




THE COMMUNITY

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What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

Ephesians 6:10-20

Introduction

As Paul closes this letter he reviews the many things he has already taught and modeled to the Ephesians. He shows us this summary through the lens of a great spiritual war.

You and I live between the two advents of Christ. At His first coming Jesus defeated sin and now has all rule, authority, power, and dominion (vv. 1:20-21). At the second coming, Christ will utterly vanquish sin and Satan and deliver us completely from the presence of sin for all eternity. But for now the battle still rages. Though we are awaiting the final eradication of evil, we can participate in Christ's victory now by relying on Him and taking up the armor and weaponry He has given us.

Take a quick look at Isaiah 11:1-5 and 59:17-20 and you will see two descriptions of Christ adorning armor to do battle. Paul took these images from Isaiah to summarize his letter to the Ephesians. And he changed it in a couple of ways. First of all, he describes a contemporary Roman warrior. In Paul's day, there was no stronger force than a Roman soldier fully equipped to engage his enemy. Secondly, and more importantly, the descriptions in Isaiah are of Christ and Paul applies those descriptions to the Ephesians themselves. Because we are God's workmanship (v. 2:10), members of His household (v. 2:19), and parts of Christ's body (v. 4:16), Christ invites us to wear His armor.

Belt of Truth

Under his armor a Roman soldier wore at least one wide belt. This protected his lower abdomen, held his outfit together and served as a place to hang his armor. Paul uses this image to represent truth. In 4:25, he told the Ephesians that they must "put off falsehood and speak truthfully." In 5:9, he says that the fruit of godliness "consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth." He uses this imagery to show them that when they speak untruthfully, they give Satan an open door into their lives to create pain and turmoil.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Paul is alluding to the behavior found in 4:25-5:7, where the Ephesians were told to put off malice, slander, bitterness, rage, impurity, sexual immorality, anger, and

What's the Big Idea?

Despite living in a hostile battlefield we can stand firm against our enemy as we depend on Christ, believing and obeying Him.

What's the Problem?

We have an enemy that hates us and seeks to exploit our weaknesses.

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several other sinful practices. They were also told to be kind, compassion-ate, and thankful. By using the metaphor of a breastplate, we see more clearly that it is our hearts that Satan targets through these sins. Our obedience and passion for the Lord fade as our hearts are captivated by greed, lust, hatred, and the rest.

Feet Fitted with Readiness from the gospel

Isaiah 52:7 gives us a helpful commentary on what “feet shod with the readiness that comes from the gospel” means. It says, “How beautiful...are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace...who proclaim salvation.” Pictured here, then, is a willingness to proclaim the gospel. Paul’s own willing-ness is modeled throughout the letter – even a few verses later in 6:19-20 where he asks for prayer that he might “fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.”

The Shield of Faith, Helmet of Salvation and the Sword of the Scriptures

A Roman soldier’s shield was four feet long and overlaid with linen and wet leather to absorb fiery arrows. Some arrows used in warfare were hollow reeds filled with flammable liquid that would explode on impact.

Paul uses this imagery to represent the attacks of our enemy as he hurls life destroying lies at us. In the first two chapters Paul went to great lengths to describe all of the things that are true of us in Christ. Satan launches fiery arrows to cause us to disbelieve these central truths about God’s character and His love, care, and benevolence toward us. Without that shield of faith to deflect and extinguish the arrows we don’t stand a chance.

As we are lied to we can not only protect ourselves by faith, but we can counter attack, fending off Satan’s lies with the truth of the Word of God. It would be wise to commit to memory some of the great promises and blessings found in these two chapters.

Lessons

There are three important ideas communicated in this section. First, Paul wants his readers to be aware that they are engaged in spiritual war between the powers of darkness, and the power of God. It is easy to look at sin, divisions in the church, even problems in the world, from a strictly human perspective. But, this would be an incomplete picture of the true nature of our opposition.

Second, Paul defines victory as “standing your ground” against Satan’s attack. While that might not sound hugely offensive, it should be observed that any time you stand your ground against Satan and sin, you actually make progress. A temptation that is yielded to causes a loss of ground, but a temptation not yielded to causes strengthening of our character. Thus, we are victorious when we refuse to give ground to Satan’s attacks.

