

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes: Ephesians 6

"The Whole Armor Of God"

7/31/13

SUMMARY

The final chapter begins with what might called an exhortation to **"walk in familial harmony."** Children are told to obey their parents, while fathers are instructed not to provoke their children to wrath but bring them up in the Lord's nurture and admonition. As many households in the first century A. D. contained servants, commands are also given on the duties of servants and their masters (1-9).

The last major section of this epistle is a call to **"walk in victory"**, with a charge to stand strong in the power of the Lord's might. To be able to withstand the wiles of the devil and spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places, Christians needs to adorn themselves with the whole armor of God. This armor includes such elements as truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. Standing strong also requires fervent and watchful prayer, not just for one's self, but for all Christians. Even Paul solicits their prayers that he might be bold as an ambassador in chains as he makes known the mystery of the gospel (10-20).

A brief explanation is then given concerning Tychicus, who is to let them know how Paul is doing. The epistle then concludes with a prayer for peace to the brethren, love with faith, and grace for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in all sincerity (21-24).

I. A CALL TO WALK IN FAMILIAL HARMONY (1-9)

EPHESIANS 6:1, 2

There is a difference between obeying and honoring. To obey means to do as one is told; to honor means to respect and love. Children are not commanded to disobey God in obeying their parents. Adult children are not asked to be subservient to domineering parents. Children are to obey while under their parents' care, but the responsibility to honor parents is for life.

EPHESIANS 6:1-4

If our faith in Christ is real, it will usually prove itself at home, in our relationships with those who know us best. Children and parents have a responsibility to each other. Children should honor their parents even if the parents are demanding and unfair. Parents should care gently for their children, even if the children are disobedient and unpleasant. Ideally, of course, Christian parents and Christian children will relate to each other with thoughtfulness and love. This will happen if both parents and children put the others' interests above their own—that is, if they submit to one another.

EPHESIANS 6:3

Some societies honor their elders. They respect their wisdom, defer to their authority, and pay attention to their comfort and happiness. This is how Christians should act. Where elders are respected, long life is a blessing, not a burden to them.

EPHESIANS 6:4

The purpose of parental discipline is to help children grow, not to exasperate and provoke them to anger or discouragement (see also Colossians 3:21). Parenting is not easy—it takes lots of patience to raise children in a loving, Christ-honoring manner. But frustration and anger should not be causes for discipline. Instead, parents should act in love, treating their children as Jesus treats the people he loves. This is vital to children's development and to their understanding of what Christ is like.

EPHESIANS 6:5

Slaves played a significant part in this society. There were several million of them in the Roman Empire at this time. Because many slaves and owners had become Christians, the early church had to deal straightforwardly with the question of master/slave relations. Paul's statement neither condemns nor condones slavery. Instead, it tells masters and slaves how to live together in Christian households. In Paul's day, women, children, and slaves had few rights. In the church, however, they had freedoms that society denied them. Paul tells husbands, parents, and masters to be caring.

EPHESIANS 6:6-8

Paul's instructions encourage responsibility and integrity on the job. Christian employees should do their jobs as if Jesus Christ were their supervisor. And Christian employers should treat their employees fairly and with respect. Can you be trusted to do your best, even when the boss is not around? Do you work hard and with enthusiasm? Do you treat your employees as people, not machines? Remember that no matter whom you work for, and no matter who works for you, the one you ultimately should want to please is your Father in heaven.

EPHESIANS 6:9

Although Christians may be at different levels in earthly society, we are all equal before God. He does not play favorites; no one is more important than anyone else. Paul's letter to Philemon stresses the same point: Philemon, the master, and Onesimus, his slave, were brothers in Christ.

