



Spiritual Power in Christ Ephesians 6

Introduction

The Book of Joshua began with the Israelites on the brink of entering the land God had promised to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We have followed them, as they were led by Joshua, across the Jordan River and throughout their conquest of Canaan to secure freedom and establish a nation.

Now, in Ephesians, we find the church positioned in her Canaan "in the heavenly places" where we possess our possessions in Christ. Does this mean the warfare is over and those "in Christ" can relax at last?

Surprisingly or not surprisingly, the warfare continues and the Book of Ephesians ends with a description of the Christian's battle dress. Just as the Book of Acts is God's "unfinished symphony", the church, as the body of Christ, goes on fighting the good fight. A skirmish is lost now and then, but ground is steadily gained to ultimately win the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Outline of Ephesians 6

- I. Spiritual Power in Relationships - Ephesians 6:21-6:9
- II. Spiritual Power for Spiritual Warfare - Ephesians 6:10-24

I. Spiritual Power in Relationships - Ephesians 6:21-6:9

A. The Nature of Relationships

1. Both walk and warfare

Our relationships are an integral part of our "walk in Christ", the subject of the last two lessons. The topic continues from Chapter 5 into Chapter 6 of Ephesians where spiritual warfare is discussed. This connection is helpful and realistic inasmuch as these three primary relationships are sometimes part of the battle: wife/husband (Chapter 5), child/parent, and slave/master (Chapter 6).

2. Submission to one another

These important relationships follow Paul's fourth and last point about walking wisely, *submitting to one another in the fear of God* (Ephesians 5:21). The key phrase, *in the fear of God*, appears in the context of

each relationship and gives the secret of success. The one with the more submissive role is mentioned first and more is written to them.

"In each of the three relationships, the first partner is commanded to be submissive or obedient (5:22; 6:1, 5). But the second partner is also to show submissiveness through care and concern for the first partner. Both partners are to act towards one another as a service rendered to the Lord" (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, John Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, editors).

3. In the home

In Biblical times, the relationships mentioned were domestic, occurring within the home. Today the role of the home has changed and it has become more a center for messages, changing clothes, grabbing a bite to eat, and sleeping. Consequently, our attention to these relationships, through the study of relevant Bible passages, can greatly strengthen our values, adjust our priorities, and encourage godly living. It is said, "As goes the home, so goes the nation and so goes the whole world in which we live" (Pope John Paul II). Inasmuch as these are God-given relationships, how important are they to you, how central to your prayers? How joyfully do you engage in them, and how is God glorified in them through you?

B. Wives and Husbands - Ephesians 5:22-33

1. Submission to the husband - 5:22

Wives are addressed here, and are required to submit to their own husbands. This is sometimes misunderstood and applied to relationships of women and men in general. Submission in other realms is not a gender issue but rather appropriateness to one's role. For instance, girls and boys are equally required to submit to both parents. Women and men employees are equally in submission to either a man or woman employer.

A wife's submission to her husband is required *as to the Lord*. F.F. Bruce writes, "The deference which wives are to show to their husbands is a particular aspect of that submission which all Christians have been urged to show to one another. The phrase '*as unto the Lord*' does not mean that they should yield to their husbands the same deference as they would yield to Christ Himself, but that deference to their husbands is a duty which they owe to the Lord" (The Epistle to the Ephesians).

2. Headship of the husband - 5:23

Paul compares the husband's headship in the marriage relationship with the relationship of Christ to the church. Every relationship needs a head for decisions and direction. As Christ is head of the church, so are husbands with their wives. Their headship is not to be used to dominate their wives, but for security and protection of their wives. As Christ is the *Savior of the body*, the husbands are caretakers of their wives. Wives are to respect their husbands.

3. Parallel of marriage to the church - 5:24

Paul draws the highest possible parallel, *just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything*. This links the New Testament to the Old Testament, where Israel is referred to as the wife of Jehovah (as in Isaiah 54:5 and Jeremiah 3:14) and Israel's defection is likened to adultery (as in Hosea 3:1 and Jeremiah 3:8)! The Old Testament concerns Israel's relationship to God as a nation. The New Testament is about the church's relationship to Christ, and the marriage relationship is the earthly illustration of it.