Third, Satan is a schemer. Evil is not a lifeless state of affairs. There is careful thought and strategy that is being mounted against the believer from the spiritual forces of darkness; and those strategies, as we might well imagine, are aimed at our weak and vital areas for maximum effect.

God has given us what we need to win this war. By believing Him, obeying Him and depending on His strength we can be victorious while we await His final conquering of evil.

What’s Our Response?

You want to help your group recognize that there really is a spiritual battle and they are at risk.

Further you want to practice the disciplines that Paul represents as armor so they can draw close to God and stand firm.

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What Are the Questions?

Ephesians 6:10-20

Launch

When was a time recently where you became more aware of the spiritual war that is going on behind the scenes?

Explore

Read 6:10-13

1. What does Paul want us to understand about the battle we face as Christians?
2. Throughout the letter, Paul has stressed that we must rely on God's strength in and through us (See 3:14-19). What's the difference between using our own strength and being strong in God's might?
3. If Christ has defeated Satan and all evil forces, why do we still struggle with sin?
4. In vv. 11-12, what reasons does Paul give for the command "Put on the full armor of God"?
5. In this battle how is victory defined?

Read 14-20

6. Paul compares the warrior's belt to truth. Take a look at a few other references to truth in Ephesians (vv. 1:13; 4:15, 21; 5:9). Jesus, speaking of Satan, said, "he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44)." What are some ways that we can fail to stand in the truth?

7. We are not only to live lives characterized by truth, but also righteousness (pictured here as a breastplate). Read Ephesians 4:29 – 5:12 What are a few ways that impurity can discredit a believer?

8. Read Isaiah 52:7. How does this help us to better understand what is meant by "feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace?"

9. In what ways is faith a shield?

10. What might be some of Satan's flaming arrows that would cause us to doubt what Paul taught in chapters one and two?

11. In what ways is the Word of God like a sword?

12. How should the reality of spiritual battle affect the way a Christian prays?

Apply

13. What does it mean to rely on Christ's strength and not our own?

14. All of us have a few chinks in our armor. What's an area you would like to grow in? Where do you most need God's power in your life?

15. Take a moment and consider if there are any areas of your life where you do not speak or act in a truthful way, giving Satan a foothold (4:27).

16. The breastplate protected the heart. How has your heart been wounded by any of these things? What tactics has Satan used to try to exploit this weakness and get a foothold in your life?

17. What has been one of the most meaningful places where you have heard and learned from God's word on a consistent basis?

NOTES:

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What Are the Answers?

1. Paul commands believers to stand strong in a hostile world by depending on God's strength to maintain integrity, purity, and the peace of the gospel, and to pursue faith, deliverance from sin, and God's word so that they experience a lifestyle of prayerful intimacy with Him.

2. The entire passage flows from this first verse. Paul commands us to function in God's strength and put on His armor. Christ alone has gained victory over sin and He invites us to rely on Him and be strengthened by Him. Before Paul began giving commands in this letter, he prayed that God would grant the Ephesians power through His Spirit in them. It is God's power within us that enables us to experience victory. Earlier in the letter (vv. 4:22-24), Paul commanded us to put on the new self, which is created to be like God in righteousness. Now he commands us to put on the armor of God.

3. Christ defeated sin at the cross, and we can experience a measure of victory over sin now by seeking Him, relying on Him and depending on His strength. In the future, He will remove sin completely from our experience.

4. So we can stand against the devil's attacks. Because we do not wrestle against flesh and blood.

5. By standing firm.

6. Truth, like the belt, must under- gird every other piece of armor. We can deny the truth by denying the gospel (1:13), adopting worldly beliefs (4:14) or by living inconsis- tently with the gospel (4:19-24).

7. It undermines our intimacy with God and can damage our reputation.

8. Pictured here is a willingness to proclaim the gospel.

9. It blocks Satan's lies so they don't penetrate our minds and destroy us.

10. Allow the group to discuss.

11. It is an offensive weapon that we can use to counter attack Satan's lies. Consider the way Jesus used Deuteronomy to respond to Satan's attacks in the wilderness. See Matthew 4.

12. We should pray with an aware- ness that much is at stake and that our prayers make a critical difference.

13. It means more of an emphasis on prayer and dependence on Christ and His faithfulness. Focusing on His sovereignty allows us to stop striving.

14.-17. Allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:12



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