II. A CALL TO WALK IN VICTORY (10-20)

EPHESIANS 6:10-17

In the Christian life we battle against rulers and authorities (the powerful evil forces of fallen angels headed by Satan, who is a vicious fighter, see 1 Peter 5:8). To withstand their attacks, we must depend on God's strength and use every piece of his armor. Paul is not only giving this counsel to the church, the body of Christ, but to all individuals within the church. The whole body needs to be armed. As you do battle against the "mighty powers of darkness," fight in the strength of the church, whose power comes from the Holy Spirit.

EPHESIANS 6:12

These who are not “flesh and blood” are demons over whom Satan has control. They are not mere fantasies—they are very real. We face a powerful army whose goal is to defeat Christ’s church. When we believe in Christ, these beings become our enemies, and they try every device to turn us away from him and back to sin. Although we are assured of victory, we must engage in the struggle until Christ returns, because Satan is constantly battling against all who are on the Lord’s side. We need supernatural power to defeat Satan, and God has provided this by giving us his Holy Spirit within us and his armor surrounding us. If you feel discouraged, remember Jesus’ words to Peter: “Upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it” (Matthew 16:18).

EPHESIANS 6:18

How can anyone pray at all times? One way is to make quick, brief prayers your habitual response to every situation you meet throughout the day. Another way is to order your life around God’s desires and teachings so that your very life becomes a prayer. You don’t have to isolate yourself from other people and from daily work in order to pray constantly. You can make prayer your life and your life a prayer while living in a world that needs God’s powerful influence. We also should pray for all believers in Christ; so pray for the Christians you know and for the church around the world.

EPHESIANS 6:19, 20

Undiscouraged and undefeated, Paul wrote powerful letters of encouragement from prison. Paul did not ask the Ephesians to pray that his chains would be removed but that he would continue to speak fearlessly for Christ in spite of them. God can use us in any circumstance to do his will. Even as we pray for a change in our circumstances, we should also pray that God will accomplish his plan through us right where we are. Knowing God’s eternal purpose for us will help us through the difficult times.

III. CONCLUSION (21-24)

EPHESIANS 6:24

This letter was written to the church at Ephesus, but it was also meant for circulation among other churches. In this letter, Paul highlights the supremacy of Christ, gives information on both the nature of the church and on how church members should live, and stresses the unity of all believers—male, female, parent, child, master, slave—regardless of sex, nationality, or social rank. The home and the church are difficult places to live the Christian life, because our real self comes through to those who know us well. Close relationships between imperfect people can lead to trouble—or to increased faith and deepened dependence on God. We can build unity in our churches through willing submission to Christ’s leadership and humble service to one another.

God's Armor for Us

We are engaged in a spiritual battle—all believers find themselves subject to Satan's attacks because they are no longer on Satan's side. Thus, Paul tells us to use every piece of God's armor to resist Satan's attacks and to stand true to God in the midst of those attacks.

Piece of Armor	Use	Application
Belt	Truth	Satan fights with lies, and sometimes his lies <i>sound</i> like truth; but only believers have God's truth, which can defeat Satan's lies.
Body armor	Righteousness	Satan often attacks our heart—the seat of our emotions, self-worth, and trust. God's righteousness is the body armor that protects our heart and ensures his approval. He approves of us because he loves us and sent his Son to die for us.
Shoes	Readiness to spread the Good News	Satan wants us to think that telling others the Good News is a worthless and hopeless task—the size of the task is too big and the negative responses are too much to handle. But the shoes God gives us are the motivation to continue to proclaim the true peace that is available in God—news everyone needs to hear.
Shield	Faith	What we see are Satan's attacks in the form of insults, setbacks, and temptations. But the shield of faith protects us from Satan's fiery arrows. With God's perspective, we can see beyond our circumstances and know that ultimate victory is ours.
Helmet	Salvation	Satan wants to make us doubt God, Jesus, and our salvation. The helmet protects our mind from doubting God's saving work for us.
Sword	Word of God	The sword is the only weapon of <i>offense</i> in this list of armor. There are times when we need to take the offensive against Satan. When we are tempted, we need to trust in the truth of God's Word.