

The Christian Life
Part 6a
The Armor and The War

Eph 6:10-20

- 10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.
- 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.
- 12 For we wrestle 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.
- 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.
- 14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
- 15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
- 16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.
- 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, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;
- 19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,
- 20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. KJV

Introduction:

Our little manual on the Christian life that began in 4:1 with:

Eph 4:1-3

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
- 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. KJV

ends with “put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand in the evil day.” (Paraphrase)

On the one hand there is an exhortation to massive effort for unity and peace and on the other a solemn call to war.

Which is true? Both calls are real instructions for the believer. He is to have peace with his brethren and, so much as possible in this world, with his fellow man. But he is to do it in the arena of a larger conflict with evil and the personalities controlled by it.

There was never a more peaceful and peace loving people than the Waldenses of ancient Europe. They lived for centuries in relative isolation in the valleys of the southern Alps. The only times they left their enclaves of peaceful farms and villages were when they sent missionaries, two by two, through the surrounding countries to carry the gospel message of Jesus Christ. They never carried out any armed campaigns to steal from neighboring countries and they never sought to dominate by force other peoples or cultures.

They lived in peace within themselves. The government, such as it was, was headed by a collection of their most revered and respected pastors. There was internal harmony in their communities and in their churches. They had no warring political or religious factions within their little nation.

But they were at war. They were at war with the spiritual ignorance and idolatry of their day. They sought to propagate the truth of the gospel of justification by faith in Jesus Christ. They taught repentance from sin and obedience to the instructions of the New Testament. They had separated centuries earlier from the Roman Church and absolutely condemned the errors of saint worship, idolatry, bondage of conscience, and the power of the pope.

They were attacked time and again with vicious campaigns from Italy and France, prompted by the pope of the time, determined to exterminate them completely. At one time their population of hundreds of thousands was reduced to a mere handful of about 5000 brave souls who had endured the complete loss of their homes and their homeland.

They were at peace, according to Eph. 4 and at war according to chapter 6. Such has been the history of the dissenting saints across the centuries in many lands.

Quote: Charles Hodge, a respected Presbyterian theologian who taught at Princeton University from 1822 to 1876, has an interesting comment on Eph. 6:10.

“Though the redemption purchased by Christ, as described in this epistle, is so complete and so free, yet between the beginning and the consummation of the work there is a protracted conflict. This is not a figure of speech. It is something real and arduous. Salvation, however gratuitous, is not to be obtained without great effort. The Christian conflict is not only real, it is difficult and dangerous. It is one in which true believers are often grievously wounded; and multitudes of reputed believers entirely succumb. It is one also in which great mistakes are often committed and serious loss incurred from ignorance of its nature, and of the appropriate means for carrying it on. Men are apt to regard it as a mere moral conflict between reason and conscience on the one side, and evil passions on the other. They therefore rely on their own strength, and upon the resources of nature for success. Against these mistakes the apostle warns his readers. He teaches that everything pertaining to it (*the conflict*) is supernatural. The source of strength is not in nature (*no in one's natural powers*). The conflict is not between good and bad principles within our own nature. He shows that we belong to a spiritual as well as a natural world, and we are engaged in a combat in which the higher powers of the universe are involved; and that this conflict, on the issue of which our salvation depends,

is not to be carried with straws picked up by the wayside. As we have super-human enemies to contend with, we need not only superhuman strength, but divine armour and arms. The weapons of our warfare are not natural but divine.

“Finally my brethren, be strong in the Lord. He concludes this epistle, so full of elevated views, and so rich in disclosures of the mysteries of redemption, with directions as to the struggle necessary to secure salvation. His first exhortation is to muster strength for the inevitable conflict, and to seek that strength from the right source. We are to *be strong in the Lord.*”

I particularly like these statements, “This is not a figure of speech. It is something real and arduous. Salvation, however gratuitous, is not to be obtained without great effort. The Christian conflict is not only real, it is difficult and dangerous.”

It is no marvel, then, that Paul speaks of strength and power, spiritual strength and spiritual power, as being absolutely necessary in victory.

But, there is a problem. In fact, there is a whole list of problems in this matter.

V. 10 is one of those passages of scripture that we read across and often have not the slightest idea of what is being said or how to implement obedience to it, “be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

In order for us to expose our own ignorance, we only need pretend that we are engaging in doing what it says. Imagine that as you sit there, looking at this passage, you say to the Lord, “OK, I will do this, I will be empowered in you and with the strength of your might.” If your mind works at all like mine, you will suddenly say to yourself, “I have no idea how to do what I just committed to the Lord that I would do!”

Look now at v.11, “Put on the whole armour of God,” and imagine that you are committing to obey it. You realize the same thing, “I have no idea what Paul is talking about.”

