



Peninsula City Church

On The Couch

Who are You Fighting Anyway?

Michael Podhaczky

3rd July 2022, the AM Service

Contents

Who are You Fighting Anyway? 3

Introduction 3

1. The proper fight in context 3

 Introduction 3

2. So, how do we protect ourselves in the fight? 5

 Some concluding thoughts 10

Who are You Fighting Anyway?

Introduction

Q. Why did Paul leave this subject of who we are really fighting until last?

Whenever someone mentions that they are having problems with another person or group, we can think of them arguing or fighting with each other. We can all have disputes or disagreements with family members, partners, neighbours, work colleagues, or school friends. We can get our back up and defend ourselves through arguments or violence. It just seems to have always been the way of things.

How have we dealt with this others when there is a disagreement or dispute over something or someone? Maybe we have stood our ground and argued it out with them but lost the friend or relationship. Perhaps we have come to physical violence or taken legal action to prove our point. Do you know what I mean? We have all been there at some stage. However, the result has not always been what we desired. It can turn out downright dreadful.

So, is this what Paul alluded to when he ended his letter to the local Church in Ephesus? Why leave it until last and not deal with it first? He had taught them about their status as Christ-followers and how-to live-in light of this truth. Then he came to a crucial closing point of fighting the right ones. I learned something while teaching in Vietnam: listening to the conversation's last 15-20 minutes. Everything else, essential, or frivolous, has been leading up to this last point. So, to here with Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Today, we will look at two things that can help us here. First, we must understand who we are meant to be fighting and who we are not. Secondly, we will briefly explain how we are to protect ourselves in the fight.

1. The proper fight in context

Q. Why did the Ephesians need to stand up?

Introduction

So, who were the Ephesians, and why did they need to stand their ground and not take a backward step? The local Church of Ephesus was on the west coast of the region of what was



known as Asia Minor (or modern Turkey).¹ It became the region's financial, spiritual, and main Roman city. It had existed since 1100 BC. Then in 550 BC, the Temple to the goddess Artemis (also in Latin called Diana, meaning sky or daylight) was built. It was believed that the origin of the worship of Artemis (prompt or safe) was due to a meteorite that had fallen in the region. Over time it had grown into a sizeable local religion and was a profitable business for some. That is why it was said in Acts 19:35, "the image which fell from heaven (the sky, Zeus, or Jupiter)." Then the city finally became a Roman city in the new Roman province of Asia Minor under general Pompey in 69 BC.

¹ "Ephesus." <https://bibleatlas.org/ephesus.htm> (29th June 2022).

It was known as the leading city and provincial capital of Asia Minor due. It was due to its huge population for the day, about 250,000 people around the time of Paul. Due to being situated on the Taurus river, its economic value for entry into Asia Minor and the Middle East was enormous. As a result, a lot of money was poured into infrastructure and building projects. For example, a theatre could seat about 24,000 people, a huge town hall, a large market, baths, gymnasiums, stadiums and even a medical school. One of the major things was the Temple of Artemis, the main emphasis of worship in the city. The main attraction, the Temple of Artemis, the main goddess of the region, would have made the city a spiritual hotspot for spiritual darkness and evil.² So, the huge traffic between Europe and the Middle East was a major reason Paul settled here for two years and three months, Acts 19:8,10.



Paul had paid a visit to the region on his third missionary journey, as recorded in Acts 18:22-19:41. So, he would have known about the dark spiritual oppression over the city, but this did not stop him from staying there and planting a local church and teaching the new Christ-followers. In chapter 19, we read about Paul's time preaching, teaching, and healing people in Ephesus and the surrounding area. While there, he had a run-in with a silversmith named Demetrius because Paul challenged the worship of Artemis (Acts 19:21-41). There were variations on the theme of what the goddess looked like, and there are two versions.³



We can now read this brief background in the Letter of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians. As we do, it quickly becomes apparent that there were some issues that he was dealing with amongst this local Church. Some of them were cultural, and others were just human issues. These were things like having a wrong understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ compared to the worship of the local idols (which many would have worshipped). Then there was making their peace with God by grace through faith and not morality or good deeds to satisfy Artemis or any of the other gods. There was the truth that there is one Church, which has been united in unity by Jesus Christ. They did not need to be part of a mystical religious cult or have mystical knowledge, but instead to know Jesus Christ, Who is the grand mystery revealed. Also, they were meant to live in unity, love, light, and wisdom as a new creation in Christ. Paul said this unity was like a marriage, a family, or a master-servant relationship. So, there would be challenges are they worked things out.

