

Ephesians Week 7 TDs

1. Explore Eph 6:10-20.

Summarize Eph 6:10-20.

Highlight key words and phrases in 6:10-20.

How does 6:10 relate to key ideas in Ephesians, and does it give us any idea what the bullseye purpose of the letter is? How/Why does the “power of God to stand” relate to the situation and purpose of the letter?

Why does Paul point out who the real enemy is—not flesh and blood, but the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places? How does the struggle with the *heavenly* powers of evil relate to “heavenly” or “cosmic” portrait of the church and plan of God?

In addition to our fundamental struggle with such forces, is there something in the historical context of Ephesians that would be benefited by folks knowing who the real enemy is; or, in other words, how does it relate to the major purpose of Ephesians and the situation of Paul?

Where in particular (and how) does the “put on,” “take up” language of the conclusion connect (to what previous section of the letter)? (Hint: Check out 4:20-24; and you might note that 4:25 starts with “put off,” but the actual words “put on” are not found again until 6:11.)

How does the armor of God function as part of the conclusion of the letter? How do the pieces of armor relate to key themes? Can you connect the pieces to previous words/phrases and ideas?

- the belt of truth

Clue: in addition to other places, take a look at 4:25, a key transitional verse to the specific ethical exhortations.

- the breastplate of righteousness (clue: 4:24)

How do “truth” and “righteousness” relate to the second half of the letter? (4:24: “and put on the new man created by God in *righteousness* and holiness of *truth*.”)

- shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace

Anything in Ephesians about “the good news” or “message of peace”?

- shield of faith

How does this relate to the “spiritual” (heavenly) perspective of Ephesians (where does the opposition come from?), the readers’ own conversion and its results (1:13-14; 2:8), and Paul’s situation and mission (3:13)?

- helmet of salvation (1:13; 2:1-10)

Might think of the concept of the “calling” and the “hope” that comes from it.

- sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (1:13-14; cf. a potential function in 4:14-15)

Extra, Extra . . .

Can you see the concepts of truth and righteousness as one-word summaries or governing concepts of the second half of the letter (taking 4:17-24 as an introduction to the specific ethical points)? 4:24: “. . . and put on the new man created by God in *righteousness* and holiness of *truth*.” The behavior comes from knowing “the truth” (i.e., reality). Truth is the basis for everything they have received and been taught (1:13). 4:25 then says “put off *the lie* . . .” (Think about the role of “the lie” in the destruction/fall of the original creation. It’s not surprising that “truth” has a fundamental place in the new creation—“righteousness” and “holiness” come from it.)

Do you see the importance of “the gospel of peace” throughout? In particular, how about 2:11-22 (“For he is our peace, who has made the two one . . . so making peace”; he came and “preached peace” to the far and the near) and 4:1-16 (“ . . . to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”)? Perhaps we shouldn’t forget the opening and closing greeting/blessing (1:2; 6:23-24).

What about “the shield of faith” in the context of Ephesians and Paul’s situation (3:12-13: “. . . in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. I ask you not to be discouraged over my suffering for you . . .”)? What are “the flaming arrows of the evil one” (4:13-16; 2:16-17)?

What about the “helmet of salvation” in relation to the description of their conversion (their calling and saving by God’s grace) in 2:1-10, and its implications in 2:11-22 (along with the “guarantee” of the Spirit and the powerful “gifting” of Christ)?

Consider the “sword of the Spirit, the word of God” (1:13-14) as the basis for their birth/calling in the first half, truth as the foundation of how they ought to live in the second half (4:17-24), and now as a weapon of God to stand against opposing spiritual forces? What is the Spirit associated with in the letter (inheritance/peace: 1:14; 2:11-22, 4:1-6)?

Amazing!

Have you ever heard anyone describe the content of Ephesians with the key word summary of the armor of God? . . . using “put on” as the fulfillment of the “put off the old self—on the new self” imagery? . . . moving into exhortations to prayer and Paul’s situation (the circumstance and potential cause of the audience’s discouragement)? . . . with a powerful and contingent blessing at the end—contingent upon loving Christ with faithful and forever love (which implies that you would love his body, the church, nourish and care for it, following him in “giving yourself up for her,” if necessary.

What an amazing conclusion to an incredible book! See what reading things in context will do to Bible inkblots!

