

## Ephesians 6

### The Significance of the Spiritual Warfare

We have learnt about The Christian Life already prepared for us to walk in. We are saved by Grace through Faith. The power of the Cross has created a new humanity out of Jew and Gentile; this is not just reconciliation but a new creation. Something new has happened or something new has been revealed that was hidden. It is the mind of God to bring this about. Paul has exposed the corruption of the person without God and the act of becoming a new man in Christ. This is then expressed as the saint walking in the light and the Christian husband loving his wife.

**Sentence 62 (6:1) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.**

There is safety for the child in obeying the parent. The child is learning how to behave and that their behaviour has consequences. Morality is about boundaries and children learn about boundaries in the supporting environment of a family. Obedience shows that the child has internalised the boundary or behavioural limit. This should be done in the Lord. The child is not required to obey what is not godly or not 'in the Lord'.

**Sentence 63 (6:2-3) 'Honour your father and mother', which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may go well with you and you may live long on the earth' [which the Lord your God gives you].**

The right attitude to the parent is the word 'honour'. We are not commanded to love our parents nor to hate them (see Lk 14:26). We can have all kinds of attitudes to our parents. 'Honour' is the preferred word. Parents (and in-laws) should receive due honour and consideration in our relations with them. The actual reference in the 10 Commandments (Ex 20:12, Deut 5:16) is that we may live long 'in the land which the Lord God is giving you'. The promise is associated with the land that God gives us to live on. Do we want survival anywhere (under any condition) or do we want to live in the Promised Land that God has prepared for us?

**Sentence 64 (6:4) And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.**

The father sets the spirit pace and direction of the family (whether he wants to or not). Even when the father is not present with the family he makes a spirit statement and determines a spirit condition for his family. Without the spirit covering of the father the family is spirit vulnerable. The fathers are not to provoke or antagonise their children to anger (resentment, reaction). This can be done with impossible demands or unfair expectations or even by no expectations at all. What is required is to nurture the child in the training (discipline) and correction (warning) of the Lord.

**Sentence 65 (6:5-8) Bondservants [employees] be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eye service, as men pleasers but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will doing service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is slave or free.**

This is Radical Christian Employment. Slavery was the way labour was organised in the ancient world. Modern Marxist theory would argue that wage-labour can be slave labour, but at least, the labourer is not owned by the employer. It may be argued that slavery (ownership of the worker) impeded ancient economies (although it built magnificent buildings/ memorials). I take these words to refer to modern employee attitudes. Whether slave or free

we work. This is about work attitude: respect, readiness to comply and emotional sincerity as doing the work for Christ. We could say that Christ is employing us in this way. We are not out to please or impress men with showy (insincere) display. It is God's will that we work as serving God not men. We serve God through what we do in work. Work is not demeaning if we worship God by doing it. (Mother Teresa spoke of ministering to Jesus in His distressing disguise as the poorest of the poor. This attitude transformed her work and what she claimed she was doing.) A Christian conscience in the workplace may bring about changes but this is still done in the fear of God and with the desire to glorify Jesus. The reward for work is in God not just in our remuneration. We usually look for reward in terms of our self-esteem and personal accommodation. As the total slaves of Jesus Christ we serve Him by working and by the manner in which we work. Work is worship. The worship changes / transforms the work and our reasons for doing it.

**Sentence 66 (6:9) And you masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own master is in heaven and there is no partiality with Him.**

God is no respecter of persons (Rom 2:11; Eph 6:9; Col 3:25; James 2:1). Grace says that God is not partial in His favours but He is powerful in His judgements. This requires our accountability. God does not consider one as more important than another. People importance on earth is not reproduced in heaven. Before Christ the master is as the servant because before Christ we are all servants.

**Sentence 67 (6:10) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.**

Paul is working up to a conclusion. He has explained the Christian life. He has exalted Jesus Christ. He has poured out his soul for the welfare of his churches. His final word is about strength and power and might. In having spoken about where we sit and how we are to walk, he now says how we are to stand. Our strength is not in being alone or exalting our individuality, but is in our being in the Lord. God has a might (strength) in which we are powerful (capable and adequate).

**Sentence 68 (6:11) Put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.**

This is saying that our task is to stand. (Sometimes that is all we can do!) What we have to stand against are the strategies, schemes and penetrations of the devil. This is part of the warfare in the heavenlies. We must recognise our spirit context and the spirit dynamics of what is around us. What God provides is not a world without strife but armour for strife. The Promised Land is already occupied with giants. The territory of our soul is already a minefield. The Spirit provides us with the armour and the Bible provides us with the language/ awareness to handle the spiritual.

