

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] Would you turn your attention, please, to Ephesians chapter 6, and we are finding ourselves with Paul's finally, in verse 10.

He is beginning to close out this epistle, which has been a tremendously revealing document. What Paul wrote to the Ephesians represents some of the deepest and highest and most precious truths that can be made available to the believer in Christ.

And now he is closing out his letter, and he begins in verse 19 by saying, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord. Now, Alfred renders it, Henceforth, be ye strengthened.

Cony Bear says, Let your hearts be strengthened. 20th century New Testament says, For the future, find strength in your union with the Lord and in the power of his might.

And just reminding you, if I might, that the bold print that you see that begins each verse is the King James reference and the King James rendering, and then the other attendant verses are as indicated.

[1 : 19] Put on the whole armor of God. And this is so encouraging to the believer because it shows us that God has not left us defenseless.

We are not to be spiritual babes in the woods that are blown about by every wind of doctrine. But what Paul is saying is that God, just because you are a believer, God has equipped you with all of the defensive accouterments you need to be able to withstand the fiery darts of the wicked.

And in addition to providing us with all of these defensive measures, such as he is going to enumerate, he has given us one offensive weapon, and that is the sword of the spirit.

And that's all we need. So when we get to that, we'll elaborate on it some more. But for now, we want to address our attention to this armor of God that is involved.

I don't know if you're familiar with the Christian in complete armor or not. It is a volume written by William Gurnall, a Puritan saint from the 1600s.

[2 : 37] It is a volume that is about three inches thick, hardback, difficult reading, tough sledding, because sometimes one paragraph is taking a whole half page.

This is the way they wrote back in the 1600s. But he wrote that entire commentary on the last few verses of Ephesians chapter 6.

And it had to do with the armor of God. The title of the book is The Christian in Complete Armor. William Gurnall, G-U-R-N-A-L-L. And I had great difficulty plowing through that, but it's got great content in it.

So the armor of God is given for the purpose that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And he has them.

Otherwise, in another place, Paul says, we are not ignorant of his devices. Satan has devices. He has wiles. He has strategies. He has a game plan.

[3 : 43] And he knows your weakness. He knows your soft spot. He knows where you are most vulnerable.

And he capitalizes on that. And I don't want to belabor this point, but it is important and it is impacting our culture like perhaps nothing else. And that is, Satan knows and understands the temptation that men have through the eye gate.

And this is why pornography is so successful in entrapping men and boys.

The masculine psyche is such that it is stimulated visually in ways that is not true of femininity.

Now, femininity can be attracted visually also. But for males, there is a peculiar kind of interest and weakness there.

[4 : 50] And I'll just say this in passing and then we'll go on. But have you ever heard of a peeping Jane? No, you probably haven't.

But every now and then we read an account of a peeping Tom. Because it's almost always a man who is caught in the act or is accused of spying on women.

Every now and then we read something in the newspaper where a janitor from such and such a high school was fired by the board because he installed a camera in the girls' restroom.

And it showed the girls, of course, undressing and dressing. And yet, I have yet to see an occasion where a woman, a principal or a teacher, ever installed a camera in the boys' restroom.

Never seen that. I just don't think it happens. Because there is a peculiar attraction on the behalf of males that does not exist in females.

[6 : 01] And, you know, part of this, guys, is God-driven. I mean, I think God designed it this way. And one of the reasons that he did, I think, is because this is the principal way that boy meets girl.

And it usually starts, maybe even in grade school, when boys become aware that girls are no longer icky or have cooties.

But there's something about girls that can be quite fascinating. And the interest begins to develop along the lines of puberty, you know. And it almost always comes through the eye gate.

A boy sees a girl and he likes the way she looks. She appeals to him. And he pursues this.

This goes all the way through childhood and into adulthood. And this is what causes the male to have that initial interest in a girl.

[7 : 11] It's always on the basis of what he sees. And he likes what he sees. And he inquires further. And the next thing you know, a relationship is struck up.

And it sometimes ends in marriage. And that's the way it began by what the guy saw. So Satan knows that we have a weakness that way.

And he takes advantage of it. And it is through the avenue of pornography that many men have been reduced to a lot less than they could be or should be.

It has ruined marriages and lives. And you see the statistics of this all the time. And it isn't getting any better. But we have been given everything that is necessary to be able to stand against that.

