

Ephesians 6:10-17

- Spiritual Warfare -

Author: Evert Jan Hempenius

© 2023

www.christianstudylibrary.org

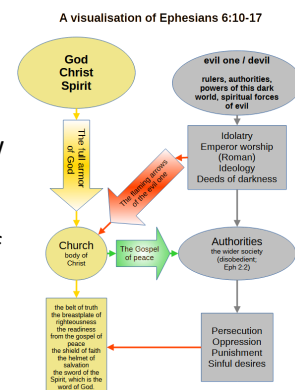
For any questions about this Scripture passage or the notes, please contact us through the Contact Us tab on the website.

Introduction

❖ One of the main questions of this passage is concerned with the identity of spiritual powers and the character of the struggle of the Christian church. Some commentaries stated that this struggle is not against "flesh and blood", which could be interpreted as that no human beings are involved, only spiritual powers. These commentaries have difficulty explaining why and how the word of God as a defence could function and why the church should be equipped with the readiness which comes with the Gospel of peace. The apostle refers to his struggle.

- It is **our** struggle, writes the apostle, who is in chains (Eph 3:1; 4:1) for the sake of the Gospel. He needs to defend himself (Eph 6:20-21) in front of judges and finally the Emperor.
- The Book of Revelation is important in this respect. Chapters 2-3 and 12-13 depict a struggle against spiritual powers (satan, the beasts), but they are acting through earthly means: political and religious, economic and social, by persecution and oppression.
- What does the apostle mean by "flesh and blood"? This study outline advocates the possibility that he refers to a physical struggle based on the strength of muscles and agility, like wrestlers.
- A visualisation of the text might be helpful. See below the application.

❖ There are four passages in which Paul addresses the power of God, the power of the enemy, and the spiritual war in which



the believers are engaged: Ephesians 1:18-23; 2:1-3; 2:19-23; 6:10-12(-18). Of these, the final one is the most explicit and a conclusion to the letter.

- As stated above, this spiritual warfare can have different backgrounds:
 - Religious (Christianity confronts Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and traditional religions);
 - Political and ideological (socialism, communism, secularism, liberalism – North Korea, China, European countries);
 - Economical and ethical (Freedom of speech, sex and gender, healthcare).
- Christianity confronts the existing (spiritual) powers. These powers can also be manifested in corruption, human trafficking, slavery, illegal drug trade, and discrimination based on race and ethnicity.
 - **The study of apologetics is strongly recommended.**¹
- ❖ The apostle characterizes the message of the Gospel as a message of peace, peace with God in Christ, and peace among the believers:
 - **“For he himself is our peace**, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph 2:14).
 - “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through **the bond of peace.**”
- ❖ This message is a mystery (Eph 1:9; 3:1-13; 5:32; 6:19), a message of a new creation in Christ (Eph 4:20-24) and of reconciliation (Eph 4:31).
 - The mystery:
 - “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and **to know this love that surpasses knowledge**—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:14-19).
- ❖ About the letter to the Ephesians
 - This letter might be compared to a cathedral, a cathedral of faith. The outside of the church is beautiful, looking at the pinnacles, and the majestic entrances, one gets overwhelmed by the artistry. Once inside, the visitor is silenced and gently forced to sit down and to look, to look at the ceilings, the walls,

¹ Wikimedia Foundation. (2023, October 5). *Christian apologetics*. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_apologetics. See for example: the Wikimedia Foundation. (2023, August 1). *Celsus*. Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Celsus>

the pillars, and the glass-stained windows. These cathedrals have been built by architects and artisans. These cathedrals were not only built to the glory of God, honestly speaking but also to the glory of the city and men.]

- The letter to the Ephesians can also be compared with a tapestry. All the threads are woven and knitted together to show one great picture of the grace and glory of God in Christ.

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological notes, and technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline below show some overlap with other sermon outlines taken from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand-alone" and as part of a series.

