



THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 6:10-24

Gospel-Centered Spiritual Warfare:

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Church family, these past few sermons have been hard. Paul commands us to obey Christ, and this obedience manifests itself in every area of our life. You may have walked away from some of these sermons discouraged. My hope today is that you walk away incredibly encouraged. Paul concludes the book of Ephesians by discussing the armor of God. This is not an add on to the book of Ephesians; instead, it is a fitting conclusion to this book. Paul has discussed in the book of Ephesians the nature of the gospel (Ephesians 1-3) and how the gospel should transform us (Ephesians 4-6). At the end of the book, Paul comforts us by commanding us to be strong in God's might. Basically, we need to know that God gives us the power to obey. We do not obey in our strength. Christ gives us the strength to obey. Thus, my



hope is that every Christian walks away from this sermon, encouraged to rely on God for the power to obey. My hope is that non-Christians would see Christ as the conquering king that he is and that they would trust him for life, today.

The main point of this sermon is that the church is commanded to be strong in the Lord by putting on his armor.

Let's investigate what it looks like to wage this war well in Ephesians 6:10-24.



**BE STRONG IN THE LORD
(EPHESIANS 6:10)**

“ *10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.* ”

In verse 10, Paul commands the church to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might (10). Church family, living the gospel transformed life of Ephesians 4-6 necessitates supernatural strength. The natural strength that you and I can muster up is not enough. We all experience this every day. Wives, husbands, children, parents, employers, and employees all struggle with the commands of Ephesians 5:15-6:9. These commands are



hard and necessitate strength, but not a man-centered strength. They necessitate a God-centered strength, and this is what God gives to his people, his strength to live transformed lives.

This is evident in the phrase in the Lord which is not new to us. We have been marching through this letter, and we have seen it and similar phrases many times. For example, the phrase in Christ was found throughout Ephesians 1:3-14 to indicate that our salvation is in the Lord. These phrases indicate that we are made right with God because God unites us to Jesus. We call this doctrine “union with Christ.” Church family, being made right with God is all about being in Christ. However, there is an ugly philosophy that says growth in the Lord is accomplished in ourselves. This is wrong. Paul calls us here, at Ephesians 6:10, to be strong in the Lord, not in ourselves. Paul is not calling the church to self-powered strength, but to supernatural strength.

The fact that the gospel-transformed life takes supernatural strength is also evident in the phrase in the strength of his might which, again, is also not new to us. This phrase is found at Ephesians 1:19. There, Paul prays that the church would know three things: the hope of God’s calling (1:18), the riches of his inheritance (1:18), and his strength of his might (19). Paul explains that



God's strength is incredibly mighty: the Father raised Jesus from the dead (1:20-23) and us from the dead (2:1-10). Our initial salvation, then, depends on God and his strength, not us. So again, we reject the idea that our growth depends on our strength. It depends on being in the strength of his might.

The fact that our initial salvation and growth depends on us being in the Lord and on his might indicates that the same supernatural strength that saved us by raising us from the dead is the same strength that moves us to obedience.

Indeed, we are to be strong in the Lord and in his might, not our own.

BE STRONG BY PUTTING ON AND TAKING UP (EPHESIANS 6:11-13)

“*11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil 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 firm.*



Now, the power we need to grow in the Lord comes from God; yet, we are called to action. The relationship between God's action and our own is that God gives us the strength to act. The action we are responsible for is "to put on" (11) and "to take up" "the whole armor of God" (13). Let's not make a deadly mistake here. The strength to "put on" and "take up" comes from God. This detail is illustrated nicely by Philippians 2:12-13. Here Paul says,

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Thus, we are called to action, but we act in the strength of the Lord which is the same strength that originally saved us!