It really is little wonder that we as believers are so ineffective and such easy prey for the Wicked One. We do not know how to access the Power of God and we have no idea how to use the armor and weapons that are necessary in this spiritual war in which we find ourselves.

Let’s disassemble v.10 and see if we can discern at least a little bit of its’ meaning. “Be strong,” is literally, “be empowered,” and Paul used a Greek word for ‘power’ that was chosen as the name for our explosive ‘dynamite.’ Those who named ‘dynamite’ knew that the Greeks had several concepts for power, one of which was explosive, forceful effectiveness. If you have ever watched videos of dynamite being used, it is a pretty good word picture for this word for ‘power’ that Paul used.

But Paul also used a construction of the verb that is a little strange to us. We normally use either the active or passive forms of verbs, such as: “I was hurt” (passive), or “He hurt me” (active), but the middle voice is expressed in “I hurt myself.” It is the idea that I did something

actively that had an impact on me. In a sense, I was both active and passive in the event. One way to read Paul's statement would be "empower yourself." But, the problem is that I don't have the kind of power that he is talking about, so I can't empower myself. Another way that we might read this is "seek empowering for yourself from the Lord."

The also might note here that Paul is using the imperative mood, which means that this is a command, not a suggestion. It carries a sense of urgency in it because the battle is already waging and the enemy is very skilled and very strong.

Actually, Paul has already introduced the topic of power and how Christians come by it in this book in a passage which I mention often to you.

Eph 1:16-19

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, KJV

Notice that there are one event and three elements of the event for which he prays. The 'event' is the granting by God, to His people, of a special visit of the Holy Spirit which produces an enlightened understanding of three specific elements necessary for our spiritual survival:

"The hope of His calling" specifically what God has called us to and called us for

"The riches of the glory of His inheritance in (or for) the saints" the riches that already belong to us

And

"The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believes, that empowering which operates according to the forceful operation of the energy of the strength of His might" this strength is already ours but we lack understanding of it because the Holy Spirit has not visited us with the enlightenment to understand it.

Therefore, "empower yourself" in the mind of Paul can only mean "seek this enlightening visit of the Holy Spirit upon your soul, this same visit that I am praying for, so that you can understand the power of God already given to you in and through Jesus Christ."

By the way, this 'power' that Paul is talking about, as he goes on in his prayer is that same power with which God raised Jesus from the dead.

Eph 1:20-23

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

- 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,
23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. KJV

So, how do we ‘empower’ ourselves? Well, first we must get past the fact that we have gaps in our information. Some of the information we need we already have and some of it we do not obtain until the Holy Spirit reveals it to us. Guess what? The Holy Spirit is not going to give us supernatural revelation concerning things He has already provided, those things that are contained in His Word that we might know if we would only study. ***Major Hurdle!***

When we have learned all that we might know from study we will: (1) be much more knowledgeable than we have ever been concerning what Christ has done and what He has provided, and (2) be far more impressed with our ignorance and need for further revelation than we are now.

The reality is that all of the power that we need for a successful Christian life and victory in the battles with our enemies has already been given to us.

2 Peter 1:2-4

- 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
3 **According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:**
4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. KJV

Second reality, it is not fully revealed to us because we are not interested enough to pursue and understanding of it from the scriptures that have been placed in our hands.

Paul’s command, then, “empower yourself” must be taken as “get over yourself and all the stuff that keeps you from being interested in having the power of God upon your life. Re-arrange your priorities, repent of your sins, give yourself without reservation to God, maybe even ‘be saved’ because your lack of interest speaks to the possibility that you are deceived about that.”

This passage cannot and will not make any real sense to you, be of any real help to you, until you are willing to say to the Lord, “I want victory and I will pursue the empowering that you have already given me. Please reveal to me the things that hamper my understanding and I pledge to you that I will put them all away. I will study your Word and take to heart all that is shown to me there concerning what is provided for me in Jesus Christ.”

There is a saying in life, “nothing happens until a decision is made,” and that is certainly true concerning spiritual things.

As we have said through this study, the Ephesian church was a good church, full of serious believers who were serving the Lord well in many ways. The church had been born out of a great revival at Ephesus and the church had the benefit of Paul's personal ministry through the first two years of its existence. Yet, there was a further step they needed to make, one which Paul prodded them with through this little letter.

They needed to make a full and complete commitment to God so that they could move forward into a realm of real empowerment.

Think about it, how many things would be available to us if we were truly empowered in the energy of the might of the Lord?

How profound our own walk and communion with God would be.

How rich and deep would our prayers become.

How many of those that we love might be saved.

How many of the hurting and sick might be healed.

How our community would be impacted with the gospel.

And, if all that were to happen, Revival would have come.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

I pray that you will be challenged and encouraged to pursue the best and deepest part of Christianity through the brief comments that Paul has left for us.