

INTO THE MYSTERY

A STUDY IN EPHESIANS

Eph 6:10-20
Nic Gilmour

Battle Without: Contending With Our Spiritual Reality

NCCC
Nov 28-29, AD2020

INTRO: There is a fierce battle waging, of which we see but a fragment. Jesus has decisively won the victory, and we are called to steadfastly contend against the dying throes of our very real enemy.

1. V10 “Finally” – this passage not just a whacky postscript for the ‘demon-hunters’ in our midst. But a culmination of the themes in Ephesians – supremacy of Christ, cosmic reconciliation, and a radically holistic Gospel.
2. V10 “...be strong *in the Lord* and in *His* mighty power” (lit. ‘be empowered in *Kúriō* [ref: Jesus, the Lord our Master, akin to *YHWH* of OT] and in the strength of the might of Him’). *Not* mere human power. Turbo..
3. V11 “armor of God” – it’s His armor. But we get to wear it. The ongoing roles of the Spirit (*dunamis*), and of the Jesus-community (*koinōnia*) in putting and keeping our armor on – *ergo*: beware denuded or lone soldiers, who are easily picked-off.
4. V11 “devil’s schemes” (don’t be unaware 2 Cor 2:11). Remember, “satan is most successfully present where he is denied, forgotten, unexpected or unnoticed.” (*God, Revelation and Authority* by Carl Henry)
5. V 12a “our struggle is not against flesh and blood” – humans are never the enemy. Who/ what is then? And how do we separate the person from the “principality”? (AK)
6. V12b “rulers...authorities...powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (1:21-22, 3:10) – this is not outdated or mythological or (only) kid’s stuff. Our enemy *is* real and, without Jesus, we’re toast.
 - a. Bad news / good news: we’re in a fierce battle. But satan is finite, Jesus is infinite in power, and we know who wins.
 - b. Now-and-not-yet Kingdom: “[w]e know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1Jn5:19).
 - i. WHILST Jesus is sovereign King and Lord Col 1: 16-20; God has power over all creation Ps 29; God rules both individuals Acts 17:24-27 *and* nations Rom 13:1-6; and Jesus defeated the ‘powers’ thru the cross Col 1:14-15...
 - ii. YET, satan is “ruler” (Eph 2:2), “prince” (Jn 12:31) and even “god” (2Cor 4:4) of our current world who has “blinded the minds of unbelievers.” In short, “whilst satan is defeated, he is not yet destroyed” (*Warfare Prayer* by Peter Wagner)
 - iii. So, er, what *does* satan ‘rule’ (or influence) then?
 1. The demonic realm.
 2. ‘powers and principalities’ (1:21, 3:10, Gal 4:8-9, Col 2:8,20) - that which we “absolutize” (*The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* by Lesslie Newbigin); or the system that pervades human thinking – the “the spirit of the world” (1 Cor 2:12) – which undermines our security as God’s beloved children; 1 John 5:19; Eph 1:5, Rom 8:17, and see Dean Sherman, YWAM)
 - c. Why?! satan & Co’s “limited power is prolonged only for the advancement of God’s glory as His people contend with them” (*Concise Theology*, by JI Packer). Big topic, sorry dear reader for the limited analysis here...
 - d. Call to move beyond denial, or fear, to *contending*. Remembering the Spirit “who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world” (1Jn 4:4), and ultimately “the battle is the LORD’s” (1 Sam 17:47b; 1 Jn 3:8; Col 2:15)
7. V 13 “*when* the day of evil comes” – the reality of cosmic/ metaphysical/ supernatural/ spiritual war. Western arrogance to deny or diminish it. We see but a fragment. Evil *will* come against you. Are you ready?

8. Vv11, 13-14 “stand” and “standing” – importance of character of warriors in an unbroken line – don’t be the one who lets the enemy in – we already have the victory 1 Cor 15:57-58. Hold “the crown of the hill...our union in Christ” (*Ephesians* by Max Turner).
9. Vv11, 13 “full armor” – make sure it’s *all* of it, well maintained, and expertly used.
10. Vv14-17 Armor (ubiquitous Roman legionnaires, also see Is 11:4-5, 59:17). Below Table adapted from *Ephesians: NLT Life Application Study Bible* by Harold Hoehner, Moises Silva & Klyne Snodgrass:

ARMOR	USE	APPLICATION
Belt	Truth	The devil fights with lies, & sometimes his lies <i>sound</i> like the truth; but believers know God’s truth, which defeats the lies.
Breastplate	Righteousness	The devil often attacks our heart – our emotions, self-worth & trust. God’s righteousness is the body armor that protects our heart, by assuring us of His loving approval.
“Feet fitted”	Peace that comes from the Gospel	The devil wants us to think that sharing the Gospel is a futile task – it’s too big, & the negative responses overwhelming. But here we find our unyielding motivation.
Shield	Faith	The devil’s “flaming arrows” include insults, setbacks & temptations. The shield of faith protects us & reminds us of God’s perspective & ultimate victory.
Helmet	Salvation	The helmet protects our mind from doubting God’s saving work for us, and for all creation.
Spirit-sword	Word of God	There are times when we need to proactively fight against the devil. When tempted or attacked, abide & trust in & use God’s Word.

11. V18 “pray in the Spirit” (link to verse before where the Word is the ‘sword of the Spirit’. This is the KEY battle plan for the armored. 2 Cor 10:3-5.
 - a. “Prayer warriors with no real grasp of what the gospel is all about (the gospel of peace and the cosmic restoration in Christ), may be spirited, but no more useful on the field than a soldier without weapons.” (*Ephesians* by Max Turner)
12. V18 “be alert”. 1 Pet 5:8 “the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion...” Yikes!
13. Vv19-20 “pray for me” – fearless evangelism. “mystery of the Gospel” – 1 Tim 3:16. Action required, and “courage is doing the right thing, terrified.” (Jill Briscoe)

BENEDICTION – Vv23-24: “Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the LORD Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our LORD Jesus Christ with an unending love.”

Questions for the brave of heart

- Does the reality of our spiritual battle fill you with fear, wonder, confidence, or any other emotion? Why do you reckon that is?
- Have you been tripped-up lately by the “devil’s schemes”? How should you wizen up?
- Look at the table above. How is your armor? Ask someone close to you what you need to strengthen and increase proficiency at.
- Have you prayed ‘in the Spirit’ today? What’s stopping you?
- With a mate, identify the biggest battle waging around you right now, and seek God on how to contend together against it. Remember, “the battle is the LORD’s”!