



A COLORFUL MYSTERY

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A STUDY IN EPHESIANS
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a field guide



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DRAWING NEAR

The faithful Christian life is a battle—warfare on a grand scale—because when God begins to bless, Satan begins to attack. Have you, or someone you know, experienced what you would call “spiritual warfare”? If so, how did you—or they—respond? Explain what happened?

Q THE CONTEXT

Paul’s description of the true Christian, described in chapters 1–3, and the faithful Christian life, 4:1–6:9, lead him to an exposition on spiritual warfare in 6:10–20. The faithful Christian life is a battle—warfare on a grand scale—because when God begins to bless, Satan begins to attack. If we are walking worthy of our calling, in humility rather than pride, in unity rather than divisiveness, in the new self rather than the old, in love rather than lust, in light rather than darkness, in wisdom rather than foolishness, in the fullness of the Spirit rather than the drunkenness of wine, and in mutual submission rather than self-serving independence, then we can be absolutely certain that we will have opposition and conflict. The good news is that God does not

leave His children unprepared or unprotected in this cosmic conflict. This passage is a heartening reminder of all that God has done and all that we must do to win the victory. In Christ, not only can we withstand the devil's assaults, but we can also defeat the diabolical forces that are arrayed against God and His Church. The gates of hell cannot stand against us!¹

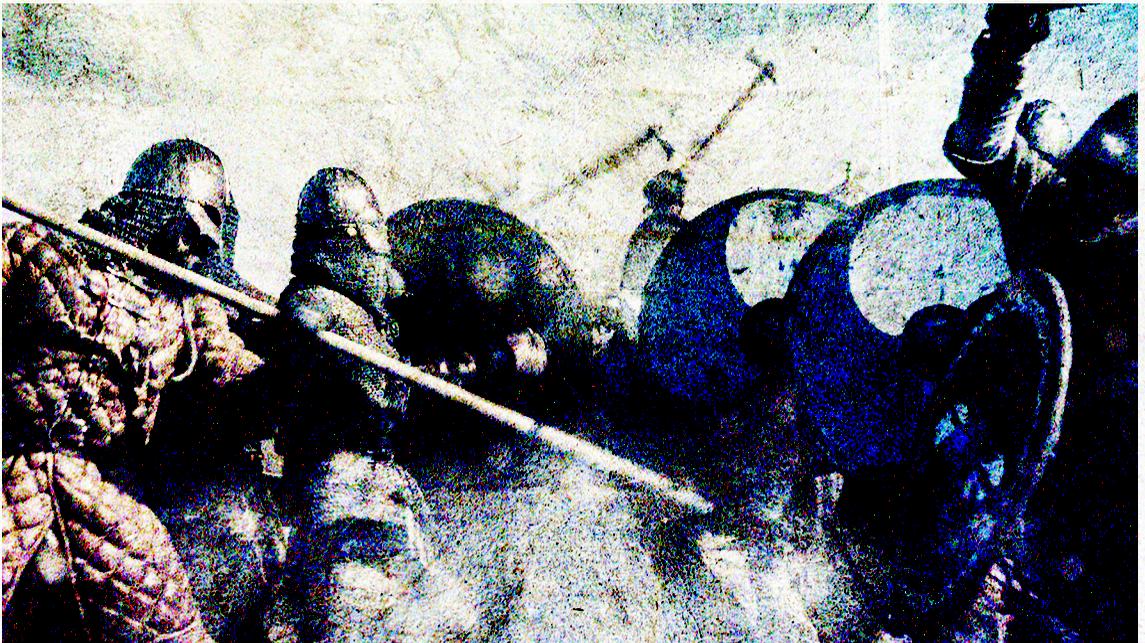


KEYS TO THE TEXT

Spiritual Warfare: The true believer who lives the Spirit-controlled life can be sure to be in a spiritual war. The fight is a supernatural one against Satan, whose schemes are propagated through the evil world system over which he rules, and are carried out by his demon hosts. The Lord provides His saints with sufficient armor to combat and thwart the adversary. Paul

uses common armor worn by Roman soldiers as the analogy for the believers spiritual defense and affirms its necessity if one is to hold his position while under attack.

Ultimately, Satan's power over Christians is already broken and the great war is won through Christ's crucifixion and resurrection, which forever conquered the power of sin and death. However, in life on earth, battles of temptation go on regularly. The Lord's power, the strength of His Spirit, and the force of biblical truth are required for victory.¹



¹MacArthur, John. *Ephesians: Our Immeasurable Blessings in Christ*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

² *Ibid.*

UNLEASHING THE TEXT

Read 6:10–24, noting the key words and definitions to the right of the passage.

