concern. ²¹ **In order now that you might know how and what I am doing, Tychicus will make known to you everything. He is the beloved brother and the faithful minister of the Lord.** ²² **Whom I am sending to you for this purpose, in order that you might know how we are, and encourage your hearts.** ²³ **Peace be to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** ²⁴ **Grace be with you all, the ones having undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Paul expresses concern in order that his audience would be encouraged rather than be discouraged. How hard is it to encourage others to not be afraid when their mentor, their



ambassador, has been imprisoned for exactly what he is challenging them to embrace? Paul in this great letter seeks to do exactly that for his original audience and still for us today. Even in the midst of his trials and hardship he seeks to encourage others to take up battle more fiercely, more confidently, more boldly. The question is will you take up the call of Paul to those who choose to follow Christ and proclaim the “good news, with boldness?”

Synopsis

In this section of Paul's letter, he draws to a close his admonitions, warning his audience of the great dangers that they face. The challenge is to "be strong," not in one's own strength, but in the mighty strength of the Lord. This conflict is going to be so intense, and so fraught with danger, that the followers of Jesus are going to need to be armored for their protection. The enemy that attacks the followers of Jesus is not an enemy of blood and flesh, but is spiritual in nature; these are the forces of wickedness and darkness, that have access to the heavenlies.

Paul instructs his audience to put on the complete armor of God in order that they will be able to resist, and stand in the midst of the fray. They are to wrap their loins with "truth" and protect their heart with righteousness. They are not simply to be defensive soldiers in the conflict. They are to be a part of God's offensive efforts to redeem this world and transform it. The followers of Jesus are to proclaim the "good news of peace." They are to shield themselves through their "faithfulness," their "trust," in God. It is through this "trust" that they will be able to



extinguish the flaming missiles launched against them by the evil one.

They are to protect their head with the “helmet of salvation, and to take up the “sword of the Spirit,” “the word of God.” These are not simply for defense, but they are offensive tools of change and new creation. The followers of Jesus are to be a part of continuing process of the new creation instigated by Jesus. They are involved in the family business, which is the business of redemption. In all of this they are to be people of prayer, praying at all times, especially for each other. Paul challenges His audience to pray that he might have “boldness” to proclaim the “good news.” The letter ends with very cordial and concerned words of encouragement and warmth for his audience. His last words are meant to convey a blessing and a reminder that the “favor” (grace) of God would be with those that have an “undying love” for “our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Questions

1. What are some ways that you can perceive the schemes of the devil to be at work in our world today?
2. How often do you think about what it will be like to stand before God and answer for what you have done? How does this make you feel?
3. What are some ways that you seek to put on the armor of God?
4. What are some ways that you might be able to recognize the schemes of the devil?
5. What is your response to being told that we are not fighting against human enemies?
6. How would you define evil?
7. What are some ways that you fulfill the command of Paul to spread the good news of peace?
8. How do you discern what the “truth” is?
9. What does salvation mean for you?
10. What are some ways that the Holy Spirit is a weapon against the enemy?
11. How do you offer prayers in the Spirit?
12. Why do you think Paul pleads for prayers for boldness for himself?
13. How would you define peace?
14. How do you see the “grace” of God effecting your way of life?
15. What are some things that bring you encouragement?

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16. How do you seek to encourage others?
 17. What are some things that reassure you in your walk of faith?
 18. What is the “mystery of the gospel?”
 19. What are some ways that this study of Ephesians has challenged the way you see your life?
 20. What are some ways this study, of Ephesians, has challenged you to live in a different way?

To Take Home

What is Important to know?

It is important for us to know, that as a follower of Jesus, we will be attacked by the devil. Sometimes people believe that the hard times in their life are over when they choose to begin following Christ. This perspective fails to consider the reality of the life of Jesus when he walked this earth. His life was far from easy, far from luxurious and pampered. If we are truly His disciples we should anticipate hardship and live into those hardships in a way that reflects the life of Jesus. What are some ways that you face the challenges of living your life as a follower of Jesus?

Where is God in these words?

God is in the words of Paul warning His followers that their journey of salvation is not yet over. There are further challenges to come and our struggle is not simply against flesh and blood, but against dark spiritual forces that are too powerful for us to repulse in our strength. We need to rely upon God, to trust in Him. What are some ways that you have been aware of God's protection in your journey of following Jesus?

What does any of this mean for how I live my life?

Paul intends for his words of admonition, encouragement, and his reminding of blessings from God to be far more than merely an academic exercise or something that one would only focus on for a season and then forget about. Being a follower of Jesus is something that is a 24/7 commitment. There is no down-time or free-time. What are some ways that you re-energize yourself when you are feeling weary in your walk of discipleship?

What is the word of God calling us to do?

The word of God is calling us to be aware of who we are as recipients of God's grace through the birth, life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ to the right hand of the Father. We are called into a deep and abiding relationship with God. Though God initiated the relationship we are called to reciprocate by walking in faithfulness and devotion to Him. What are some ways that you demonstrate your appreciation to God for what He has done for you?