

The Epistle to the Ephesians

INTRODUCTION.

- A. We are going to begin a series of lesson based on Ephesians 6:10-17. Why would Paul admonish the Church of Ephesus to put on the Whole Gospel Armor? In order for us to have a full understanding of Paul's admonishment, it is important to first look at his life and then we must know something about the city of Ephesus.

I. ABOUT THE APOSTLE PAUL.

A. Paul (his Roman name), also known as Saul (his Hebrew name), was an apostle of Jesus Christ. He was the most prominent man of the New Testament with the exception of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

1. Paul was born of a great race. (Acts 22:3; Philippians 3:5)
2. Paul was also religious from his youth. (Acts 26:4-5)
3. As a young man he used to persecute followers of Jesus by having them arrested and jailed. (Acts 8:3; 22:4)
 - a. Saul compelled Christians to blaspheme. (Acts 26:11)
 - b. He voted to have Christians kill. (Acts 26:10; 7:58-59; 22:20)
 - c. Saul was so determined to destroy Christians that he even went to foreign cities to seek them out. (Acts 26:11; 9:1, 2)
4. Saul was very conscientious about what he was doing but he was wrong. (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:9)
5. Saul said that he was the chief of sinners. (1 Timothy 1:15)
6. On his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, Paul was blinded by a bright light. (Acts 26:13)
7. Jesus spoke to Saul. (Acts 26:14)
8. Paul obeyed the gospel of Christ, being baptized into Jesus Christ. (Acts 22:16)

9. We have here in the lesson of Paul a surrendered life. As the persecutor now becomes persecuted. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27)
10. Paul became a very faithful servant to the Lord and fulfilled his responsibility as a Christian. He went on three separate missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire.
 - a. After his third missionary journey, Paul was arrested in the Temple in Jerusalem and was brought before the Sanhedrin who had him sent to Caesarea.
 - b. Over the next two years Paul was brought before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa II. After appealing to the emperor, Agrippa had Paul sent to Rome. Paul was taken to Rome during the time of Emperor Nero.
 - c. It was here in Rome that Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians while under house arrest.

II. ABOUT THE CITY OF EPHEBUS.

- A. Ephesus was the center of worship for the goddess Diana (Artemis). (Acts 19:24-27)
- B. It is generally known that the temple of Diana at Ephesus was deemed one of the Seven Wonders of the World, and was a most superb building.
 1. It appears that the silver shrines mentioned in Acts 19:24 were small portable representations of this temple, which were bought by strangers as matters of curiosity, and probably of devotion.
 2. If we can suppose them to have been exact models of this famous temple, representing the whole exterior of its magnificent workmanship, which is possible, they would be held in high estimation, and probably become a sort of substitute for the temple itself, to worshipers of this goddess who lived in distant parts of Greece.

3. The temple of Diana was raised at the expense of all Asia Minor, and yet was two hundred and twenty years in building, before it was brought to its sum of perfection.
 4. It was 425 feet in length, by 220 feet in breadth; and was beautified by 127 columns, which were made at the expense of so many kings; and was adorned with the most beautiful statues.
 5. To procure himself an everlasting fame, Erostratus burned it to the ground the same night on which Alexander the Great was born. It is reported that Alexander offered to make it as magnificent as it was before, provided he might put his name on the front; but this was refused.
 6. It was afterwards rebuilt and adorned, but Nero plundered it of all its riches. This grand building remains almost entire to the present day, and is now turned into a Turkish mosque.
- C. Ephesus was a major port city of the Roman Empire. Businesses made money by selling silver idols and souvenirs to visitors. When Paul went there to preach about Jesus, people listened, and many became Christians.
- D. Some sorcerers who turned to Jesus came together and burned their magic books (worth 50,000 pieces of silver). (Acts 19:16-20)
- E. Local silversmiths began to worry that too many people would become Christians, which would hurt their business. The silversmiths and merchants started a riot against Paul and his coworkers. The silversmiths demanded a hearing in the theater. The city clerk put down the riot, and a church started in Ephesus. (Acts 19:24-41)

III. WHY THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS.

- A. We can now see why Paul wrote this letter to the Church at Ephesus. He compared the ungodly life without Christ with the new godly life full of good news, blessings, peace, joy, and inner strength because of Jesus. He told them how