So as we look at our next page, we see that we are wrestling not. Our conflict and our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

[8 : 16] Now, it may pan out to take that avenue. But it begins with the spiritual weakness. And I'm going to make a statement now that probably some of you, understandably, will think is probably not true.

Or maybe I'm making an exaggeration. But I've given this a lot of thought over the years. And I'm convinced that it is completely valid. And that is this. There is no human problem that can arise that does not have a spiritual solution.

I don't care what it is. There is no human problem to arise that does not have a spiritual solution.

And it's very often the last place people will look for solutions because we tend to think, well, you know, if you've got a money problem, you're not going to solve a money problem with spiritual answers.

You need cash. You need dollars to solve money problems. But at the base of a money problem, there is always a spiritual solution. I don't care what it is, whether it's a psychological problem, whether it's a marriage problem, whether it's a problem with honesty or whatever it is.

[9 : 34] The answer is always a spiritual solution. And if you want to pursue that further with any illustrations, I'd be happy to do that. But I do want to move along in the text because, believe it or not, I have visions of finishing Ephesians.

And we intended to do this in a few months. And I think this is our third year, something like that in it. Yeah. Just a quick comment. I don't mean to distract too much, but God will provide.

And that includes money. Money can come out of nowhere and save you, or it can disappear. Where did it go to? It can go both ways.

Absolutely. But you said it's a faith. It's the root of it. Yeah. Someone said, I remember a quote of Bill Ford. He was with the Lord, but he used to be here every Thursday morning.

He was one of our regulars. And Bill passed away when he was about 92 or 93. But I remember a statement that he made that money is a wonderful servant, but a terrible master.

[10 : 39] And indeed it is. And that often quoted verse that Paul wrote to Timothy about money being the root of all evil. And he insists, Paul insists, it is not.

Money is not the root of all evil. It is the love of money that is the root of all evil. And there's a huge difference. God can use money and God can bless a Christian with huge amounts of money.

So money is not the root of all evil, but it's the love of money that is. So Paul says we wrestle not. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, the kind that you can identify and look at and see.

Our struggle and our conflict is really in the area of the spiritual because that is the base of everything. And I try to emphasize this to every couple that I counsel with premarital counseling.

And I've been doing this, you know, for 50 plus years. And I try to emphasize it because it's so very important. And I've done this also in the Marriage on the Rock series.

[11 : 46] And that is that marriage, marriage is a social thing. It's an economic thing. It's a physical thing.

But more than anything else, marriage is a spiritual thing. It is the most important ingredient of the husband-wife relationship.

It is the spiritual. And, fellas, if you want to know why so many marriages fail, sometimes even Christian marriages, it is because the most important single ingredient to the marriage has been omitted.

And that's the spiritual. And if a couple is together spiritually, they can handle the economic problems, psychological problems, societal problems.

But they've got to have that spiritual base. And that alone will address the problems that will arise in a marriage or in any other relationship.

[12 : 56] It always has a spiritual root. And as I pointed out, the basis for all human conflict, the basis for all human conflict, whether it is in a marriage or in a community or in a school or in the workplace or whether it is between nations, the root and the basis for all conflict is the same.

It is unresolved offenses. Things we say and do to each other that wound and hurt and creates barriers and distancing between people.

We're all capable of doing those things. And that's just part of human nature. So the problem is not with the offense.

The problem is the offense that is unresolved. And how is it resolved? Spiritual solution. Always has to do with information, awareness, acknowledgement, confession, apology, request for forgiveness, granting of forgiveness.

Those are all spiritual realities, spiritual truths. And they are so often ignored, even in the body of Christ. They are all spiritual solutions. And the end game, the end result is restoration.

[14 : 27] The harmonizing of the rift that was created by the offenses. That's the end game. That's the end result. And that's the kiss and make up between husband and wife.

And what is it? It's a spiritual solution. So this is exactly what Paul is getting at here. Against, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

And all of this has to do with the involvement of the adversary. We are told by Peter that be sober, be vigilant.

For your adversary, the devil, walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. He's always looking for Christians that would constitute a delicious little snack for him.

And he just gobbles them up. Ruins their lives. Decimates them. Brings them to no effect. And just impacts the body of Christ in a negative way.