Literary and historical context

- ❖ The City of Ephesus:²
 - The city was an important administrative and commercial hub of the Roman province of Asia. Nowadays the remnants of the magnificent city theatre can still be viewed. It had a seating capacity of 24,000 people (Acts 19:30-41). The temple of Artemis was famous and already classified in the ancient world as one of the seven wonders of the world. Numerous other gods and goddesses were worshipped.
- ❖ The City of Ephesus in the New Testament:
 - Paul visited Ephesus for the first time only briefly on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-22). After he had left the city, Priscilla and Aquila continued to preach the gospel (Acts 18:24-28).
 - Paul visited the city for a second time and stayed there for more than two years (Acts 19): **“This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”** More churches were probably established during these years (Rev 2-3) in the Roman province of Asia.
 - Paul must have encountered severe conditions while he was in Ephesus. In his letter to the Corinthians, he wrote: **“If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus** for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’” (1 Cor 15:32). The majority of recent scholars postulate that Paul was in prison one or more times while he was in Ephesus.
 - Paul met the Elders of the church on the beach of the city of Miletus (Acts 20:13-38) when he travelled to Jerusalem.
 - Jews from Asia recognized Paul when he entered the temple in Jerusalem: **“Some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple.** They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him” (Acts 21:27; 24:19).
 - Later, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3) to support this church through teaching and instructions.
- ❖ Finally, the apostle John received his Revelation of Jesus Christ and sent it to the seven churches in Asia, the first being Ephesus (Rev 1:11; 2:1-7). According to old church traditions, John probably stayed in Ephesus.
- ❖ An overview of the letter to the Ephesians and the context of 3:14-21:
 - 1:1-2 Salutation

² Arnold, C. (1993, pp. 249-253). *Ephesus*. In G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, & D. G. Reid (Eds.).

1:3-14	Blessing or glorification of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
1:15-23	First prayer and thanksgiving to God
2:1-22	Gentiles and Jews are both made alive in Christ – a new creation, a holy temple in the Lord
3:1-13	Admonition: don't be discouraged because of my sufferings (Paul)
3:14-21	Second prayer and glorification of the Father
4:1-6:9	Admonition: live a life worthy of the calling you have received:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4:1-16 • • 4:17-5:20 • • 5:21-6:9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live a life of love within the community of the church, which is the body of Christ • Live a life of love as a new creation in Christ, as children of God, filled with the Holy Spirit • Live a life of love, especially within the family household
6:10-20	The spiritual warfare
6:21-24	Greetings

Form and structure

- ❖ Ephesians 6:10-20 consists of three parts:

Part 1. Spiritual Warfare (verses 10-12) – Warning

Be strong: Finally, be strong in the Lord and his mighty power.

(verse 10-12)

How? Put on the full armour of God

Why? so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

What are the powers of the devil? For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Part 2. The armour of God (verses 13-17) – Preparation

The armour of God: Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

<i>truth</i>	Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,
<i>righteousness</i>	with the breastplate of righteousness in place,
<i>gospel of peace</i>	and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.
<i>faith</i>	In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.
<i>salvation</i>	Take the helmet of salvation
<i>word of God</i>	and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Part 3. Be alert and pray (verses 18-20) – perseverance

Perseverance: And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

(verse 18-20)

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Technical, theological and hermeneutical notes

Literary notes:

- ❖ The authorship and addressees of this letter have much been debated.³ Pauline's authorship is affirmed by tradition and autobiographical information.

General theological notes:

- ❖ The letter to the Ephesians is essentially Trinitarian:
 - Ephesians 1:3-14. "Praise be **to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**.... Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised **Holy Spirit**, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."

³ Arnold, C. (1993, pp. 240-242). Ephesians, Letter to. In G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, & D. G. Reid (Eds.).

- Ephesians 1:17: “I keep asking that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father**, may give you the **Spirit** of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”
- Ephesians 2:18: “For through **him** (Jesus Christ) we both have access to the **Father by one Spirit.**” (See also Eph 2:22; 3:5.)
- Ephesians 3:14-19: “For this reason I kneel before the **Father**,... I pray that out of **his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...**”
- Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body and one **Spirit**— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— ⁵one **Lord**, one faith, one baptism; ⁶one **God and Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
 - Paul begins his letter with an exclamation of praise to God (Eph 1:3) and the mercies of God, especially his love: “But because of **his great love for us, God**, who is rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4).
 - Christ is the exalted one (Eph 1:21-22). He is the head of all creation (Eph 1:10) and especially of his body the church (Eph 4:15).
- ❖ Paul stresses the unity of the believers with Christ, the “saints in Ephesus, **the faithful in Christ Jesus**”:
 - **The expression “in Christ” or “in him” occurs thirty-four times!** There is a mystic corporate unity and solidarity of all believers in Christ, which is practised in the local congregation.
 - In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7). “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan” of God (Eph 1:11).
 - God “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions— it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6).

The new man(kind)

- ❖ The new man(kind) as a creation in Christ is an important theme in this letter:
 - “His purpose was **to create in himself one new man(kind) out of the two**, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility” (Eph 2:15, 16).
 - “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and **to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness**” (Eph 4:22-24).

