

International Sunday School Lesson
Study Notes
February 22, 2015

Lesson Text: Ephesians 6:10-20
Lesson Title: Clothed and Ready

Introduction

Years ago it was important that people have the right clothes for the occasion. Today, it seems less emphasis is placed on proper clothing. Some see that change as social progress while others would see it as a reflection of a culture that has lost touch with reality and integrity. If a policeman is to do his job he must be clothed properly. Performance and protection are literally woven into the fabric of what he wears. The same is true of a surgeon, a firefighter, and certainly a soldier. None of these groups would dare attempt to do their jobs unless they were clothed and ready.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians opened with a doxology of praise to God for the blessings of redemption (Ephesians 1:1-14). The epistle closes, however, with a call to arms and proper attire for battle. It is a serious mistake to think that the experience of salvation sets us free from the troubles of life. It has often been said, and rightly so, that trouble doesn't really start until you become a Christian. While that statement should not be taken to mean that the Christian life is totally about hardships, the experience of salvation does mark the beginning of a lifelong warfare. This is not a war for our salvation, but a war resulting because of our salvation. In our lesson text from Ephesians 6:10-20, Paul addresses the believer's warfare and gives instructions on how to be clothed and ready for the battle.

The Believer's Strength (Ephesians 6:10)

Verse 10

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

"Finally," means "something remaining," and indicates that Paul has something further to say to the Ephesians after having discussed the issues of children and parents and masters and slaves (Ephesians 6:1-9). Paul addressed his readers as "my brethren" which is one of only two uses of the word "brethren" in Ephesians (Ephesians 6:10, 23). "Brethren" is the Greek word *adelphos* {ad-el-fos} and speaks of "those born from the same womb." Although Paul will be speaking to the Ephesians like a general would speak to his army, issuing commands and giving instructions, he comes to them based on their relationship in Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, by addressing the believers as “my brethren,” Paul is making it clear that every believer at Ephesians is going to need strength for the spiritual battle. It is not just the pastors, elders, and church leaders who need to be strong. All of God’s children need to “be strong in the Lord.” Why? The Apostle John wrote, “*And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*” (1 John 5:19).

As Paul thinks of the conflict that faces the Ephesian believers, he charges them to “be strong in the Lord.” The word “strong” means “to be empowered.” The use of the word suggests the pouring of power into the believer. This same thought occurs in Philippians 4:13, “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me,*” or, “pours power into me.”

“Strong” comes from the Greek word *endunamoo* that comes from the root word *dunamis*. The word describes power that overcomes resistance or causes a change. It is such an encouragement to know that no matter what battle the believer may face there is a power available to overcome the enemy and bring victory.

“In the Lord” speaks of the union believers have with Christ in salvation. The idea is that by our union with Christ the power that is his may be drawn upon by us. “And in the power of his might” further explains Paul’s thinking. The two leading words in this verse is “power” and “might.” “Power” is used in the New Testament to speak of supernatural power, whether Satanic (Hebrews 2:14) or divine and denotes power as an active force. “Might,” is more passive. It speaks of strength possessed, whether exercised or not.

Paul must have been thinking of the words he wrote in Ephesians 1:19, “*And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power...*” (Ephesians 1:19). No matter what the believer faces he is promised the “strength, power, and might” available through his union with Jesus Christ.

The Believer’s Enemy (Ephesians 6:11-12)

Verse 11

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”

“Put on” literally means “to dress or clothe.” It’s the same word used in Luke 15:22, “*Bring the best robe, and put it on him...*” The words carry with them a sense of urgency. While the Luke 15:22 passage suggests that someone else is putting the robe on the returning prodigal, “Put on” here in verse 11 is the

believer's responsibility. No one is going to clothe you for the battle. You must put on the armor of God yourself.

The expression "the whole armour of God," (vv.11, 13) uses the imagery of the Roman soldier fully equipped for heavy military battle. It is the armor "of God" in the sense that it is "armour" which only God provides. "Of God" means God furnishes it and it is ready for our use. "Whole" means "full." Only a fully clothed soldier, as described in verses 17-20, is to enter battle with Satan's forces. Only a fully clothed soldier, clothed in the armor God provides is ready for battle. One must not attempt to enter this spiritual battle in armor of our own making. The force of this thought is that God furnishes the armor and He also demands that the believer put it on!

If fully clothed, the battling believer will be "able to stand against the wiles of the devil." "Able" is the Greek word *dynamai* {doo-nam-ahee} and means "the power or ability needed to do something." In this case, the believer, through God and the armor He furnishes, has the ability "to stand." "To stand" in this context means "to stand your ground." It is a military thought of a soldier holding his position on the battlefield. Believers have power to "dig in" and remain faithful through the battles of life.