[15 : 41] And you know, churches can be one of his favorite hangouts. Wasn't it? And it was J. Vernon McGee who used to say that when Lucifer fell from heaven, he landed in the choir loft.

And I don't know about the truthfulness of that. But J. Vernon McGee with his Texas drawl could put it across. And you know, these are situations that arise.

And it doesn't have to be in the choir loft. It can be in the deacon board, too. You know. I mean, it can be anywhere. Because Satan has a game plan. And it is divide and conquer. And he is an expert at it.

And trust me when I say you are no match for him. None of us is any match for him. The only real remedy that we have is that which Christ has provided.

Which he himself used when Satan tempted him. Christ's defense when encountering Satan in the wilderness. Was it is written.

[16 : 45] It is written. And Christ came back with each temptation that Satan threw at him. With the perspective from the word of God. And that's going to be our offensive weapon as well.

We'll see when we get on through the passage here. These are all spiritual realities. And guys, I don't know exactly how these things work. I know there is demonic power that is out there.

I know they are unseen forces that we cannot tap into. But their reality, I think, is quite apparent. Especially when you consider portions like in the Old Testament.

You'll recall now whether it was 1st or 2nd Kings. But Elijah and his young assistant were about to be assailed by enemy forces.

And he turned to Elijah. And as much as said, Master, it looks like we're sunk. This is it. There's no way that we're going to survive this.

[17 : 50] And Elijah said to him, don't worry about it. Because those who are with us are more than those who are with them. And the young man, of course, was perplexed and had no idea what he was talking about.

And Elijah said, Lord, open the young man's eyes. And God gave this young man a vision of what it was that Elijah was able to see.

And as he looked out on the horizon, there was a huge throng of angelic beings that had marshaled together and were prepared to take on the enemy.

And yet they could not be seen with normal human eyes. And when God opened the eyes of the young man, he was able to see what Elijah was talking about. Those who are with us are greater than those who were with them.

So the principle is the same. Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. But if we do not understand and know how to utilize the power and the spiritual resources that God has made available to us, we're sitting ducks.

[19 : 01] And this is what Paul is talking about in an earlier portion of Ephesians when he said that we are to grow and mature and to develop in Christ so that we will no longer be as children blown about by every wind of doctrine.

And if you do not have spiritual stability, you are a push over for the adversary. He'll have his way with you. That's why we need to understand biblical truths and spiritual solutions so that we're not only able to stand but be victorious.

Any comments or questions before we conclude? Anyone? Yes. I'm taking you back a chapter. You talked about God will provide.

And I'm struggling with that. Okay. Especially being part of the ministry where I can be overwhelmed by other leaders of the ministry.

We can take this additional problem on because God will provide. And my argument has always been, I can't remember his name, but it was the crystal cathedral.

[20 : 20] Drew Shuler. What was his name? Brother Shuler. Shuler. Oh, yeah. Shuler. Yeah. And there was a point in time when God didn't provide for him. Or somebody was crooked.

Yeah. Yeah. It didn't involve God at all. Yeah. It involved man and his weakness.

Yeah. I presume. So, I've always had a big difficulty when the ministry says, we can do that.

We can do that. We can do that. Yeah. Yeah. And then, wait a minute. We have a mission statement. Yeah. That defines what we stand in. Yeah.

I hear you. That's a very valid point. You know, there is a great misconception that comes into play, especially when you're talking about ministry, ministry opportunities, ministry expansion, etc.

[21 : 19] There is, I think, a great deal of misunderstanding regarding the principle and the use of faith.

And maybe we ought to pursue that next week because it does tie in with this, the God will provide thing. And we see clear instances where that does not appear to be the case at all, where God did not provide.

So, you know, there is a very valid principle between having faith and trusting the Lord, which is an important thing.

But there is also the possibility that instead of having faith and trusting the Lord, we are acting presumptuously. And I think that's what a lot of ministries can be capable of doing, and a lot of individuals can, too, where we actually presume upon the Lord that we make our plans and we decide the way it ought to be, and then we ask God to go along with it and bless it.

And a lot of times, he's not interested in that. You know, he's interested in his plan. Not your plan. And that can create a lot of confusion, a lot of disappointment.

[22 : 33] And it can even cause some Christians to just wash out because they feel that God let them down. Yeah. So we'll pursue this theme next week.

And you bring any comments or questions that you may have regarding it. I think it would be very profitable.