4. Duty of the husband as head - 5:25-30

Having established the model, Paul describes how it works.

- Husbands are to love their wives *just as Christ also loved the church*.
- Husbands are to sacrifice themselves for their wives as Christ gave Himself for the church.
- Husbands are to love and care for their wives in the same way Christ tends the church to present her sanctified, cleansed, glorious, holy, and without blemish.
- Husbands are to regard their wives as part of themselves, as their own body which they take care of, as Christ regards the church as His body.

5. A mystical union - 5:30-33

a. Incomprehensible but true

In the marriage ceremony the words are sometimes used, "This is a mystical union," as it is. Paul states that individual believers in the church are *members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones*. Yet how can we understand this rationally when Christ died 2000 years ago and His resurrected body ascended to heaven? It is because Christ created the church to be His body on earth, as an extension of Himself.

b. Ordained from the beginning

Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 regarding the first marriage

with Adam and Eve as reason for the parallel. *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*. The two become one in the physical marriage relationship. It involves forsaking one home and establishing another. A mystical union takes place, ordained of God and continued in Christ. A marriage relationship is not to be taken lightly, neither physically nor spiritually.

C. Children and Parents - Ephesians 6:1-4

1. Obligations of children - 6:1-3

Paul begins with children, reminding them of *right* behavior in relation to their parents.

- Children are to obey their parents *in the Lord*. Because the Lord has placed parents in authority over the children, they are to willingly submit.
- Children are to *honor your father and mother* because it is a commandment (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16).

In addition, obedience to parents is a commandment with a promise, *that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth*.

2. Duty of Parents - 6:4

The word "*fathers*" can refer to both parents, but since fathers are to be the head of the household, this command is especially directed to them. Fathers are called to be reasonable and consider the well-being of their children, not putting unreasonable demands upon them which might provoke them to anger.

Instead, they are to *bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord*. Consistent biblical instruction, along with loving discipline and gentle reproof, teaches a child to honor and obey God. To take care in doing this is time and effort well spent.

D. Bondservants and Masters - Ephesians 6:5-9

In the twenty-first century, this section adapts to the current labor/management situation of employees and employers.

1. Bondservants - 6:6-8

The heart of this command is performing service *as to the Lord, and not to men*. Paul writes that this includes the following:

- Obedience to human masters means submission to those God has placed in the position of earthly authority
- Obedience is not to be performed grudgingly but with a sincere heart
- Work is not to be done merely to please men but to please God by doing His will. The promise of receiving

from the Lord what one has given accompanies this command. *For whatever a man sows, that will he also reap* (Galatians 6:7).

2. Masters - 6:9

Masters are to follow the same rules because they have a master employer in heaven to whom they are responsible. In addition, masters are to *give up threatening*, remembering they also have a Master who is in heaven. There should be mutual respect between servant and master because both have the same heavenly Master who shows no partiality.

II. Spiritual Power for Spiritual Warfare - Ephesians 6:10-24

A. Strength in the Lord and in His Power - Ephesians 6:10

The last section in the last chapter of Paul's epistle to the church is a call to arms. Along with Joshua and the Israelites, the church is commanded to *be strong in the Lord and in His power*. What is the purpose of our preparation and the journey to arrive in our promised land if it is not ultimate victory? Why have we come from Egypt to Canaan, from bondage to freedom, if in the end we do not win? To settle in to self-indulgence is to degenerate and decay. The battle for good against evil is cosmic. It gives ultimate meaning to life and zest to daily existence. Only by being *strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* will we hear our Lord say, "*Well done, good and faithful servant*" (Matthew 25:21).

The key phrase in this chapter is "*in the Lord*". We are to do everything in Him and by His strength.

"Did we in our own strength confide,
would be losing;
Were not The Right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing....
And He must win the battle"
(from "A Mighty Fortress is Our God", Martin Luther, 1529).

God's strength never fades. He is untiring and never slumbers nor sleeps (Psalm 121:4).

B. Putting On the Whole Armor of God - Ephesians 6:11-18

1. Military pattern- 6:11

The Roman guards watching Paul were always present and he was able to carefully observe their armor. If worldly powers provide protection and arms for their soldiers, would God do less?