- to become more like Christ, full of love and forgiveness, instead of being in darkness away from God. He advised husbands, wives, and children.
- B. When we look at the letter to the church we can see a number of important things to consider.
- C. Have you ever heard of “Hetty” Green, known as “America's Greatest Miser”? She died in 1916, and left an estate worth over \$100 million dollars. Yet, it is said that she ate oatmeal cold, because it cost to heat it. Her son's leg was amputated, because she delayed too long looking for a free clinic. It sounds crazy for someone who had such great assets, to go through life miserable. She lived the life of a pauper, even though great wealth was at her disposal.
1. The same could be said of many Christians today. For in Christ Jesus, we have countless spiritual blessings! (Ephesians 1:3)
 2. However, many of these blessings go unused.
 - a. Blessings that are wonderful, but unappreciated by many.
 - b. Resulting in some Christians living what Thoreau would call “lives of quiet desperation.”
 - c. God would have us to know about these blessings, or spiritual “riches”, and in the New Testament one book in particular describes many of them: It is the book of Ephesians.
 - d. One expressed purpose of the book is that we might know “*what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*” - “*the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*” (Ephesians 1:18)
 - e. Finally, he called them all to put on “The Armor of God.”
- D. Paul was in contact with the Roman palace guards and knew the kind of armor they wore. There is no doubt that **the Armor of God** is an illustration of how to

stand firm against spiritual powers of darkness.

- E. At the time Paul wrote this epistle, he was awaiting trial in Rome. (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20)
- F. This epistle was written about the same time as Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon, approximately 60-62 A.D. It was written during the time period briefly described in Acts 28:30-31.
- G. So who are the recipients of this letter? The recipients of this letter were called “saints.”
 - 1. The word “saint” means “one who has been set apart.” It is related to the word “sanctified” which means “set apart.”
 - 2. ALL Christians were called saints in the New Testament, for in Christ Jesus even the vilest sinners are “sanctified” upon their conversion. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
 - 3. The recipients of this letter were those brethren “in Ephesus.”
 - 4. They are “faithful in Christ Jesus;” that is, they trusted in Him for their salvation. (Ephesians 1:13)
 - 5. They were “faithful” in another sense, also, in that they were trustworthy in their stand for the truth. (Revelation 2:1-3, 6)
 - 6. The Nicolaitans were, as is commonly supposed, a sect of the Gnostics, who taught the most impure doctrines, and followed the most impure practices. They are also supposed to have derived their origin from Nicolas, one of the seven deacons mentioned Acts 6:5. The Nicolaitanes taught the community of wives, that adultery and fornication were things indifferent, that eating meats offered to idols was quite lawful; and mixed several pagan rites with the Christian ceremonies.
 - 7. Later, however, the Church at Ephesus was rebuked for leaving their “first love.” (Revelation 2:4,5)

IV. THE THEME OF EPHESIANS IS FOUND IN CHAPTER ONE VERSE 3: THE BELIEVER'S RICHES IN CHRIST.

- A. What is the source of our blessings (riches)?
 - 1. They come from “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - 2. As revealed later, they come to us a result of the “riches” of . . .
 - a. God's grace. (Ephesians 1:7)
 - b. God's glory. (Ephesians 1:18)
 - c. God's mercy. (Ephesians 2:7)
- B. What is the scope of our blessings (riches)?
 - 1. They include “every” spiritual blessing; not just a few, but every single one!
 - 2. Blessings that are “spiritual” in nature; unlike many of the blessings to the nation of Israel of old, which were but material
- C. THE SPHERE OF OUR BLESSINGS (RICHES) . . .
 - 1. First, they are “in the heavenly places”
 - a. Literally, “in the heavenlies,” this is a phrase found only in Ephesians. (Ephesians 1:3; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12)
 - b. This of course refers to the spiritual realm, as opposed to the physical.
 - 2. Secondly, they are “in Christ.”
 - a. This phrase “in Christ” occurs 27 times in this epistle.
 - b. Emphasizing that it is only by being “in” Christ that one can have access to “every” spiritual blessing.

V. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS.

- A. Let's consider a brief outline of the letter:
- B. In chapters 1-3 we have the doctrine – our riches in Christ.
 - 1. Our spiritual possessions in Christ (1:4-14)

- a. From the Father (1:4-6)
 - b. From the Son (1:7-12)
 - c. From the Spirit (1:13-14)
 2. We then have a prayer for enlightenment. (1:15-23)
 3. In Chapter two we see our spiritual position in Christ. (2:1-22)
 - a. We are raised and seated on the throne (2:1-10)
 - b. We are reconciled and set into the temple (2:11-22)
 4. In chapter three we have the second Prayer: for enablement (3:1-21; with verses 2-13 as a parenthesis)
 5. Chapters 4-6 tells the Christian his responsibilities in Christ.
 - a. We are told to walk in unity (4:1-16)
 - b. Walk in purity (4:17-5:17)
 - c. Walk not as other Gentiles (4:17-32)
 - d. Walk in love (5:1-6)
 - e. Walk as children of light (5:7-14)
 - f. Walk carefully (5:15-17)
 - g. Walk in harmony (5:18-6:9)
 - h. Husbands and wives (5:18-33)
 - i. Parents and children (6:1-4)
 - j. Masters and servants (6:5-9)
 - k. Walk in victory (6:10-24)
 6. ***“Finally, my brethren . . .”*** - With these words Paul begins to draw his epistle to a close.
 7. To effectively carry out our “purpose,” Paul's final concern is that the Christian be “strong.” (Ephesians 6:10-12)
- C. So what is the source of this strength?
1. This strength comes from the Lord and not from ourselves. Note that Paul