The "wiles of the devil" is Satan's strategies. Satan has many ways of attacking and deceiving God's children. The word "wiles" also suggests that Satan is not just launching attacks at random against God's children. His "wiles" or schemes, are well-planned and "tailor-made" for each person. He operates like a cunning animal stalking and ready to pounce upon his prey (1 Peter 5:8). This is even more reason to be clothed and ready.

Many believers live as if there is no real enemy in the world. Satan is not all-powerful but he is powerful and he carries out well designed plans. As Spurgeon said, "Satan will attack by force or by fraud." The Bible reveals everything the believer needs to know about Satan and his strategies. To be informed about your enemy, read the Bible. Like Paul, believers should not be ignorant of his ways (2 Corinthians 2:11).

Illus. Military intelligence is crucial to victory in any battle. Unless we know who the enemy is, where he is located, and what he can do, it is difficult to defeat him.

Verse 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."

Part of the “wiles of the devil,” or his strategy, is to cause the believer to ignore the fact that he is engaged in a massive conflict. That’s why Paul said, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood...” This battle in which the believer is engaged is not just a “flesh and blood” battle with physical opponents. In other words, our enemies are not people. Satan may use people but our real enemy is behind the scene. This is not an ordinary battle. There is more going on here than “flesh and blood” can see.

The word “against” is used five times in verse 12. It means “a movement toward or closeness to something.” The believer is not commanded to move toward the battle but the language suggests he is already in the battle. “For we wrestle” involves every believer. “We” leaves no one exempt from this conflict.

“Wrestle” speaks of hand-to-hand combat between athletes. This form of confrontation would include deception, trickery, and anything necessary to gain an advantage over the opponent. In hand-to-hand combat between military soldiers, this “wrestling” could result in all types of physical injuries and even death.

Paul lists four distinct Satanic orders against whom we wrestle in our spiritual warfare:

1) Principalities-This refers to rulers, the leadership of the evil spirit world. There are multitudes of spirit beings in the unseen world. Before the fall of Lucifer, all the spirit beings were glorious and good. When Lucifer rose in pride and challenged God, he fell and a host of spirit beings fell with him. Lucifer, whom we know as Satan, is “*the god of this world*” (2 Corinthians 4:4) and those who fell with him are now the evil spirits that rule in this world. The “principalities” against which the believer wrestles are the high ranking, governing authorities who are under Satan’s control.

2) Powers-The Greek word for powers is *exousia* {ex-oo-see-ah}. The word means “delegated authority.” Satan is powerful, clever, but he is not God! However, he has enormous power beyond our ability to understand. He can give people deceiving power and controlling power. Satan has the power to perform miracles as in the case of the magicians in Egypt (Exodus 7:11). Thank God Christ “*spoiled principalities and powers*” (Colossians 2:15) when He gave his life on the cross. Until the end of the age of grace, God allows the “powers” of Satan to work in certain limited purposes. That’s why believers continue to “wrestle” against them.

3) Rulers of the darkness of this world-This speaks of world rulers who govern and rule from the darkness of unbelief and Satan’s power. “Darkness” simply means “absence of light.” When any world ruler makes decisions that reveal the absence of light he is ruling under Satan’s leadership. Satan and his demonic

forces made up of fallen angels and those who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord controls the present world system. And the believer “wrestles” against it.

4) Spiritual wickedness in high places-“Spiritual” refers to that which belongs to the supernatural world as opposed to that which belongs to the natural world. Our battle, our struggle is against invisible forces. We may see the evil in the faces of our government and religious leaders but the real force is spiritual. “Wickedness” refers to man’s depravity. The word describes those who lack moral or spiritual values. This “wickedness” is active, not passive. The word also means that people do evil because they are evil (Luke 11:39). “High places” is “heavenly places.” This is not referring to heaven where God dwells but the heavens or the atmosphere surrounding the earth where man lives. Paul makes reference to it when he speaks of Satan at the “*prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*” (Ephesians 2:2).

Teachers note: I doubt if any of us can fully understand or grasp the significance of the number of spiritual forces that oppose us daily. We can define words and try to explain what they mean but in all honesty it comes back to this simple truth. Satan is powerful. God is all-powerful. And we are in a battle!

The Believer’s Protection (Ephesians 6:13-17)

Verse 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.”

“Wherefore,” points back to the descriptions of verse 12 and calls attention to the character of the enemy. It also means “on this account,” or “because of.” Because of the nature of the enemy the believer must “take” or put on “the whole armour of God.” “Take unto you” is a military expression for arming one’s self. The suggestion is that the armor is at the believer’s feet ready for use; it just needs to be picked up and put on. Again, Paul is stressing the seriousness of the battle and the seriousness of being clothed with the “whole armour of God.”