The act we do in the strength of the Lord is to "put on" some armor (14-16) and "take up" other armor (17). In other words, we get ready for battle. Paul describes our battle in detail. First, we war against the schemes of the devil (11). The idea of "schemes" is craftiness. The devil's war plan is crafty. Often, those the devil wars against do not know they are battling. Think of Eve, for example. When the snake questioned God's word, Eve was being assaulted spiritually, and yet, she had no idea. Church



family, the devil has schemes for every person and in every stage of life. You cannot escape them, and sadly, we too often fail to recognize his assaults. He is tricky!

Second, we war against spiritual forces (12). Let's be clear: our spiritual enemy is not happy with us or our Lord. Remember Ephesians 3:9-10: God's wisdom is now being proclaimed to our enemies. You see, our enemies thought that they conquered our Lord at the cross; and yet, now, as the gospel spreads to every corner of this planet, the devil sees the manifold wisdom of God. The message is clear – they lose.

Therefore, physical armor will not suffice. What we need is spiritual protection, and this is what God provides for us. Paul commands us to “take up” the armor that we might stand. Church family, our perseverance in the faith depends on us taking up the armor. Notice the word “that.” This indicates purpose. What Paul is about to describe is, thus, essential to our souls, but let's not forget that God is giving us the strength to take up this armor.

STAND READY FOR BATTLE (6:14-16)

“ 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

Paul's command is that we take up the armor and stand ready for battle (14). A soldier who sleeps amid a battle or who sits while a war rages is not ready. We are to be ready by standing dressed in God's armor. Let's not forget, perhaps an obvious point. We stand in this battle dressed in God's armor (11 and 13). This is not the armor of man or even the armor of Paul. We are to stand dressed in God's armor.

Church family, this armor is essential to this spiritual warfare. This armor is...

- *Truth (14)*
- *Righteousness (14)*
- *The gospel of peace (15)*
- *Faith (16)*
- *Salvation (17)*
- *The word of God (17)*

Now, these verses are rightly beloved by all of us so let's make some preliminary points. First, Christ came and defeated the devil by wearing this armor. He came wearing truth and righteousness as a belt as prophesied in Isaiah 11:5 and as lived out in the gospels. Not only did Jesus live out our obedience for us, he preached the message of the kingdom. His feet were quick to bring us the gospel (Isaiah 52:7, Mark 1:15). God was his shield as he trusted him even at the cross, and it was prophesied that his helmet would be salvation (Isaiah 59:17). The Scripture was his sword (Isaiah 49:2) when battling the devil (Matt 4:1-11) and the religious elite of his day (Matt 19:3). Jesus came and conquered the devil by wearing this armor.

Second, Christ gives us his armor to wear as we participate in his spiritual battle. This means we do not battle alone; Jesus has gone before us. Moreover, because Jesus has gone before us, we, thus, battle as victors! Christ has already defeated our enemy. Therefore, we should take great courage to “take up” Jesus’ armor knowing that he has already defeated the enemy!

We these things in mind, let’s investigate this armor (14). First, there is the belt of truth and breastplate of righteousness. Spiritual warfare means that we, like Jesus, live righteously and speak the truth. Thus, spiritual warfare involves our ethics. The way we relate to one another must be modeled after Jesus who wore this armor before us.

Second, we ready our feet with the gospel of peace (15). It is no accident that Paul describes the gospel here as “of peace.” Nowhere else in the Scripture is the gospel called “the gospel of peace,” but here, Paul highlights the important fact that the gospel is what makes peace. The gospel, alone, church family has the ability to make peace between your dead and dying non-Christian friends and Christ. Thus, preach the gospel of peace. Tell people about their sin and the consequences of sin. And then, tell them about Christ and what he did for sinners on the cross.



Third, we take up the shield of faith. Church family, our battle necessitates faith in God. The devil is firing his weapon – flaming darts at us. This can be a frightening reality, but God has given us provision to extinguish these darts. What is that provision, faith? However, faith itself is not the Christian’s shield; rather, faith in God is our shield. Often in Scripture God is called the shield of his people (Genesis 15:1; Deuteronomy 33:29; 2 Sam 22:31//Ps 18:31; Psalm 3:4; 59:12; 84:10, 12; 119:114; 115:9; 144:2; Proverbs 2:7; 30:5). Church family, God himself is the shield of those who trust him, and he has the power to extinguish the devil’s darts.