- “It is the gracious action of God’s Spirit moving believers into a different sphere where the new rule of life obtains.”⁴
- ❖ The mind and heart of the new man have been changed. *Heart* “stands not for the literal heart but for “the whole of the inner being of man in contrast to his external side”.⁵ The heart is also “the integrating center of man as a rational, emotional, volitional being.”⁶

Hermeneutical notes

- ❖ Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, although both assertions (Paul? Ephesians?) have been contested by scholars (see above).
 - For the exposition, it is fruitful to refer to the implied author and the implied addressee. We can’t meet Paul nor the Ephesians personally. There is a distance of place and time between the first readers, Paul, and the 21st-century reader. But we can get to know them both a little bit through the contents of this letter. The author (Paul) tells some things about himself, personal information, style of writing, and his concerns. The same is true for the Ephesians, but the information we receive is given by the implied author.
- ❖ The implied author makes himself known by:
 - Personal remarks, such as “**As a prisoner for the Lord,**” tell something about his situation.
 - The use of personal pronouns, such as “I”, “my” and to a lesser extent “we”, because in this case he includes others as well.
 - His theological statements, acclamations and prayers, are embedded in and function in the larger Christian community.
- ❖ The implied audience is made known by the author of the letter:
 - When he writes about their local and (sometimes) personal circumstances.
 - When he uses specific personal pronouns, such as “you”, and “we” – including himself, “they”, when he is writing about others.
 - When he uses imperatives and specific figures or style, such as hyperboles, understatements, irony. Take, for example, Ephesians 4:2-4:
 - “**I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received**” (Eph 4:2) tells us something about Paul and the Ephesians:

⁴ Dockery, D. S. (1993, p. 629). *New Nature and Old Nature*. In G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, & D. G. Reid (Eds.).

⁵ Baumgärtel and Behm (1962) quoted by Chamblin, J. K. (1993, p. 769). *Psychology*. In G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, & D. G. Reid (Eds.).

⁶ Dunn (1988, 100) quoted by Chamblin, J. K. (1993, p. 769). *Psychology*. In G. F. Hawthorne, R. P. Martin, & D. G. Reid (Eds.).

- To Paul, it is important (“**I urge**”) to live a life worthy before God.
 - Paul is concerned about the conduct of the Ephesians (“I urge **you**”). These concerns are exemplified by verse 3: “**Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.**”
 - Because, by implication, (some) were not humble and gentle; (some) were not patient, not bearing with one another in love. And by doing so, breaking up the bond of peace (verse 4).

Power and Glory

- ❖ Power and glory are important themes which the Spirit will show the believers.

Exposition

Introduction

- ❖ As is stated in the introduction, each passage in this letter must be understood and explained against the background of the preceding passages, especially Ephesians 1:3-14, 2:1-10 and Ephesians 3:14-21.
- The first passage introduces the reader to the letter as a whole and its major themes.
- The second passage gives a summary of the work of God in the lives of sinners.

Overview Ephesians 1:3-14 (Note the colored parts as markers)

- ❖ This passage consists of three sections, each ending with “to the praise of glorious grace.” The author is glorifying the Triune God. Everything is done “in Christ.”
 - See also Ephesians 3:21: “to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
- (verses 3-6) – *election*
 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
 - For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.
 - In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ,
 - in accordance with his pleasure and will—
 - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.
- (verses 7-12) – *redemption*
 - In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,
 - in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.
 - And he made known to us the mystery of his will
 - according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfilment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.
 - In him we were also chosen, having been predestined

- according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope **in Christ**, might be for **the praise of his glory**.
- (verses 13-14) – *inheritance*
 - And you also were included **in Christ**
 - when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.
 - Having believed, you were marked **in him** with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—**to the praise of his glory**.

❖ Four remarks:

- We – You: In verses 3-12 Paul uses "we". In verses 13 and 14 he addresses the congregation "you." Both "we" and "you" receive the inheritance "our." This means that everything he has written in verses 3-12 is also applied to the church in Ephesus.
- "Every spiritual blessing" "in Christ" (verse 3), includes:
- Election to be holy and blameless (verse 4);
- Predestined to be adopted as his sons (verse 5); Also (verse 11);
- Redemption through his blood (verse 7);
- Made known the mystery of his will for the future (verse 9) inheritance (14).
- Everything is done according to his will, love, grace and plan (verses 5, 7, 9, 11).
- The purpose: **"to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ"** (verse 9).
 - Already before the creation, the believers were chosen in Christ, the Lord Jesus. Everything we receive, we receive in Christ! He is from eternity. Christ will receive all power, cosmic power (verse 9). He is Lord of all.

