

FPFWC Christian Development



We Are God's Artwork

November 2022

Fall Quarter

November 26, 2022

Lesson #4 – God Gives Tools for Our Protection

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Ephesians 6:10-18

Key Verse – “Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”—Ephesians 6:13

ICE BREAKER –

1. How can Christians defend themselves spiritually?
2. What Is Spiritual Warfare?

LESSON BACKGROUND

Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians when he was especially conscious of the stakes in the battle between good and evil. Most of his letters addressed specific issues within a congregation. Ephesians is unique, however, in presenting the gospel more generally, without taking on any specific problems this church faced. This may be due in part to Paul’s intention that this letter begin circulating from Ephesus into the wider territory, what is now Turkey.

Having planted churches across the Roman world over the course of more than two decades, the apostle had been arrested in Jerusalem during a riot (Acts 21:26–35). A corrupt governor refused to resolve his case (24:27); so after sitting in jail for two years, Paul appealed to Caesar. This appeal resulted in a trip to Rome to stand trial (25:1–12).

Paul then spent two years under house arrest in Rome, waiting for a hearing before the emperor (Acts 28:30). During this time (about AD 61–63) Paul wrote letters to his churches in cities back east, including the one in Ephesus. Doubtless the circumstances of his arrest and the daily frustrations of his imprisonment led Paul to greater awareness of Satan’s schemes and the preparation necessary for defeating them.

LESSON COMMENTARY

Children and Parents (6:1–4)

(1) Children (6:1–3)

Honoring parents is crucial (e.g., Pr 6:20; Mt 15:4), and thus Paul called for obedience to them, grounding the call in its correctness (v. 1b) and in the OT (v. 2). The NT does not give a specific age at which this command ceases to apply, but in this context the implication is that those still under parental training (v. 4) are the ones who obey. Probably “in the Lord” should attach to the verb “obey.” The sense is “obey as part of your life in Christ.”

Although other Mosaic commands gave promises (e.g., Dt 12:28; 28:1–3) this is the first command of the Decalogue that does so. As with similar statements in Proverbs (e.g., 3:1–2), Eph 6:3 does not guarantee health and prosperity but teaches that following a parent’s wise counsel helps a child thrive and avoid pitfalls.

(2) Fathers (6:4)

Earlier Paul spoke about parents (v. 1: *goneis*); here he changed the word used in order to specifically address fathers (v. 4: *pateres*). In the ancient world, fathers were responsible for the children’s education. Negatively, fathers should avoid things that hurt children and thus cause them **anger** (e.g., humiliation, abuse, tyranny). Positively they should train (**discipline**) them and verbally guide (**instruction**) them in distinctively Christian ways.

c. Slaves and Masters (6:5–9)

In the Greco-Roman world, slaves were considered part of the household. Hence, Paul addresses the relationship between believing slaves and masters as part of his household instructions.

(1) Slaves (6:5–8)

Regarding slavery, it should be said, first, that the practice in Paul’s day was much like indentured servanthood: it was temporary and not based on race (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 801). Second, Paul’s commands do not mandate slavery but only regulate it.

With these caveats in mind, Paul put things negatively and positively. Negatively, slaves should avoid wrong motivations such as insincerity or pleasing only people (v. 6). Positively, they should show respect (v. 5), good will (v. 7a), and see their service as directed to God (vv. 5c, 6b, 7b). These commands are based on God’s impartial reward and judgment (v. 8).

(2) Masters (6:9)

Just as slaves had obligations toward masters, so also did masters toward slaves. **The same things** refers to the kinds of Christian attitudes seen in vv. 5–8. Masters must not indulge in abusive, tyrannical, or manipulative treatment (v. 9b).

C. Accomplishing God’s Purposes in Spiritual Conflict (6:10–20)

The Christian’s behavior has cosmic significance. For we interact, not only with people, but also with an unseen spiritual world. Although other passages in the NT mention spiritual conflict (e.g., 2Co 10:3–5; Jms 4:7; 1Pt 5:8), this section is unique in its length and detail.

1. Be Strong (6:10–13)

Living a life worthy of our calling (4:1) means living in God's strength (cf. 1Sm 30:6; Zch 10:12), not ours. Paul mentioned strength/power in his two prayers (1:19; 3:16). Now believers are commanded to live by God's strength, using the armor that God supplies (full armor is only in this paragraph and Lk 11:22).

Regarding the armor, first, God's armor is needed because we **struggle** (v. 12; only here in the NT, *pale* refers to battle or hand-to-hand combat) against evil spiritual forces. The NT informs us that their **schemes** (v. 11; cf. 4:14) can include at least the following: tempting to immorality (1Co 7:5), attempting to deceive (2Co 2:11; 11:13–14), taking advantage of bitterness (Eph 4:27), hindering ministry (1Th 2:18).

Second, steadfast allegiance to the gospel is the goal of having the armor. With it we **stand firm** (vv. 11, 13) and **resist** (v. 13). Both verbs imply attack from the enemy and imply what Paul explicitly stated earlier: believers have already been given victory and every blessing (see 1:3–13 and 2:4–10).

LESSON NUGGET – In one sense, “the whole armor of God” is a picture of Jesus Christ. Christ is the Truth (John 14:6), and He is our righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21) and our peace (Ephesians 2:14). His faithfulness makes possible our faith (Galatians 2:20); He is our salvation (Luke 2:30); and He is the Word of God (John 1:1, 14). This means that when we trusted Christ, we received the armor. Paul told the Romans what to do with the armor (Romans 13:11–14): Wake up (Romans 13:11), remove your dark deeds, and “put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:12). We do this by clothing ourselves by “put[ting] on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 13:14).

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, Wiersbe Study Bible and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*