Ephesians 6:10-24¹

The Armor of God

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power 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 do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. **13** Therefore take up 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 waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, **15** and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; **16** above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. **17** And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; **18** praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- **19** and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. **21** But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you;

Key Terms

BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE POWER OF HIS MIGHT (V. 10)

—Believers must rely completely on God's omnipotence to win the battle.

STAND (V. 11) —to stand firm, in a military sense; to maintain a critical position while under attack

WILES (V. 11) —schemes; the Greek word from which comes the English term "methods." Carries the idea of craftiness, cunning, deception.

WRESTLE (V. 12) —hand-to-hand combat

PRINCIPALITIES ... POWERS ... RULERS ... SPIRITUAL [HOSTS] OF WICKEDNESS (V. 12)

—A description of the different strata and rankings of invisible, supernatural demons and evil spirits who are part of the devil's empire.

SHOD YOUR FEET (V. 15)

—Roman soldiers wore boots with nails (cleats) in them to help brace their feet in all terrains. For the Christian, the gospel of peace with God gives sure footing and a sound foundation.

SHIELD OF FAITH (V. 16)

—The word is the Greek term for the large 2.5 X 4.5 foot shields carried by soldiers to protect their entire bodies. As long as Christians place their trust in God, they will be protected.

FIERY DARTS OF THE WICKED

ONE (V. 16) —In ancient times, arrows were often tipped with cloth, covered with pitch and ignited; the idea is that our faith affords us protection against the many temptations of the devil.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION (V. 17)

—protects the head, for Satan attacks a believer's assurance of salvation with his weapons of doubt and discouragement

¹New King James Bible: New Testament. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1982.

22 whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts. **23** Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **24** Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

1) What does mean when he states categorically that our fight is “not against flesh and blood”?

Underline each word and phrase that describes our enemy and his/its activity.

2. What protective (defensive) pieces of armor are children of God given in their ongoing struggle with the forces of evil? What offensive weapons are we given with which to wage war?

3. Why does Paul emphasize the concept of standing (vv. 11, 13-14)

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT (V. 17) —The truth of Scripture, the only weapon that a Christian should carry into battle.

PRAYER (V. 18) —general requests of God

SUPPLICATION (V. 18) —specific petitions

IN THE SPIRIT (V. 18) —in the name of Christ, consistent with His nature and will

BEING WATCHFUL (V. 18) —staying awake, being vigilant

THAT UTTERANCE MAY BE GIVEN ME (V. 19) —Paul’s request is not for prayers for his personal well-being or physical comfort but for boldness to continue proclaiming the gospel, regardless of the cost.

AMBASSADOR (V. 20) —an envoy who represents a government

IN CHAINS (V. 19) —Paul wrote this letter while under Roman imprisonment.

COMFORT YOUR HEARTS (V. 22) — literally “to call alongside” so as to bring encouragement



GOING DEEPER

Paul expounded often on what it means to walk in the light. Look for further insight as you read Galatians 5:16-26,

Luke 4:1-13¹

Rules for Christian Households

1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, **2** being tempted for forty days by the devil. And in those days He ate nothing, and afterward, when they had ended, He was hungry. **3** And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." **4** But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'" **5** Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. **6** And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. **7** Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."^a **8** And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" **9** Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. **10** For it is written: 'He shall give His angels charge over you, To keep you,' **11** "and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, Lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" **12** And Jesus answered and said to him, "It has been said, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" **13** Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.

EXPLORING THE MEANING

4] What method did Jesus use to defend Himself against the attack of Satan? (Consider also, Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 22:44)

¹New King James Bible: New Testament. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1982.

5] Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. What extra insights into spiritual battle do you find in this passage? What is the tone of this passage? Why?

6] Read 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8. What should be the Christian's frame of mind?

TRUTH FOR TODAY

It is easy for believers – especially in the Western world, where the church is generally prosperous and respected – to be complacent and become oblivious to the seriousness of the battle around them. They rejoice in “victories” that involve no battles and in a kind of peace that is merely the absence of conflict. Theirs is the victory and peace of the draft dodger or defector who refuses to fight. They are not interested in armor because they are not engaged in war. God gives no deferments or exemptions. His people are at war and will continue to be at war until He returns and takes charge of the earth. But even the most willing and eager soldier of Christ is helpless without God's provision. A Christian who has no conflict is a Christian who has retreated from the front lines of service.¹

7] What does this study teach or remind you about spiritual warfare? How aware are you of the cosmic conflict going on between God and His enemies?

8] In what specific ways/areas does Satan most often tempt (wage war against) you? Why those ways?

¹MacArthur, John. Ephesians: Our Immeasurable Blessings in Christ. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

9] How successfully do you resist him? What new ways do you need to put on your armor and stand?

10] Ask God to give you the grace to stand to stand in His strength and to fight as you should. Write out additional reflections and questions you may have in the form of a prayer below.