Overview Ephesians 2:1-10 (*This gives a background to the spiritual warfare*)

- ❖ This paragraph describes the great saving acts of God in his love. Christians are rooted and established in this love (Eph 3:17).
 - The human condition (Eph 2:1-3) – we were dead:
 - "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked,
 - following the course of this world,
 - following the prince of the power of the air,
 - the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

- among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh,
- carrying out the desires of the body and the mind,
- and were by nature children of wrath,
- like the rest of mankind.
- God loved us in Christ (Eph 2:4-7) – we are made alive:
 - But God, being rich in mercy,
 - because of the great love with which he loved us,
 - even when we were dead in our trespasses,
 - made us alive together with Christ
 - —by grace you have been saved—
 - and raised us up with him
 - and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
 - so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
- Saved by grace, created in Christ for good works (Eph 2:8-10):
 - For by grace you have been saved through faith.
 - And this is not your own doing;
 - it is the gift of God,
 - not a result of works,
 - so that no one may boast.
 - For we are his workmanship,
 - created in Christ Jesus for good works,
 - which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 6: verse 10-12

❖ **“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.”**

- **“finally”** as a conclusion of the letter. Finally, be strong in the Lord,
- and **“be strong”** spiritually. This strength is based on faith, perseverance, and wisdom.
 - Not weak, or immature, as is described in Ephesians 4:13, 14; see also Ephesians 3:16.

- **“in the Lord”** = in union with Christ, and the new community in Christ, the church. See especially Ephesians 1:3-14 (see above).
 - This makes clear that spiritual warfare is never an individualistic struggle. It is always in connection with Christ and therefore together with the church and other Christians. See Ephesians 6:18-20 and Acts 12:1-19 (Peter’s escape from prison).
- **“and in his mighty power.”** See especially Ephesians 1:17-21 and 2:4-7.⁷
 - **“might”** = **“ἰσχύς”**: **capability to function effectively, strength, power, might.**⁸ “Of his might”: the power the LORD gives (subjective genitive).
 - **“strenght”**= **“κράτος”**: b. of intensity in might⁹
 - Ephesians 1:19-21:
 - "That power is like the working of his mighty strength ("**the strength of his might**"),
 - **which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,**
 - far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come."
 - See for rule and authority also Ephesians 6:12.
 - **“his mighty strenght”** is illustrated by:
 - "raised him from the dead" and:
 - "seated him at his right hand"
 - Ephesians 2:5, 6:
 - He "made us alive together with Christ";
 - "and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."
 - Be strong with confidence, Romans 8:38, 39:
 - "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

⁷ Ephesians 1:15-19 - Christian library. (n.d.).
<https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/files/pub/word/Ephesians%201.15-19.pdf>

⁸ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 484).

⁹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 565).

- 1 Corinthians 16:13:
- "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong" (See also Philippians 1:27).
- This will be explained in the next verses and the reason why, "to stand against the schemes of the devil."
- ❖ **"Put on the whole armor of God"** Compare Ephesians 4:24: "and to **put on** the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."
 - The whole armour equals the new self. This armour is provided by God, given by God. God himself is also a Warrior. The apostle elaborates on the whole armour of God in the second part (6:13-17). See also Romans 13:12.
 - Bratcher and Nida comment: "The context would seem to point primarily to defensive action."¹⁰
 - The only 'offensive' action is described as: "and take (...) the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph 6:17).
- ❖ **"so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."**
 - **"your stand"** = **"ἵστημι"**: 3. **to stand up against, resist**, with πρὸς: *offer resistance* (Ex 14:13); 4. **stand firm so as to remain stable, stand firm, hold one's ground** (Eph 6:13, 14).¹¹
 - **"devil"** = **"διάβολος"**: **one who engages in slander**, as title of the principal transcendent evil being *the adversary/devil*.¹² See also Ephesians 6:16, where slander is described as **"flaming arrows."**
 - **"the schemes"** = **"μεθοδεΐα"**: **scheming, craftiness; in deceitful scheming** (Eph 4:14).¹³ Or "stratagems" as the best translation here in keeping with the military metaphor.¹⁴
 - See also Ephesians 4:26, 27: "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil."
 - 1 Peter 5:8: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."
 - O'Brien remarks: "Satan tries to gain a foothold and exert his influence over the lives of Christians through uncontrolled anger (Eph 4:26) as well as falsehood, stealing, unwholesome talk (Eph 4:25-29), indeed any conduct that is characteristic of the 'old way of life' (Eph 4:22). Further, the

¹⁰ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 159).

¹¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 482).

¹² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 226).

¹³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 625).