2. Spiritual purpose - 6:11-13

The purpose of armor and weapons is to withstand the wiles, or scheming, of the devil. Crucial items are provided by God's grace. God's people are not up against human enemies; therefore, we should not fight other people. *We do not wrestle against flesh and blood*. We are under attack from demons, called *the rulers of the darkness of this age*, and *spiritual hosts* [armies] of *wickedness*, a formidable array. What should we do? Paul says, *Take up the whole armor of God* so we are able to *stand*. What protection has God supplied? Some unique items of armor are described.

3. Panoply of provision - 6:14-17

a. The belt of truth - verse 14

The soldier's belt held the various pieces of armor together. Weapons could be tucked into it also. So believers are held together by the truth. Jesus Christ is the truth (John 14:6). We never have to fear the truth for it will always agree with Jesus.

b. The breastplate of righteousness - verse 14

A breastplate protects the heart, which pumps the blood, which in turn keeps each part of the body functioning. The heart also represents emotions, which are unrighteous through sin.

Righteousness means meeting God's standard, which no one can meet (Psalm 53:1-3; Romans 3:10-12). The Scripture tells us, *All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags* (Isaiah 64:6). But God declares believers righteous at the time of conversion (Isaiah 61:10). Christ's righteousness is put to our account when we believe.

Having a standard of right and wrong and good and evil protects our emotions in the battle of temptation.

c. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace - verse 15

Shoes are vital for an army on the march. The terrain can be rough and hot and the march long. Wherever you go, do you take the gospel of peace with you? *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace* (Isaiah 52:7).

d. The shield of faith - verse 16

In the Psalms, David described the Lord as his shield (Psalm 18:2; 28:7) because it was so valuable against enemy attack. The shield was held up against the fiery darts of the wicked from any direction. Our faith in

God is protection from the sudden sting of anger, envy, jealousy, self-pity, lust, disappointment, covetousness, and any need we may suddenly feel. Faith protects us when we believe God will meet us in every situation.

e. *The helmet of salvation* – verse 17

A helmet is protection for the head. Many have said the battle is for the mind of mankind. *As he thinks in his heart, so is he* (Proverbs 23:7). Satan's first approach to Eve was subtly aimed at her reason. *"Has God indeed said?"* He wanted her to doubt God, His goodness, and His promises. Satan pulls out his old heresies and lies for every generation, though under new guises. He tells every person to "live it up," or "you can get away with it," or "God doesn't care about you." What lies has Satan been peddling to you? Our salvation puts believers into a different category: less vulnerable, protected, hopeful, confident of victory. We need to put on the armor by faith, in order to be protected.

f. *The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God* - verse 17

We have only two offensive weapons, but they are adequate. The first is God's Word which is half of our offensive weaponry, an arsenal of sixty-six books. The better we know it and the more willing we are to use it, the more effective we will be in warfare. A soldier is taught that his rifle is his best friend. It is his offensive weapon. He cleans and polishes it regularly, understands it, becomes proficient in using it, and always knows where it is.

The Lord Jesus Christ used the sword of the Spirit in His initial contest with Satan, just as His ministry was beginning (Matthew 4:1-11). Three times Satan tempted Him and three times Jesus spoke the Word of God as an offensive weapon. It worked. Satan was unable to defeat the Lord Jesus in any way and he slunk away. Jesus lived and died according to God's Word. It is written, *He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures* (1 Corinthians 15:4).

Jesus said, *we do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God* (Matthew 4:4). Do you live by God's Word? Is it as important to you daily as the food you eat? Do you become more familiar with it every day? Do you polish your skill in using it by memorizing it, meditating on it as you drive, get dressed, wait for an appointment, or work around the house?

g. *Praying always with all prayer....in the Spirit* - verse 18

The other half of our offensive weaponry is prayer. It may seem weak and inoffensive, almost useless as a weapon. Yet Paul makes it the final piece in this display

of power. Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate under Queen Victoria, said, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world knows." Jesus taught that *men always ought to pray and not lose heart* [or give up] (Luke 18:1). Paul frequently asked for prayer because he knew, as Jesus said, *Without Me you can do nothing* (John 15:5). God answers prayer. What answers has God wrought for you? What seeming impossibility will you take to Him today?