² Arnold, C.E. "Ephesus." In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 249-253.

³ "Artemis, Greek goddess." <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Artemis-Greek-goddess> (29th June 2022). "The Cult of Artemis." <https://redemptivehistorytheology.com/blog/chapter-8-pain-and-desire-genesis-316-20/the-cult-of-artemis/> (29th June 2022).

He bound all of this teaching and encouragement together with the biblical truth that they were “in Christ” and “Christ was in them.” In fact, of the 165-180 times that the phrase (or an equivalent), Paul used it 143 times and 27 times (or something similar) in the Letter to the Ephesians.⁴ Jacob mentioned this truth last week when he spoke about us being in Jesus Christ.

Paul then came to his closing thoughts as he wrote to this local Church. We could say that although what he had said at this point was very important, he had now come to the crux of the matter. He began this closing section with “Finally,” and then he established an intriguing reinforcement of who they were and who stood against them. That is,

¹⁰ “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle **is not** against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

¹³ Therefore, take up the full armour of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. ¹⁸ With (Lit. *Through*) all prayer and petition pray (Lit. *praying*) at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be (Lit. *being*) on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints” (Eph 6:10-18 NASB).

The foundational issue for the local Church at Ephesus was a spiritual one more than a natural one (although it played out in the natural). It was that Ephesus was a spiritual hotspot for idolatry and destructive spiritual activity. It was so spiritually out of order it was dysfunctional as a local society. As a result, we will now look at how this passage can be broken down into its varying parts.

2. So, how do we protect ourselves in the fight?

Q. What was Paul firstly saying to the Ephesians, and then how does it relate to us today?

So, we have seen great biblical and cultural truth so far. But why did Paul need to say all of this to this the local Church? Well, he was addressing real matters which existed. One of these was the unity of the Church, including this local Church. To mention a few things on this matter, Paul pointed out that they were is only one body and that Jesus Christ is the head, Eph 1:22-23. He went on to show (that both Jew and non-Jews) were brought near the Father through the death of Jesus Christ, having made peace between them, Eph 2:11-18. Then he said that in the light of what he had said, they were to live in unity because there is only one body, Eph 4:1-6. They are, therefore, a new creation not divided, Eph 4:17-24. So, they need to walk in love, the light, and wisdom towards each other, Eph 5:1-21. Paul then highlighted some areas where they needed to make more effort and work, i.e., in their marriage, in the local Church, as families and in business, Eph 5:22-6:9.

⁴ Seifrid, M.A. “In Christ.” In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 433-436. “What did the Apostle Paul say 143 times?” <https://medium.com/@edelliott/what-did-the-apostle-paul-say-143-times-429f79248cb7> (29th June 2022). “A Study of ‘in Christ.’” <https://www.bibletruths.net/Archives/BTARO90.htm> (29th June 2022).

Paul then came to the last fifteen to twenty minutes (so to speak, which I mentioned in the introduction). All that I have been saying has been leading up to this point. Here we will break down this important section of Scripture into its varying parts. We will look at what Paul said to the Ephesians in Eph 6:10-20. The New American Standard Bible will be used for this breakdown since it is the most literal translation from Greek. However, I will also add any comments, which will help bring out the meaning lost in the English translation.