¹⁴ Best, E. (1998, p. 592).

evil one is committed to hindering the progress of the gospel and the fulfillment of the divine plan of summing up all things in Christ.”¹⁵

- Stott writes that: the devil “prefers to seduce us into compromise and deceive us into error.”¹⁶

❖ **“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood”**

- **“our”**. It is not the struggle of the Ephesians. “Our” includes the struggle in which the apostle is engaged. At the moment of writing, he is a prisoner of the Lord (Eph 3:1; 4:1).
 - Ephesians 6:19-20: “Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”
- **“struggle” = “πάλη”**: engagement in a challenging contest (originally ‘wrestling’) struggle against.¹⁷
 - Bratcher and Nida write: “But in the context, with the picture of a soldier armed for combat, it is inappropriate to use the specific word for “wrestling,” and a more general term is called for: “to struggle, fight, battle against.”¹⁸
- **“flesh and blood”** = “human beings” (Heb 2:14; Gal 1:16). This implies that the next passage speaks about spiritual beings and powers.
 - It also makes sense when the apostle is referring to gladiator fights or Greek wrestling. Thoughts, ideologies, and accusations can be more powerful than muscles, strength, skills and agility.

❖ **“but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”**

- These are all different representatives of the devil. Best comments: “The struggle is not against what may come from human foes: persecution, harassment, temptation, poverty, injustice, or the temptations that may arise out of the self (Rom 7:7ff). It is instead against eternal evil beings.”¹⁹ But is better to relate these evil beings to earthly powers, otherwise words like “feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace” would not make sense. Christians will be ready to go out into society and in front of judges to proclaim a gospel of peace (Mt 5:9). They will meet resistance and this resistance is powered by evil beings, just as they are empowered by God.

¹⁵ O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 463-464).

¹⁶ Stott, J. R. W. (1979, p. 265).

¹⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 752).

¹⁸ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 159).

¹⁹ Best, E. (1998, p. 593).

- So O'Brien: "From one perspective, then, their spiritual battle is against human adversaries, against 'flesh and blood'. But Paul's cogent point here is that the Christian life as a whole is a profound spiritual warfare of cosmic proportions in which the *ultimate* opposition to the advance of the gospel and moral integrity springs from evil, supernatural powers under the control of the god of this world."²⁰ It must be stressed that these powers are really powerful, they are evil, and Thirdly, they are cunning.²¹
 - Ephesians 2:2: "You followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, **the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.**"
- "ruler" = "ἀρχή": 6. **an authority figure who initiates activity or process, ruler, authority.** — **Also of angelic or transcendent powers,** since they were thought of as having a political organization.²²
 - "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world **and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit** who is now at work in those who are disobedient" (Eph 2:1, 2).
- "authorities" = "ἐξουσία": 5. **bearer of ruling authority;** b. of transcendent rulers and functionaries: powers of the spirit world.²³
- "powers" = "κοσμοκράτωρ": **world-ruler used of world-ruling gods** (and later of the emperor Caracalla who reigned AD 211-217). Then generally of spirit beings, who have parts of the cosmos under their control; *the world-rulers of this darkness*, the rulers of this sinful world.²⁴ See also Ephesians 2:1, 2.
- "dark world" = "σκότος": 3. **the state of spiritual or moral darkness, darkness,** of darkening by sin, of the state of unbelievers and of the godless, opposed to "φῶς" = "light"²⁵ In a related sense, and in contrast to φῶς, σκότος has the sense 4. **bearer/victim/instrument of darkness.**²⁶
 - "Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light" (Eph 5:7, 8).

²⁰ O'Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 466).

²¹ Stott, J. R. W. (1979, p. 264-265).

²² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 138).

²³ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 353).

²⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 561).

²⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, P. 392).

²⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 932).

- “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” (Eph 5:11). See for the spiritual struggle in Ephesus also Acts 19:13-20.
- **“the spiritual forces of evil”**
 - **“evil” = “πονηρία”**: state or condition of a lack of moral or social values, wickedness, baseness, maliciousness, sinfulness.²⁷ See also verse 16.
- **“heavenly realms” = “ἐπουράνιος”** contrast to earthly places.
 - Also the place of the rule of God and Christ (Eph 1:3, 1:20; 2:6) and the scene of the heavenly warfare (Eph 3:10, 6:12).
 - Ephesians 2:6: “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” Therefore, a Christian