**Sentence 69 (6:12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

Here comes the language and the concepts to help us understand and wage the battle. We are not fighting flesh and blood. If we are fighting people then we are fighting the wrong thing. Satan is the enemy and he is a master of deception. How clever is it to get people to believe that you do not exist? Refusal to believe in Satan is a great cover for Satan. Paul is describing the forces that inhabit the heavenlies. These are the spirits not in the presence of God. These demonic spirits are not part of the heavenly host worshipping God (Is 6:1-4; Lk 2:8-15a; Rev 5:11-14). Principalities are the rulers, those that come first in authority.

The powers are the authorities, those that have the ability to do things. The world rulers of this present darkness are the forces at work in the current world system. These are world rulers who maintain the present darkness in which we are all immersed. By coming to Christ we see and seek the Light which leads us out of the thralldom to (the bondage of) corruption and decay. The spiritual hosts of wickedness exist in the heavenlies. These are supernatural beings (creations) which greatly influence human behaviour (principle: spirit → behaviour). Spirits communicate with my spirit. Feelings are the result of spirit activity. Emotions are how my soul negotiates with spirit activity.

**'Principalities and Powers'** (see Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (2<sup>nd</sup> ed))

**1) Creation.** God creates the heavens and the earth and everything that is in them (Neh 9:6). All things were created through Jesus Christ 'visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him' (Col 1:16).

**2) The Fall.** Satan had fallen from heaven (Lk 10:18). He becomes the tempter (Gen 3:4). The rebellious angels (demons) were cast out (2Pet 2:4, Jude 6). Although chained they represent rebellion against God. In some sense, rebellion still has influence in human nature which is beyond just human capacity for evil.

**3) Defeat by Christ.** Jesus resisted satanic temptation (Lk 4:1-13). He exercised and gave authority over demons Lk 4:35; 8:2; 9:1. In His death Jesus disarmed the forces of evil (Col 3:15). In His Resurrection, Jesus has triumphed over and is placed above every conceivable power and spirit force (Eph 1:20-22; 1Pet 3:22). Christians should live according to this victory (Col 2:20-3:4).

**4) Revelation.** The spirit powers learn about God through the church (Eph 3:10). They are not omniscient.

**5) Continuing Warfare.** The Christian is immersed in a continuing struggle with evil which has an origin outside the believer. Those who do evil cooperate with the evil they are shown even as the good person cooperates with the good they are shown. In either case, the willing person cooperates with what is at work in their spirit, which becomes a commitment in their heart, a thought for their mind, a word for their mouth and an action for their behaviour. Hence we are agents for good or evil in the world.

A Christian's most powerful enemies are still demonic (Eph 6:12). Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Rom 8:38).

**6) Total Defeat.** The end of the age is when the evil and rebellious principalities and powers are judged and Death, Hell and its corruption removed (1Cor 15:24; Rev 20:10,14).

**Sentence 70 (6:13) Therefore take the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand in the evil day and having done all to stand.**

Because of the cosmic situation we are to put on the whole armour of God which is designed to protect us and enable us to stand.

**Sentence 71 (6:14-16) Stand therefore having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one.**

This is the armour of God which we PUT ON (in this order):

- 1) Truth. Put on truth as a belt for the basic garment.
- 2) Righteousness. Put on doing the right thing as a breastplate.
- 3) Peace. Put on peace as shoes to your feet. Go peacefully.
- 4) Faith. Put on faith as a shield to quench the fiery darts of hate, rebellion and unbelief.

**Sentence 72 (6:17-20) And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints - and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it [the mystery] I may be bold, as it is necessary for me, to speak.**

5) Salvation. Put on salvation as a crown and protection for your head and mind. Assert salvation in the battle for the mind.

6) The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the sword which is the Word of God (Heb 4:12). This is the only offensive weapon. Do we sense the power of the Word of God as a spirit weapon? Do we so use it? Battle tactics are all (forms of) prayer with supplication (begging, making humble petition) in the spirit realm and before the throne of God. We are to be watchful (alert), persevering (persistent) and making supplication (to God) for all the saints including Paul (the ambassador in chains, in Rome for the Kingdom of God) who wants both opportunity and courage to proclaim the gospel. We do not put on the Spirit; we are filled by the Spirit.

**Sentence 73 (6:21-22) But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose that you may know our affairs and that he may comfort your hearts.**

Paul has need of human comfort and friendship and he loves, gives honour and is concerned for the lives and conditions of believers.

**Sentence 74 (6:23) Peace to the brethren and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

This farewell is a benediction, a blessing and a spirit command.

**Sentence 75 (6:24) Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.**

Grace to those who love Jesus without corruption.