- says.
- a. “be strong IN THE LORD”
 - b. “in the power OF HIS MIGHT”
2. Thus Paul states that there is “strength” and “power” available for the Christian beyond their own!
 - a. Paul already referred to this earlier. (Ephesians 1:19; 3:16, 20)
 - b. Paul also refers to this “strength” and “power” in his epistle to the Philippians. (Philippians 2:12-13; 4:13)
- D. This strength comes from “The ARMOR OF GOD”...
1. It is "armor" that GOD supplies.
 2. It is "armor" that we must "put on", i.e., it is not something we have in of ourselves.
 3. The point is, we are not left to our own feeble strength, but there is "divine strength" that we can "put on" to protect us in the "battles" we must face.
 4. Speaking of "battles", we next consider . . .
- E. What is the need for this strength? (11b-13)
1. We need this strength to stand against the wiles of the devil.
 - a. Satan has various “wiles” (lit., cunning arts, deceit, craft, trickery), but Christians need not be ignorant of his “devices.” (2 Corinthians 2:11)
 - b. For example, some of Satan's “schemes” are:
 - 1) Satan blinds people via false doctrine. (2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-3)
 - 2) Satan will entice people to indulge in illicit desires of the flesh and mind. (Ephesians 2:1-3)
 - 3) Satan will bring persecution upon those who try to do right. (1 Peter 5:8-9)

- a) Only with the Lord's help can we overcome the wicked one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 John 2:13-14)
- F. We must have this source of Power to wrestle against “SPIRITUAL HOSTS OF WICKEDNESS.” (Ephesians 6:12)
 - 1. Not only do we fight Satan, but we battle against:
 - a. Principalities and powers.
 - b. Rulers of the darkness of this age.
 - c. Spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.
 - d. We may not fully understand how the “rulers of the darkness” operate, but clearly we see the need for all the strength God provides us in order to “stand” against such forces.
- G. What is the strength God provides? As we continue in our text, Paul explains . . .

VI. THE NATURE OF THIS STRENGTH.

- A. The nature of this strength. We will briefly mention them and then in later lessons, we will cover them in detail. (Ephesians 6:14-20)
 - 1. It is the “whole” Armor of God. This is necessary so that we are able to “stand against the wiles of the devil”, and “withstand in the evil day.” To do this we need not just part of the Armor but the “Whole” Armor of God that is provided for the Christian.
 - 2. EVERY element Paul now describes is essential to be "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."
 - 3. The “whole Armor of God” involves:
 - a. **TRUTH**, which serves like a belt. It will hold our life together with a sense of direction and purpose. Truth can free us from sin, which can easily 'beset' us. (John 8:32-34; Hebrews 12:1)
 - b. **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, which guards like a breastplate. It does that which is good and right and will guard our hearts (emotions).

- c. **THE GOSPEL OF PEACE**, which is crucial to our ability to “stand.” The gospel is God's power unto salvation. (Romans 1:16-17; 10:15)
- d. **FAITH**, which is like a shield. A strong conviction in God can protect us from every "fiery dart" that Satan can throw at us (false doctrine, lusts of the flesh, persecution). This faith comes only from the Word of God. (Romans 10:17)
- e. **SALVATION**, which is like a helmet. In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul speaks of the "hope of salvation" as our helmet. *“But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.”* Thus it is the “hope” that salvation provides that can protect our minds against things like despair and fear.
- f. **THE WORD OF GOD**, which is the “sword of the Spirit.” Here is the “offensive” weapon that Christians must use in their battles, and it is a powerful one! (Hebrews 4:12) With this “sword” it is possible for the Spirit to “cut to the heart” those who hear the Word. (Acts. 2:36-37; 7:54)
- g. **PRAYER**, the means by which we remain “watchful.” In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus taught that we must “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.” (Matthew 26:41) The sort of “watchful prayer” that is effective, is one that is with "all perseverance" - as Jesus taught in His parable of the persistent widow. (cf. Luke 18:1-8) “Supplication for the saints” - especially those with special needs, even as Paul asked the Ephesians to pray for him. (Ephesians 6:19-20)

CONCLUSION.

- A. When we arm ourselves with such qualities as Truth, Righteousness, The gospel, Faith, The hope of salvation, The word of God, and Prayer then we are "*strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*"! (Ephesians 6:10) With such strength, we are able to resist and stand firm against anything Satan might throw against us. But the choice to "put on the whole armor of God" is up to us. Are we taking care to adorn ourselves with this wonderful armor?
- B. In the next several lessons, we shall consider what Paul has to say about "Standing Strong In The Armor Of God"