Verse 13-17

- ❖ **“Therefore put on the full armor of God”** which is described in the following verses.
 - The Christian is actively engaged in this spiritual warfare. See also Ephesians 4:24.
- ❖ **“so that when the day of evil comes, (...) and after you have done everything, to stand.”**
 - **“the evil day”**: Bratcher and Nida comment: “it is not the last day, the final battle between the forces of God and the forces of evil, but the day, any day, when the Christian has to go into combat against the forces of evil.”²⁸
 - Ephesus 5:16 has the plural “evil days” and these days are contemporaneous. These days are days of darkness. “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them” (Eph 5:11; see also Rom 13:13).
 - **“comes”**: At the moment of writing, the apostle is in chains (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:19-20). The Ephesians are discouraged (Eph 3:13). The apostle is encouraging them and admonishing them to stand firm when their “evil day” comes. O’Brien: He “is also alerting believers to the dangers of the devil’s schemes on critical occasions in this present evil age.”²⁹
 - **“have done everything” = “κατεργάζομαι”**: 4. to be successful in the face of obstacles, overpower, subdue, conquer³⁰
 - They also offer some alternative translations: “You will be able to resist the enemy’s attacks may sometimes be best rendered as “you will not retreat when the enemy attacks” or “you will not give way ...”³¹

²⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 851).

²⁸ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 160).

²⁹ O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 471).

³⁰ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 531).

- Colossians 3:12: “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” See also Romans 6:13.
- ❖ The armoury described is an image, referring to central aspects of the Christian position:
 - He is armoured (protected) by the truth, righteousness, faith and salvation, given by God. He shows the readiness which comes with the gospel of peace and he will speak the word of God.
 - It is not necessary to identify the armoury in detail with the equipment of a Roman or Greek soldier. The stress lies in the spiritual aspects.
- ❖ **“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist,”**
 - **“stand” = “ἵστημι”**: 4. **stand firm so as to remain stable, stand firm, hold one’s ground**³²
 - This “emphasis on the need to ‘stand’ or ‘withstand’ shows that the apostle’s concern is for Christian stability. Wobbly Christians who have no firm foothold in Christ are an easy prey for the devil.³³
 - **“truth” = “ἀλήθεια”**: 1. **the quality of being in accord with what is true, truthfulness, dependability, uprightness** in thought and deed³⁴ in accordance with the Gospel. **“Truth expresses itself in virtues like righteousness and holiness”** (Eph 4:24).³⁵
- ❖ **“with the breastplate of righteousness in place,”**
 - **“righteousness” = “δικαιοσύνη”**: 1. **the quality, state, or practice of judicial responsibility with focus on fairness, justice, equitableness, fairness.**³⁶ 3. **the quality or characteristic of upright behavior, uprightness, righteousness**³⁷
 - This righteousness is a gift from God. The believer knows that he has been justified by God:
 - Romans 8:33, 34: “Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? **It is God who justifies.** Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

³¹ Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 160).

³² Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, 482).

³³ “Stott, J. R. W. (1979, p. 275).

³⁴ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 42).

³⁵ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 42).

³⁶ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 247).

³⁷ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 248).

- Isaiah 11:5: “Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.”
 - This is part of a major messianic prophecy applied to Christ, Isaiah 11:2:
 - "And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD."
 - Isaiah 59:17 (of the LORD himself): “He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.”
- ❖ “and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”
- “readiness” = “ἑτοιμασία”: readiness, preparation for the gospel of peace.³⁸
 - NIV translates: “the readiness that comes from the gospel.” This is a socially *genitive subjective*: comes from. The gospel of peace motivates the believer to be ready and prepared. Arndt suggests an *objective genitive*. In that case, the believer is ready for the proclamation and defence of the gospel.
 - The second *genitive* “of peace” is an *objective genitive*. The proclamation of the gospel aims at peace with God and men in Christ.
 - Ephesians 1:2: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (See also Ephesians 6:23.)
 - Ephesians 2:14-17: “For he Christ) himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.”
 - Ephesians 4:3: “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”
 - “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’” (Isa 52:7).
 - Matthew 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”

³⁸ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 401).

- Galatians 5:22, 23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”
 - Paul refers to civic (Roman) law. There is no civic law against joy and peace!
- This peace will be established by righteousness, mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation, friendliness, love and goodness, which are grounded in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- The powers of darkness (Eph 6:12) resist the peace of God, see Revelation 12-13, and also Revelation 2-3. See application.

❖ **“The shield of faith”**

- **“shield”** = “**θυρεός**” = **“scutum”**³⁹
- **“shield of faith”**: the faith in Christ will protect you (Rom 8:38, 39; Ps 56:3, 4, 11)
 - This faith is a gift of God: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—” (Eph 2:8).

❖ **“with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”**

- **“the evil one”** = **“the devil”** (Eph 6:11). The powers mentioned in verse 12 are different representatives of the evil one.
- **“flaming arrows”**: this image refers to insults, lies, and false accusations, especially in situations of oppression, persecution and trials.
 - “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us” (1 Pet 2:12).
 - “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom 12:21).

❖ **“Take the helmet of salvation”** See Psalm 27:1 and **Isaiah 59:17**; 61:10.