TAKE UP THE FINAL ARMOR (6:17-20)

“*17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.*”



Now, in Ephesians 6:17, Paul slightly shifts gears. He moves away from describing how we should stand (14-16) to now stating that we should “take up.” These final two pieces of the armor of God are the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit (17).

The idea of the helmet of salvation is that fighting the devil means we constantly look for protection and encouragement in God’s salvation. We embrace with joy that God has saved us from our sins, and we look to him for our future deliverance. Despite what trials come and how the devil may attack us, we look to God for help. This is like Christ who looked to his Father even on the cross.

Finally, we are to take up the sword which is the word of God (17). This is the way that God does battle against his enemies. It is not an accident, then, that Satan is constantly whispering in our ear’s falsehoods about the word of God. He whispered this to Adam and Eve, and they believed him. Notice how Eve misquoted Jesus! He whispered this to Jesus, but Jesus did not give into the snake’s lies. The word of God is our offensive weapons; we must be ready like Jesus to use it at all times.

Now, verses 18-20 explain how we are to “take” the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. We are to



do it with prayer (18) and with alertness (18). Our warfare necessitates prayer and notice how extensive this prayer is. Paul says that we should pray at all times, all kinds of prayers, with all perseverance, for all the saints (18-19). Successful spiritual warfare which is obeying the commands of Ephesians 4-6 depends on extensive prayer.

Notice, not only how extensive this prayer is, but also how other centered this prayer is. Paul requests that the church pray for him that he would have the boldness to proclaim the gospel (19-20). Paul prayer request for boldness to preach the gospel is not off topic. Paul makes this request because the proclamation of the gospel is the means God uses to advance his kingdom against the kingdom of the devil. Thus, integral to spiritual warfare is gospel proclamation.

I find some comfort in the fact that Paul asks that the church pray that he has boldness. This is what we all need. Yes, we need to pray for opportunities, but sometimes God gives me opportunities, and I do not take them. I need boldness. Let's all pray for one another that God would give us boldness to proclaim the glorious gospel to all peoples.



A BENEDICTION OF GRACE AND PEACE (6:21-24)

“*21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. 23 Peace be to the brothers,[a] and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.*”

Paul’s benedictions are intentional so let’s make a few concluding remarks. First, Paul’s care for this church. He is not content to write them this amazing, God saturated letter, he sends them a friend. He sends them Tychicus to inform them of their well-being. Paul cares deeply for this church.

Second, notice that the letter begins and ends in the same way. Ephesians 1:2 begins with a prayer that the church would experience grace and peace. Now, he closes the book in the same way. He prays that they would experience peace and grace. Church family, although the Ephesians are currently fighting a spiritual battle, they can experience peace now because they have experienced grace. God’s grace and peace are ours even amid our spiritual battle.



CONCLUSION

Church family, Ephesians holds a special place in Scripture for the clarity of Paul's gospel proclamation and for the clarity of how the gospel should affect us. Indeed, the gospel transforms us from death to life. Let's walk accordingly as individual believers and as the body of Christ.

Non-Christian friend, the gospel can transform you too. Christ truly did live the life you were called to live and then he died your death. If you would turn from your sins today and trust in Christ, then all of the blessings of being Christ will be giving to you as a gift. You will get Christ! I am praying that you would come to him today. If you have begun to trust Jesus, please reach out to us through email. We would love to connect with you about how to live of life of following Jesus.

LET'S PRAY

God, I pray that you would give us the strength to obey you for we desperately want to obey you. Thank you that your power not only saves us from sin but keeps us to the end. We pray these things in Jesus name, amen.