

# Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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## The Epistle to the Ephesians: Ephesians 6:10-24 - Warfare

We have now come to the end of our considerations of the Letter to the Ephesians. What a letter it has been! We have learned of the remarkable blessing God had planned for mankind, through His Son; we are blessed with every spiritual blessing - all in Christ (see Ephesians 1:3). The place of every believer is with Christ, purchased through His death on the cross. We are now assured of an inheritance with Christ and given the certainty of it, by the Holy Spirit, until we come into full possession of it. We enjoy eternal life now, united with all believers in "one body" of which the Lord Jesus is the Head. In the assembly of believers in this world, He has provided all we need for worship, service and working together. Now He desires that we walk as "imitators" of God, each in the position in which He has placed us in this world.

### Be strong in the Lord

Our passage today is the last part of this letter and covers Ephesians 6:10-24. Please turn to it if you will. We may say that all that Paul has said, so far, is very good. Maybe, we feel like the hymn says: "I feel like singing all the time". The problems have all been dealt with. All we need is to go on our way rejoicing. Paul knows better. So he says in Ephesians 6:10: "Finally, my brethren be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." We exercise to make us strong. Lack of exercise brings weakness. We need continual exercise in all matters regarding our relationship and communion with God. Be strong!

### There is a war in progress

Paul is as well aware as anyone of the reasons for this. He knows living, as a Christian, will not be easy. There is a war in progress, not of our making. There is an enemy and that enemy is the Devil. Paul says in Ephesians 6:11, we face "the wiles of the Devil". What craft the Devil will use to obtain his purpose! That purpose is to spoil, to disrupt, to break down every form of Christian enjoyment and communion with the Lord, to distract our attention from the Word of God, the Bible, and make us ineffective Christians. He wants us to succeed. Perhaps we ask ourselves, "How can we go on?" So Paul says: "... be strong in the Lord..." This is the way.

### An angel of light and a roaring lion

How does the Devil deal with us? Paul writes to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11:14: "... For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." We may get taken in by what appears to be so good. Again, the Apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 5:8: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." How devastating to meet that adversary! So Paul says: "... be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might..." (Ephesians 6:10).

We are also told a little about this warfare. It is not physical in the sense of "flesh and blood", Ephesians 6:12. This enemy directs the powers of darkness of this world, those who have no desire for God and His blessings. He controls the realm of spiritual wickedness where all that surrounds him fulfils his purposes, where his demons are at his direction and call. Let us never forget that these forces exist and we need ever to "...be strong in the Lord..." (Ephesians 6:10).

### Be prepared

We have to realise that the Christian life, with all its blessings and privileges, is a battle with an enemy, far greater than we are. This enemy is out, not to rob us of our Christianity - this he cannot do - but to make us totally ineffective in our witness for the Lord Jesus. We need to be prepared, as a soldier would be and train to be strong; otherwise we will certainly fail against the wiles of the Devil. So the Apostle writes: "...Take unto you the whole armour of God." The good soldier ensures that he wears the armour, which will defend against both the strategy and the assault of the enemy.

**Still standing**

Let us see also the purpose for which the armour is meant. In Ephesians 6:11 Paul writes: "that ye may be able to stand against..." and in Ephesians 6:13 he says, "...that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand". This is the essential - to still be standing at the end of the assault. So we are standing at the commencement and standing at the end - how wonderful to be able to withstand all the attacks of the Devil, and still stand!

**The Armour**

The armour is made up of six pieces, three are fixed or attached to the soldier and three are taken up by the soldier. Almost all are defensive, only one has any possible value in attack and that is the last one - the sword. Let us see what they mean.

**The Girdle**

The first is the girdle (Ephesians 6:14). We can think of the oriental in his long flowing robe. When at leisure he does not need the girdle. But when there is to be action, when progress is necessary, the garment is gathered up and fixed into position by the girdle. The garment is, therefore, to be no hindrance to progress and the individual is prepared for action. There is a sense of security, everything is in order. Let us note also that this is a foundational garment. We must start with this. Everything else is useless without the girdle. Now Paul applies his example: "Having your loins girt about with truth" (Ephesians 6:14). How vital is the truth. This is not truthfulness or sincerity. It is the whole truth of God, the whole Christian doctrine, the whole Word of God. It means getting to know the truth, letting it get hold of us so that it governs our attitude to the world around. Let the truth be girdled around us; giving us strength, vigour and power for the life ahead. How vital it is to be prepared for action with the truth of God in the whole matter of living in this world with its dangers and attacks. Without knowledge of the truth, we will fail.

**The breastplate of righteousness**

The second is the breastplate (Ephesians 6:14). Paul probably had in mind the Roman soldier who was covered by the breastplate from neck to upper thighs. This covers the heart, the lungs and all the abdominal organs, which are referred to in the Psalms as reins (see Psalm 7:9, 16:7 26:2, 73:21, 39:13 ) and in the New Testament as "bowels" (see 2 Corinthians 6:12; Philippians 1:8, 2:1; Colossians 3:12; Philemon 7, 12, 20; 1 John 3:17). Paul speaks of "bowels of mercies" in writing to the Philippians (Philippians 2:1). These parts were thought to be the seat of the affections and feelings by people of old, so Paul speaks of putting on the "breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14). There is no more important part to be careful in protecting than our affections, our feelings. How often our affections lead to our conscience and our will. We need to protect these with righteousness, the quality of being right or just. When we received the Lord Jesus as Saviour, God saw us, and sees us now, made righteous because of the work of the cross. We have the righteousness of Christ (2 Peter 1:1). It is vital, if we are going to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11), that we maintain in a practical way this righteousness in daily living, especially protecting our affections, our feelings, our links with all around.