- **“Salvation”**: “For I am convinced that neither (...) nor any powers, (...) nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 8:38, 39).
 - This salvation is described in Ephesians 2:4-7: “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in

³⁹ See for more information: Wikimedia Foundation. (2023, July 13). *Scutum*. Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scutum>

Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

Note the character of this salvation:

- made us alive with Christ;
- raised us up with Christ;
- seated us with Christ in the heavenly realms.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:8: “But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

❖ **“and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”**

- **“sword”**: “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb 4:12).
- **“Spirit”**. See especially John 14-16, where Jesus promises the Spirit as the Counselor and his role, especially in case of trials.
 - John 14:26: “But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.”
 - John 16:8-11: “When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.”⁴⁰
- **“word of God.”** This is the word of the Spirit. We can distinguish between the written word of God, “it is written” and the spoken word of God.
 - The spoken word of God:
 - “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, **which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God**, which is at work in you who believe” (1 Tess 2:13; see also Ac 8:14; 1 Pet 1:25).
 - Colossians 4:5, 6: “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

Verse 18-20 (addition)

⁴⁰ Read also John 15:16-18:

❖ **“And pray in the Spirit.”**

- Compare 1 Timothy 2:1-7. Prayer is part of the spiritual warfare.
- The apostle refers to his prayers in Ephesians 1:17-19 and 3:14-21.
 - So that the Ephesians may know: "his incomparably great power for us who believe" (Eph 1:19).

❖ **“Pray also for me”** to “make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains” (Eph 6:19).

- “In chains” (Eph 3:1; 4:1). Jews from Asia were involved in the arrest of Paul (Ac 21:27).

❖ **“the mystery” = “μυστήριον”**: A *secret* or *mystery*, too profound for human ingenuity.⁴¹ Paul refers to this mystery in several instances:

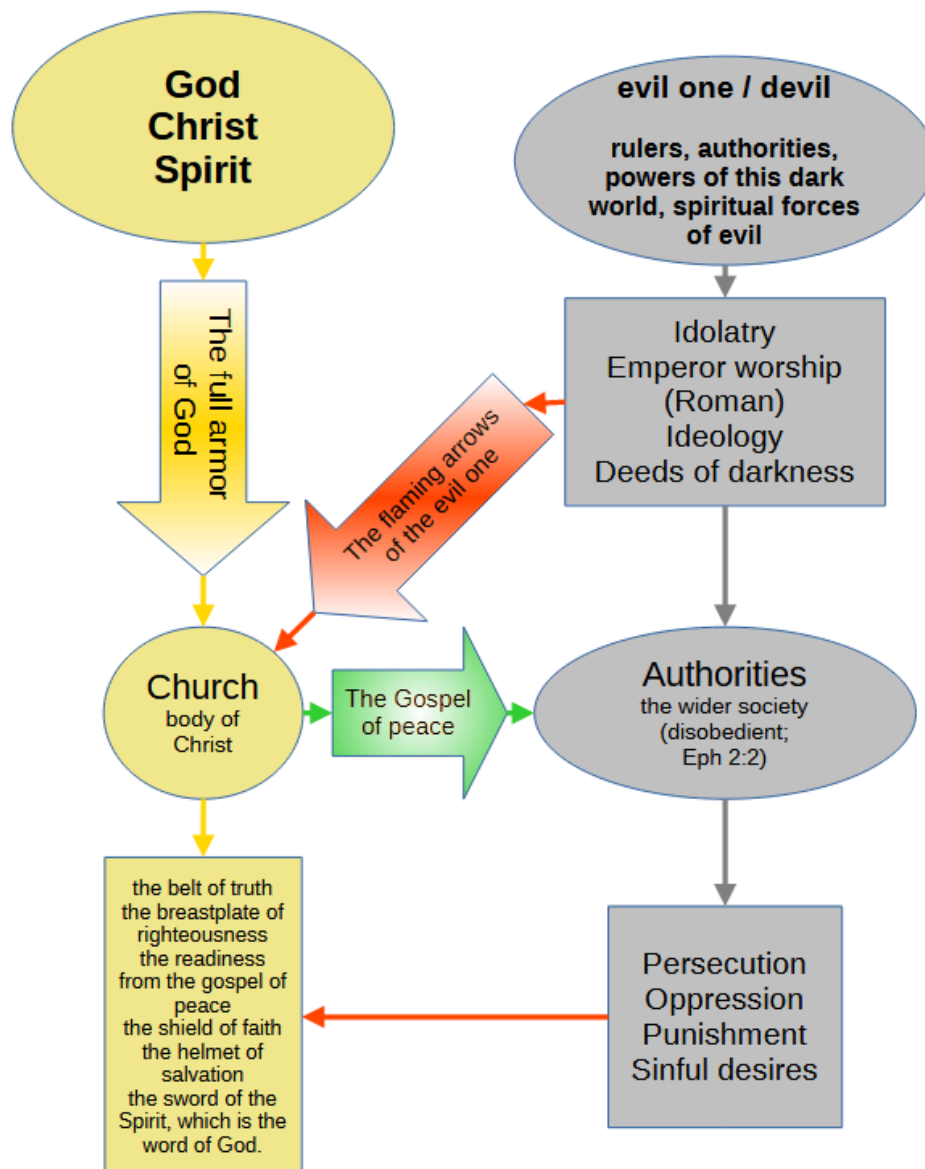
- Ephesians 1:9: “And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ.”
 - It is made known to us (Paul and his readers), by revelation (Eph 3:3, 4; 9). See also the vision of Peter (Acts 10).
 - It is the mystery of will – according to his good pleasure
 - Which he purposed in Christ.
- Ephesians 3:6: “(This mystery is) that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”
 - The Gentiles are heirs together with Israel (in Christ Jesus).
- Ephesians 5:32: “This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”
 - The unity of husband and wife is used as an image of the unity of Christ and the church. This one-flesh-imagery is also found in Ephesians 1:23; 2:16; 4:4; 4:12-16; 5:23, 30.