Prayer includes praise. When Paul and Silas, with backs raw and bleeding and their feet in stocks, were confined in a dark, dank prison, they sang praises to God. He responded with an earthquake that flung open the prison doors and brought the jailer to his knees crying out for salvation. Among other great results, prayer has been called the only explanation for the sudden, surprising collapse of Eastern European communism in December, 1989.

Is prayer your offensive weapon in the battle? Do you receive your "marching orders" each day by spending time in prayer, alone with God and His Word, so that you are able to proceed with confidence into your day? Many Christians imagine they are putting their spiritual armor on as they dress every morning. They prepare their mind by reading God's Word. They place righteousness over their heart to avoid temptations. They tie truth around their waist. They put sandals of evangelism on their feet. They pray and apply something from the Bible to their life each day. How can such a believer be defeated?

h. No provision for retreat

A piece is missing! Where is the armor for our back? What if we have to turn and run? Dear friend, God made no provision for our defeat! Jesus said of His church, *The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it* (Matthew 16:18). The victory was won on the cross. Our part is to experience it. The script is written, Jesus has already won, and we are the players in this cosmic drama.

When Paul wrote, *We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed* (2 Corinthians 4:8-9), he was referring to the battle. We do get bruised, even wounded. We cannot always tell how the battle is going. But Paul gives the secret of victory; *always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body* (2 Corinthians 4:10). We need to be willing to die to self, so we may live for God (Romans 6:5). It is Christ in us victorious.

C. Supplication for all Saints

Every saint (believer) on this earth needs prayer, for we

are all in the battle. Therefore, we should adopt some system of praying for others. Others are praying for us. We cannot pray for everyone, but if we pray diligently for those whom God has given us, and everyone else prays also, the needs of the world will be covered. Even Jesus did not always pray for everyone (John 17:9).

D. Paul's Closing Request - Ephesians 6:19-20

Paul closed by asking for prayer for himself:

- *That utterance may be given to me*
- *That I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains*
- *That in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

E. Conclusion – Ephesians 6:21-24

1. Paul's personal sharing – 6:21-22

- a. That you also may know my affairs and how I am doing*

Paul had come a long way from being the proud Pharisee, dominant and in control. He now had nothing to hide, and he wanted to include the recipients of his letter in the “nitty gritty” of his existence, so God would be glorified, and because he truly loved them.

- b. Tychicus.....will make all things known to you*

Paul sent his fellow-worker, Tychicus, to deliver this letter. Along with the letter, he would bring news of Paul, news that would comfort their hearts concerning him. Paul wanted them to know it was well with his soul. I remember visiting Miss Wetherell Johnson, founder of Bible Study Fellowship, in her final illness, a few weeks before she died. It was in a very impressive hospital in beautiful Pacific Grove, California. She was physically very weak, confined to her bed. Miss Hertzler, our fellow worker, was with me and Miss Johnson wanted us to know “how it was with her”, the truth about her condition, something we had all wondered but no one knew.

Miss Johnson asked me in a low voice to call the doctor to her room. He was a very busy specialist and the hospital was reluctant to do it. But I knew better than to return to her without results. So I persisted and the doctor came. She asked him to inform us. He took us aside, sat us down, and took the time to describe in detail the extent of the cancer. Then he left. With God-given authority, which had always impressed me, Miss Johnson had gotten that hospital and that doctor to do what she knew should be done. Do you let others know about you so that they can glorify God with you?

2. Benediction - 6:23-24

Peace, love, and grace from God, *to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ*, close the letter as it began. Does this describe you today? Are you one who loves the Lord Jesus Christ? Will you choose to put on all your armor and fight the good fight until Jesus returns? Will you fight knowing *those who love the Lord Jesus Christ* are the victors?

Where do you need victory today? Is it over personal sin (*lust of the flesh*), temptation (*lust of the eyes*), or *the pride of life*? The apostle John wrote, *For all that is in the world -- the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life -- is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.* Are you clinging to things that are passing away or are you clinging to the Father? In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses called the people of Israel to *love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days* (Deuteronomy 30:20). What are you clinging to that is not of the Lord? In this letter to the Ephesians, Paul is calling you today to lay it aside, dress for battle, and fight the winning fight.