



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Ephesians 6.10-24

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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we conclude our fall series Welcome Home, engaging the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, engaging how to walk in victory over the principalities and powers of this world.

II. Connecting With One Another

Who would you say is your biggest enemy? Why?

III. Study the Text

- a. Before engaging this week's text, spend some time reading the passages below, noting questions you have or anything that surprises you in the space provided:

2nd Corinthians 11.3 _____

Ephesians 4.26-27 _____

1st Peter 5.8 _____

Revelation 20.1-3 _____

- b. Read Ephesians 6.10-12.

Most first century letters like Ephesians were read aloud in a worship gathering, and were probably dictated to a scribe, who penned them (see Romans 16.22, for example, and Galatians 6.11, for the opposite). This may explain use of the word "finally" in verse 10 (which would not otherwise form a natural transition from the preceding verses).

The specific exhortation in this final section is called the *peroratio*, which is "a persuasive appeal at the conclusion of an epistle." These concluding comments contain 1) an exhortation to strength, 2) the source or means of such strength, 3) the need for strength, and 4) the employment of this strength. Reread verses 10-12, noting each below:

1) Exhortation (verse 10): _____

2) Source (10) and means (11): _____

3) Need (11): _____

4) Employment (11, 13, 14): _____

- c. In verse 11, Paul asserts the reason to employ God's strength: To take our stand. What do you make of this declaration? Why wouldn't he instruct us to *advance*!?
- d. Our desire to "advance in battle" may be due to our mental image of modern warfare. While it may seem passive for us to merely "hold the line," in a defensive posture, the ancient form of hand-to-hand combat which inspires Paul's thought is quite different. It involved a line of soldiers standing shoulder to shoulder with large shields, seeking to prevent an incursion into their territory. In theological terms, if, indeed, we have already been invited, adopted, and welcomed home into the household and family of God, we need no heroic, advancing action! The battle has already been won!

One scholar puts it this way: "There is no need, then, for Christians to accomplish what has already been done. Instead we must resist the attempts of Satan both to retake territory no longer his and to defame Christ and his kingdom by causing us to fail. To *stand* is neither static nor passive, but the active accomplishment of our present task."

How does this reframe your understanding of spiritual warfare?

- e. Other passages which provide background to "merely standing" include Matthew 12.22-32, Luke 10.18, Hebrews 2.14, and Ephesians 1.20-23. How do these verses clarify that the battle has already been won?

- f. Reread Ephesians 6.12.

Do you agree with Paul? Is our struggle not against flesh and blood?

Who is the "our" in this verse? Who is it *not*?

- g. Read Ephesians 6.13-17.

Notice the words "Therefore" in verse 13 and "then" in 14. What function do these words have in Paul's argument?

What do you think Paul means by the phrase "the day of evil"?

- h. While many commentators have noted the possibility that Paul was inspired by a Roman soldier guarding him, there are interesting parallels from the Hebrew Scriptures, as well.

Read Isaiah 11.4-5, 59.17, and 52.7, noting connections with the articles of clothing that Paul mentions:

Belt of Truth _____

Breastplate of Righteousness _____

Feet Fitted... Gospel of Peace _____

Shield of Faith _____

Helmet of Salvation _____

Sword of the Spirit _____

- i. It has been written that "the significance of the armor is not as much in the individual pieces, important as they are, as in what they signify together as God's armor, which is also that of his Messiah." Note especially that the context of Isaiah 11, 59, and 52-53 are each, in their own way, messianic prophecies.

How did Jesus display these pieces of armor in his earthly ministry?

- j. It has been written that "...Paul's instructions about the spiritual battle are not given as a means by which we gain ultimate victory. That belongs to Christ himself. But if that victory meant we are automatically destined to win every skirmish, there would be no need of teaching about the battle and the armor. Clearly we must apply the result of Christ's victory in our own lives. The victory of Christ in the supernatural arena must be achieved in our personal lives on earth."

Which piece of armor do you most need today?

How could you be equipped to "apply the result of Christ's victory in your own life"?

- k. Read Ephesians 6.18-24.

In just three verses, Paul mentions prayer 5 times! Prayer is undoubtedly required for the spiritual battle he's just described. Accompanying these 5 references to prayer are the words "all" or "every" - so prayer is needed *always*!

Read Matthew 26.40, 1st Thessalonians 5.4-11, and 1st Peter 5.8-9, for other connections between prayer and spiritual battles.

- l. The final verses of Ephesians include words of encouragement. It's fascinating to remember that such words were dictated or written during Paul's imprisonment! How do you think he was able to be so positive in the midst of such difficulty?

IV. Pray

- a. Pray for those around the world experiencing persecution by "flesh and blood" enemies, that they would stand firm in their faith in Christ,
- b. Ask God to help us open our eyes to the reality of spiritual warfare in our midst,
- c. Lift up those you know who have not yet committed to Jesus Christ, that the Holy Spirit would break through the principalities and powers of evil that are keeping them from following Jesus.