

20120204 Ephesians 6

Ephesians 6:10–24 (ESV)

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the **belt of truth**, and having put on the **breastplate of righteousness**, ¹⁵ and, as **shoes** for your feet, having put on the **readiness given by the gospel of peace**. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the **helmet of salvation**, and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Most of the NT is written from a eschatological viewpoint

eschatology = of the last days

We are awaiting the coming of Jesus, we are living in the “last days”

The NT says a lot about “the last days” :Jesus, Paul, Peter, John (Revelation)

characteristics of the “Last Days”

Times will become worse: natural disaster, hunger, epidemics, war, fear, etc.

People will become more evil, sin will increase

Christians, just like the rest of humans, will not be unaffected by all this. They will suffer too.

But On top of that christians will also be persecuted and suffer more because of their faith!

There has always been persecution, but in the Bible we read that the size and intensity will increase

Bible: be warned, be prepared, stand firm!

How shall we stand firm as christians in these bad times?

1. We should know that it is war!

Some Christians are not even aware that it's war. When someone tells them they are very surprised! In a war only two kinds of people: civilians and soldiers.

Deal with false ideas of comfort and peace

Our society is a comfort-society: if it feels good, it is good. If I like it, it is good, etc...

"If it doesn't feel good, it can't be good".

"Didn't God call us for peace and to live in peace?" When we face opposition, resistance, problems it can't be part of the normal Christian life. Something must be wrong"

WW2: American, Canadian guys signed up to bring peace and freedom to Europe. How? Buy fighting, suffering, offering their lives!

Start living as a soldier

2 Timothy 2:3–4 (ESV) ³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. ⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

Entangled in civilian pursuit – entangled (like a tango, complicated :))
Civilian pursuits

Matthew 6:31–33 (ESV) ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Seek first the kingdom – pursue the Kingdom, chase after the Kingdom!

Soldiers give their lives for their King and country → King Jesus

Attitude, aim in life, ambitions, view on life, everything they pursue → shaped by mission of the King!

Soldiers sacrifice their comfort, their lives so other people can live in freedom!

Summarized

Know that we are at war!

Deal with false ideas of comfort and peace

Start to live as a soldier of Jesus and give your life!

(All of this is still point 1)

2. You should know who your enemy is

We do not wrestle against people, but in reality it may seem so!

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

The fact that Paul has to emphasize that we are not fighting against other people, seems to indicate that his readers thought that they were fighting people!

And if we have a look at Paul's life we might come think the same. Because during his career as an apostle he was called all kinds of ugly things, accused, intimidated, he was beaten, he was stoned, thrown into jail, etc. BY other PEOPLE! Nevertheless he says that we do not fight against them!

Our battle is a spiritual battle (against rulers, etc...)

It is good to know that there is more between heaven and earth (demons?)

2 Corinthians 10:3–5 (ESV) ³ For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. ⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵ We destroy *arguments* and *every lofty opinion* raised against the knowledge of God, and take every *thought* captive to obey Christ,

Some christians literally are fighting demons. But this is not what Paul did!

He is not fighting demons, but ideas, opinions, thoughts, philosophy that goes against God!

Thoughts etc. that are inspired by demons, demonic mature. (oooh, spooky)

An example from Paul's mission: Artemis of Ephesus

Acts 19:23–27 (ESV)

²³ About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. ²⁴ For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. ²⁵ These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷ And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship.”

Paulus was not busy fighting demons, doing spiritual Kung Fu. He proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus! Gospel tells that the only living God is not made by human hands.

Paul confronts ideas that go against the knowledge of God, that are disobedient to God

Demetrius on the other hand sees his income in danger, he will soon be without a job and the goddess he believes in will be stripped of all her glory!

He is going after Paul!

The Gospel is Good News, but also Confronting News!

Goes against our own ideas, opinions (e.g. Comfort, etc)

It also opposes ideas of other people, their culture, traditions, etc.

Beware of the Gospel, you might lose your job!

1 Cor. The Gospel is foolishness and an offense → opposition, hatred, struggle, persecution!

3. Fight the right way

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God,

Soldier, war, struggle, problems, people yelling at me...how will I ever manage?

When the Bible tells us all these things, but not in like: now you know, good luck with it!

We believe in grace! The passage we've read of Paul calling Timothy to be a good soldier starts with this beautiful encouragement: 2 Timothy 2:1 (ESV) You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus

Finally, be strong *in the Lord* and in the strength of *his* might

It is also His armor, not ours. And the weapons we are fighting with are strong by *God's power!*

Looking at the “spiritual armor” you'll see that all the parts have something to do with ideas, believes, thoughts, etc.

→ Thruth, righteousness (thruth in action), readiness of the Gospel, salvation, faith, sword of the Spirit

These are all things we do not have of ourselves! They are given to us by Jesus!

Jesus is the Truth, Jesus is our Righteousness, Jesus is our Salvation, Jesus is the founder of our faith, Jesus is the Eternal Word of God!

Put on the whole armor → put on the new man (Eph. 4) → put on Christ!

Ephesians 1: “In Christ!”

Ephesians 2-3: Jesus put away racial barriers between people, he made us one, we we in darkness, but Jesus brought us into the light. Strangers – members of God's family!

Eph. 4 Jesus gave gifts to his body, the Church, so she will mature and throught the Church the manifold wisdom of God is displayed!

Eph. 5 Be imitators of God, of Jesus Christ!

Eph. 6/1 Marriage to the glory of God, Christlike husbands that lay down their lives!

Eph. 6/2 Armor of God → also about Jesus!

Paul talks about feet and Gospel shoes → Isaiah 52

Isaiah 52:7 (ESV) ⁷How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings good news,
who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness,
who publishes salvation,
who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”

It is about God who is going to war to free his people. God bared his right arm...(Wartalk!)

After Isaiah 52 comes 53! → To whom has been revealed the right arm of God? = Jesus!

Jesus fought as a good soldier for our sake!

Jesus sacrificed himself for our sakes. He gave up his comfort for our eternal comfort!

Jesus lived and died (and rose again!) for the glory of God and for our sakes!

Jim Elliot – he is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot loose

Standing firm = letting go of what is not of eternal value and grasping firmly what is eternal → JESUS!