How do the things summarized in chapter 6/the armor of God relate to the key concept of “in Christ” in 1:3-14 and the primary point/purpose of the letter?

What’s the point of adding “all prayer” to the armor? Is there significance to the exhortation to pray for “all the saints”? What about for Paul?

Clue: If the recipients pray that Paul might continue to boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel—for which he is “an ambassador in chains”—what will they be prayerfully affirming about his ministry and consequently whatever path/place that may take him? How does that relate to his situation as portrayed in 3:1-13?

2. Explore Eph 6:21-24.

Summarize Eph 6:21-24.

Highlight key words and phrases in 6:21-24.

How does Eph 6:21-22 relate to 3:1-13 and the situation behind the letter? (Compare Eph 6:21-22 to Colossians 4:7-9, along with the book of Philemon.) Are they worried about Paul? Why? Why was Paul in prison? What does it mean for the future of his ministry? What does it mean for their relationship to Jerusalem and Jews in general?

How might the particular aspects of the greetings in 6:23-24 relate to the primary point/purpose of the letter?

Extra, Extra . . .

The Conclusion, and more specifically in this case, the final words of a document (like Ephesians) is, of course, the last opportunity the writer has to impress his or her point upon the audience. Ephesians ends like this:

Peace to the brothers [brothers and sisters] and love with faith from God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love [or *are loving*] our Lord Jesus Christ in *aptharsia* [with incorruptibility].

The translation of the last two words is interesting and important. Here are a few examples:

ESV: with love incorruptible

NASB: with incorruptible love

NKJV: in sincerity

NRSV: an undying love

NIV: with an undying love

CEV: who keeps on loving [our Lord Jesus Christ]

GW: who has an undying love . . .

HCSV: all who have undying love . . .

NCV: with love that never ends

NLV: May God's grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. [Hmm?]

The Voice: with a never-ending love

Both emphases—incorruptibility and immortality/unending—can be found in this ancient Greek word, meaning “it doesn’t change in a negative way” (it’s not polluted, watered down, or perverted) and “it doesn’t stop.” I might be tempted to translate it with two English words as something like “. . . who love the Lord Jesus with faithful and forever love.”

Why do you think the last statement to the recipients of the letters starts with the word “peace” (should we consider the potential background of the Hebrew word *shalom*)? And why would the final blessing of grace be pronounced upon those who love the Lord “incorruptibly” or “with an incorruptible love” (forever faithful love)?

What might “corruption” look like, according to the book-level context of Ephesians? Or how might this relate to the picture of the one, united, body of Christ (2:11-22; 4:1-16) presented in Ephesians? (Remember Paul’s description of how Christ loved the church and his use of the image of how a husband loves his wife—like his own body [5:25-33]?)

What if someone were to act in such a way as to harm the body of Christ? That would in essence divide the body or produce 2 bodies? What if Jews were to separate from Gentiles? What if Gentiles were to separate from Jews? Since the church is the body of Christ, would that be loving the Lord Jesus with an incorruptible love?

Sample Highlighting of 6:10-24

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.

²¹ So that you also may **know** how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the **beloved** brother and **faithful** minister in the Lord will tell you everything. ²² I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may **know** how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

²³ **Peace** be to the brothers, and **love with faith**, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ **Grace** be with all who **love** our Lord Jesus Christ with **love** incorruptible.

Expert's Corner

Key Questions Review

Ephesians 6:10-24

- How does Eph 6:10-20 bring the theme of “. . . **power** upon us who believed” to its conclusion? Besides unity, why is power the most dominant theme of the letter? How does it relate to unity? How do they both relate to understanding/truth?
- How do these pieces of the conclusion help to summarize and conclude Ephesians:
 - the appeal to stand strong against the spiritual forces of evil,
 - the “put on” finale,
 - the individual pieces of armor,
 - prayer at all times in the Spirit and for Paul
 - Paul’s description of himself as an “ambassador in chains” for the “mystery”
- Why does the letter end with emphasis on Paul’s ministry and situation? How does the purpose of Tychicus’s visit relate to the purpose of the letter?
- How does the contingency of the final “grace” blessing (“grace be upon all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with faithful and forever love”) relate to the purpose of the letter? What if someone doesn’t love Christ that way?