The end result of taking the whole armor of God is that the believer “may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” “May be able” is the Greek word *dynamai* {doo-nam-ah-ee} and means “to have power from an outside source.” God graciously gives the enablement to effectively resist the enemy. The word “to withstand” means “to resist successfully.” It involves not only the right attitude toward the battle but also involves the right actions toward the battle. Because of the God given power and strength the believer is “able to” resist the enemy.

Defining exactly what the “evil day” means is difficult. Some scholars believe Paul was referring to an imminent attempt to destroy the church in his day. Others think he may have been referring to an inevitable confrontation with Satan. Most likely, Paul is referring to those crucial days of special assaults by the enemy.

“And having done all to stand” is a strong expression that means “everything has been done that could be done.” “Having done all” conveys the thought of hard labor. The Christian soldier has passed through every aspect of the struggle. It pictures the end of the conflict when the enemy has been totally defeated. “To stand,” speaks of the stand of victory. The believer has held his ground through the power God has given him, fully clothed, the conflict having ended, and he is still standing!

Verse 14-16

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

“Stand therefore” means that the believer having held his ground during the “evil day,” is to take his stand again ready to face another such crucial day, should it come. He is to stand “having his loins girt about with truth.” “Girt” means “to tuck in the loose ends” and refers to the securing of the long robes inside a belt to allow activity or movement to be unhindered. For the soldier to be “girded” meant he was ready for battle. “Loins” refers to the area around the hip. The hip area is the center of action, mobility, and direction. The Roman soldier’s belt or girdle wrapped around the hip area and was used to secure other parts of the soldier’s equipment. It supported, braced, and strengthened the entire armor.

Since Satan is a liar we must fight our enemy with “truth.” What “truth” is Paul talking about? “Truth” is “practical acknowledgment of the truth as it is in Christ and His Word.” When the believer agrees with God’s revelation and holds that conviction tightly in the midst of battle, it guarantees victory and keeps every other piece of equipment in place. “Truth” is the basis of everything the believer does (3 John 1:4). Unless we are motivated and directed by truth, we will be defeated by the enemy. God’s “truth” is what holds everything together.

The “breastplate” provided protection for the chest area of the soldier. It was often a form fitting piece of metal covering the lungs and heart. Without a “breastplate” a warrior was vulnerable to every assault of the enemy. Paul says that “righteousness” is the Christian’s “breastplate.” The “righteousness” spoken of here must not be thought of in terms of personal righteousness or

moral character, for none of us are equipped to face the enemy in our own righteousness. This “righteousness is Christ’s alone! In Christ’s righteousness we stand and are enabled to stand before God or face the enemy.

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” draws attention to a very important part of the soldier’s body. “Shod” means “to bind.” The well-equipped soldier in Paul’s day wore sandals with soles thickly studded with a type of nail. This not only gave protection to the soldier’s feet but it also enabled the soldier to move quickly and securely. This was very crucial in hand-to-hand combat.

“Feet shod” conveys a readiness due to firm footing. The Christian, Paul explains, must have his feet firmly established “with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” “Preparation” means “to make ready.” “The gospel of peace” is a reference to the good news of Jesus Christ. If the “gospel of peace” is accepted and believed, it results in peace with God. A soldier is ready to fight when he has a consciousness of peace with God. It gives him the disposition of mind that enables him to see his duty as a soldier of Jesus Christ and enter the battle with calm assurance.

“Above all” or in addition, Paul instructs believers to “take” or “lift up the shield of faith.” Used for defensive purposes, the “shield” was shaped like a large door measuring 2 ½ feet wide by 4 feet in height. If a soldier stayed behind the defensive “shield,” he was a protected man. “Faith” must be understood here to mean our utter dependence upon God and trust in Him. “Faith” is the Greek word *pistis* {pis-tis} and is synonymous with trust or belief. Used here, the idea is that the believer’s trust and belief in God can stop and extinguish all the “fiery darts of the wicked.”

“Fiery darts” were among the most dangerous weapons used in ancient warfare. They were arrows dipped in pitch or some other combustible material and set on fire and then launched toward the enemy. When these arrows hit the wooden shield of the soldier, the burning tip would sink into the wood and the flame would be extinguished. If the believer will have trust and have faith in God, the burning assaults of Satan will be “quenched” or extinguished. “Faith” protects us, not our ability to fight or our opinions about the conflicts we face. The “shield of faith” stands between the believer and the enemy. And that “shield of faith” is able to extinguish “all” the flaming arrows of the enemy. Not some, but “all.”