**The feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace**

The third piece of the armour is for the feet (Ephesians 6:15). How often we hear today of the neglect of our feet through ill-fitting shoes! We are bidden by Paul to stand. There must be no neglect of the feet! Unshod feet lead to easy prey and various defects. We walk in the dust and mud of the conditions around. The Roman soldier wore a type of sandal, made of stout material but providing mobility so that the wearer could move swiftly and unexpectedly. The stout material prevented the enemy's traps of pointed wood piercing the foot and hobnails were fitted to prevent sliding on soft conditions. The Christian soldier is told to have "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). So we see the type of material, strong, allowing mobility, safeguarding and secure and prepared. We need to be ready. Paul writes to Titus in Titus 3:1, "to be ready to every good work". How necessary is that security and that preparedness for the conflict ahead with such good news! In Ephesians 5:15, Paul writes "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming [or buying back for use] the time..." How are we walking today?

**The shield of faith**

Now we have dealt briefly with the first three items. The Apostle goes on, in Ephesians 6:16, "Above all, taking the shield of faith". Now here is a change from the first group. It means, in addition to, and covers all of the next three items. You will also notice that, with the first three, it was a matter of "having". In Ephesians 6:16 this changes to "taking". It is necessary to take the shield of faith. The Roman shield was large, perhaps 4 feet long and 2 to 3 feet broad. Our shield needs to be large enough for all of "the fiery darts of the devil" (Ephesians 6:16). We need a faith to

apply to all the devil's darts. Holding that shield suggests that we are always looking to God for His grace and we immediately apply that faith to all the problems. When the dart of strange thinking, or evil thoughts or other disturbances, in prayer or worship come from the outside, we apply our faith, all that we believe in God, to quench whatever the devil will throw at us. It will immediately bring a proper balance to the matter. What a shield we have!

### **The helmet of salvation**

Then we come to the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17). The helmet was a type of cap made of leather, but ornamented with pieces of metal for added protection. It is most important to maintain good protection of the head. This has a spiritual application to the mind, the understanding, our intellect. How easy, without the helmet, to want to give up, not just the attack, but the battle. Writing to the Galatians in Galatians 6:9, Paul says, "Let us not be weary in well doing". Now this helmet is the helmet of salvation. Salvation brings to us, not only the fact of sins forgiven, but a present aspect and a future aspect. We are being saved now in all the circumstances of life and we are going to be saved, certainly and finally, when we reach the glories of heaven. In writing to the Thessalonians, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, the Apostle writes, "...putting on ... for a helmet, the hope of salvation. This grand assurance of hope of the Christian is the certain hope or knowledge of that final salvation. When our mind is disturbed by those fiery darts, we can assure ourselves that "[nothing] ... shall separate us from the love of God..." (Romans 8:38-39); all is assured in that final salvation of all believers. Let nothing disturb that!

### **The Sword of the Spirit**

The last piece is the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). This is the only part, which is not for protection, but it is defensive in that it keeps the enemy at bay. It can be used in attack and the Apostle James writes in James 4:7 - "Resist the devil and he will flee from you". When the devil assaults, he desires to produce a feeling that all is hopeless. We do not yield. The sword of the Spirit is in our hand. It is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). We read it, we meditate on it, we learn what God has to say to us. When that Devil hurls a fiery dart of doubt at us, we defend ourselves with the wonderful faith we possess and the great assurance of eternal salvation. Then the Holy Spirit brings a word from Scripture to our minds and we return that to the Devil. He will flee. This was the course that the Lord dealt with him in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). The devil left Him, we read in Matthew 4:11. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to understand the Word of God, the truth. The great power of the enemy requires the greater power of the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17).

### **The whole armour of God**

So we see what provision there is for each one of us to face the wiles of the Devil - the whole Truth which has been made known to us, the righteousness we have and must maintain, that wonderful gospel of peace. Then we take the Faith which confirms the correctness of our way, the full assurance of salvation to the end, and that Spirit guided use of the Word of God. What more can we want?

### **Praying always**

But Paul is not finished. In Ephesians 6:18 he adds: "Praying always..." Communion with God is a necessity. Notice, too, the qualifications Paul uses to describe our praying, First, "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" - our seeking for help, for blessing, must be in accordance with the purpose of the Holy Spirit. Second, "Watching thereunto with all perseverance" - we need to persevere and never give up. We can also make our prayers personal. Note that the Apostle adds, "for all saints" (Ephesians 6:18). There are many who need your prayers. It is so encouraging, when we have passed through some difficulty or problem, to be told by another believer, "I was praying for you." And even when service for the Lord is pressing, someone remarks, "You are so busy I have been praying for you". Now can you understand also how Paul felt when he asked the Ephesians for their prayers for himself, not for health and strength, but that he might preach boldly.

My friend, listening this day, Ephesians 6:10-20 is rich in encouragement to every believer to follow the Lord closely. It is the only way the Devil can be kept at bay. Let us follow too. Paul ends by expressing his desire for the Ephesians in such a lovely way: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" (Ephesians 6:19-20). May these terms apply to each one of us today, as we finish this letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

### **Prayer**

O blessed Lord Jesus, the Bible teaches us of all the love and care shown by Thee to men and women today. We seek help for each day, for today and for all the way forward, that we may rely on all the wonderful provision we have been speaking about today in the Word of God and through the work at Calvary. May we this day, and each day until we see Thee, keep close to Thee in every way. We give Thee thanks for all this provision for our help. Amen.

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