⁴¹ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 662).

Application

A visualisation

A visualisation of Ephesians 6:10-17



Be prepared

- ❖ Study of apologetics – how to defend the Gospel of Peace!

- What is the predominant religious, political, ideological, and social context of the church?
- How does the Gospel confront these religions and ideologies? What are the questions, and attacks?
- ❖ Praise God and Christ:
 - For his victory.
 - Thank God for his armoury.
- ❖ Schemes of the Devil:
 - Stott quotes Lloyd-Jones: “I am certain that one of the main causes of the ill state of the Church today is the fact that the devil is being forgotten. All is attributed to us; we have all become so psychological in our attitude and thinking. We are ignorant of this great objective fact, the being, the existence of the devil, the adversary, the accuser, and his ‘fiery darts’”⁴²
 - O’Brien: “Mention of the schemes” of the devil reminds us of the trickery and subterfuge by which evil and temptation present themselves in our lives. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable, and legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap.”⁴³
 - Stott: These words “warn us of their hostility and teach us how to overcome them. Is God’s plan to create a new society? Then they will do their utmost to destroy it. Has God through Jesus Christ broken down the walls dividing human beings of different races and cultures from each other? Then the devil through his emissaries will strive to rebuild them. Does God intend his reconciled and redeemed people to live together in harmony and purity? Then the powers of hell will scatter among them the seeds of discord and sin.”⁴⁴
- ❖ No fear, Christ has overcome:
 - O’Brien: The entire passage is suffused with a spirit of confidence and hope and the reader is left, not with a feeling of despair, but with the sense that Satan can be defeated.”⁴⁵
 - Only God can deliver us from evil: “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” (Lord’s Prayer; Mt 6:13).

⁴² Stott, J. R. W. (1979, p. 265).

⁴³ O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 464).

⁴⁴ Stott, J. R. W. (1979, p. 261-262).

⁴⁵ O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 464).

Quote

In his letter to Polycarp⁴⁶, Ignatius of Antioch⁴⁷ wrote:

“Let your baptism be ever your shield, your faith a helmet, your charity a spear, your patience a panoply. Let your works be deposits, so that you may receive the sum that is due to you. In humility be patient with one another, as God is with you. May I rejoice in you always.”⁴⁸

Bibliography

Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Best, E. (1998). *A critical and exegetical commentary on Ephesians*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark International.

Glimm, F. X. , Marique, J. M.-F. & Walsh, G. G. (Trans.), *The Apostolic Fathers*. The Catholic University of America Press.

Hawthorne, G., Martin, R., & Reid, D. (Eds.) (1993). *Dictionary of Paul and his letters*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

O’Brien, P. T. (1999). *The letter to the Ephesians*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Stott, J. R. W. (1979). *God’s new society: the message of Ephesians*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

⁴⁶ Wikimedia Foundation. (2023, July 23). *Polycarp*. Wikipedia.
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polycarp>

⁴⁷ Wikimedia Foundation. (2023, October 2). *Ignatius of Antioch*. Wikipedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Antioch

⁴⁸ Walsh, G. G. (1947, Vol. 1, p. 126). *The Letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch*. In Glimm, F. X., Marique, J. M.-F. & Walsh, G. G. (Trans.)