Verse 17

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”

The last piece of defensive equipment for the soldier is “the helmet of salvation.” The believer is to “take” the helmet of salvation. The word “take” usually means “to receive,” or “welcome.” In this context, however, it most likely means “to grasp.” The “helmet” was a vital defensive piece of armor for the Roman soldier. Obviously, a blow to the head could be fatal. A man’s head is the seat of his intellect and the brain center for all his bodily functions. A soldier may be wounded in other parts of his body but if he could properly think and make decisions he could be spared. The head must be protected at all costs.

Paul calls the helmet “the helmet of salvation.” As brilliant as and as educated as a lost man may be, he is doomed to death if he isn’t saved by grace. Satan has and continues to deceive man by having him trust in human reasoning over the truth of God’s inerrant Word. God’s “salvation” must encompass what we think. Apart from God’s salvation, man cannot reach a correct conclusion about anything. The mind is Satan’s territory and he occupies it well. But the more we “take the helmet of salvation,” the better we are able to think about the things of God and the better we are protected from Satan’s lies.

The “sword of the Spirit” is the only offensive weapon listed. While the “sword” may be used to maintain ground in battle, it is also used to advance and attack the enemy. When Paul wrote this passage much of the New Testament had not been written. However, the “sword of the Spirit” is clearly defined by Paul as “the word of God.” When Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness, He used “the sword of the Spirit.” On three occasions He said, “*It is written*” (Matthew 4:6, 7, 10). The believer is to use the Scriptures as a mighty weapon in the conflict with evil.

The Believer’s Prayer (Ephesians 6:18-20)

Verse 18-20

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 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, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

The believer is expected to be fully clothed and ready for battle utilizing all the armor God has provided. Now, says Paul, the believer is expected to not only be clothed and ready for battle, he is also expected to be immersed in prayer. “Praying always” literally means “in every season” the believer is to pray.

Two words are used in these verses for the believer’s prayerful approach to God. First, “prayer” is the general word that includes the whole act of worship as the believer adores and approaches God. Second, “supplication,” is more of

making petition as the believer is in the presence of God. The word “all” is used three times in this section to stress the range of prayer or what all it touches. We are to pray with all prayer, during all periods, in all perseverance, for all people.

We are to pray “in the Spirit” which means “under his influence and with His assistance” (Romans 8:26; Jude 20). Such praying requires “perseverance.” The word means “to continue to do something with intense effort.” Satan will try everything possible to defeat the believer and discourage us. We must continue to battle and pray. The believer must “supplicate for all saints.” It means we are to make urgent requests to God on behalf of our fellow believers. Spurgeon said, “*When you cannot use your sword, you can pray.*”

Praying for each other is so important to spiritual victory. As persecution increases against Christians all around the world in the last days, we must “supplicate for all saints.”

Finally, Paul requests prayer for himself. “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.” “And for me” seems to set Paul the prisoner in a separate category from the rest of the saints. It also stresses just how much he covets their supplication on his part. First, he asks for prayer that he may preach effectively. “Utterance” is the Greek word *logos* {log-os}. *Logos* is a general term for speaking with content. Paul is not asking to be set free from prison, but he is asking the Ephesians to pray that when he opened his mouth to speak that he could declare the gospel. Second, he asks for boldness or confidence to “make known” or courageously communicate the “mystery of the gospel.” This “mystery” is something hidden in former times but is now revealed. Paul wanted the Ephesians to pray for him that he might be able to make known how God through his gracious salvation placed Gentiles and Jews in the body of Christ.

“For which” is a reference to the gospel. Because of the gospel of Jesus Christ that Paul preached, he was now “an ambassador in bonds.” An “ambassador” was a messenger or envoy who officially represented a king or a government (2 Corinthians 5:20). Paul was anxious to “speak boldly” as he “ought to speak.” “Boldly” means “confident in spirit” and “without constraint.”

An “ambassador in bonds,” what a sight! But through the prayers of God’s people Paul could still fulfill his calling and reach the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

If you are interested in being socially clothed and ready for any occasion, you can google “dressed for the occasion” and it will take you to various websites

that tell you the latest trends and what is acceptable and not acceptable. If you are interested in being spiritually clothed and ready, you can read Ephesians 6:10-20, and the Apostle Paul will tell you what you need, piece by piece, to fight the good fight of faith.

While we thank God for His grace and provisions of all we need for victory in the battle, we as Christians must be clothed and ready. Don't wait until Satan launches his attacks. Prepare today for battle. Pray through the lesson text. Ask God to specifically put every piece of armor upon you. Take up the armor that is available to you. And pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

Amen.