Paul's introduction to this closing section focuses on the real enemy and what the Ephesians were meant to do in light of the enemy. Notice that the focus begins on the Lord, what He has given them and why He gave them the things He did. Then and only then did Paul focus on the real enemy.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

- It was Paul's final words (the rest or remaining things that I need to say to you) to all of the local Church in this letter, so they had better listen well.
- He said they were to be strong or empowered; this verb was a command. However, it was also used with the present and ongoing effects but was also passive, i.e., something done to them. He told them they need to realise that they "are constantly being strengthened."⁵ They needed to be aware that when they came to Jesus Christ through the new birth, they permitted themselves to be continually clothed in Jesus Christ's strength. They were already in Him from their new birth, so Paul was trying to get them to see and understand this truth.
- The strength was not their own Jesus Christ's. They had been called into the family of God, and He was now looking after them. However, they had also been called into partnership as soldiers on His behalf. So, they needed to constantly submit themselves to Him and, in faith, rely on His strength because theirs would not be enough for what they needed to do.

¹¹ Put on the full armour of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

- The Ephesians were commanded to put on the whole armor of God once and for all for their benefit and not just part of it. Paul compared this armour of God to the Roman soldier's armour that all Ephesians would have been familiar with at the time. The question needs to be asked didn't this happen when they were born anew? Yes, the matter here was the recognition of this truth. In other words, they were already heavily armed soldiers in God's army.
- Notice that the armour belongs to God. He is the source of this divine and complete protection, not the Ephesians. They needed to recognise this truth, stand up, and stand solidly in faith against their common enemy.
- Their common enemy was the diabolical evil one, the devil. Paul mentioned the devil's schemes, i.e., methods of cunning and crafty trickery. The devil was out to deceive them into fighting against each other, the people in the city of Ephesus and even their family members. But if they were going to constantly stand firm against this enemy, they needed to recognise that it was the crafty one they were to stand up against.

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

⁵ Wuest, Kenneth S. "Ephesians and Colossians." In *Wuest's Word Studies: In the Greek New Testament*. Vol. 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), part 4, 140.

- Paul now comes to an essential part within the whole letter. Namely, they were not wrestling against each other. They were never meant to be and should never do so. Although a person may be the one, they saw in front of them, it was not the people they were wrestling against, never, ever, at all. Notice that Paul used the illustration of close hand-to-hand combat, a contest between two in which each endeavours to throw the other down to see who the winner is.
- Paul said “but” and pointed out that the real enemy here was a spiritual one. The spiritual enemy can (and does) use people for their means, but the real enemy is of another realm. Paul highlight what the enemy was like,
- They were the **rulers** (the principal or main leaders, from the same root as ‘arch’ as in archangel), the **powers** (authorities it is the same Word (except plural) as in Matt 28:18 where Jesus said, “All authority [*exousia*] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth”), the **world forces of this darkness**, (*kosmokratas* world-leaders of the darkness the spiritual beings that are ruling and dominating human world-leaders) and the **spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places** (it the spiritual forces not human who are wicked and of another realm, they are malicious and evil-aligned to the will of the devil).

So, in light of what Paul had said, he now went on to describe how the Ephesian local Church was to engage in this hand-to-hand combat. He explained it using an example of the armour of a Roman soldier. He chose several parts of the armour and compared them to one of the character qualities of God the Father.

¹³ Therefore, take up the full armour of God so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

- He began this section with the “Therefore,” or In light of what I have just said, you need to do and realise the following. That is,
“Because the fight was with such powers as the demons and satan, ‘take unto you the whole armour of God.’”⁶
- In other words, he said, ‘I command you to realise that you have haven already taken or put on yourself once and for all the completed armour given you, keep it on at all times.’ Paul would have understood what the Hebrew Bible had to say on this matter, Is 11:4-5; 59:17
- Paul would have been dealing with the incorrect teaching (which is still around today) that they were to take it off when resting and put it on again when needed. The teaching goes that they were to put on the armour every day; otherwise, the devil may get them. Instead, they were meant to realise that armour is, in fact, the character of Christ who is in them, who they received new life the day they were born anew. They needed to see that they did not and cannot take off Jesus Christ and put Him on again. It is a relationship, not a transaction. It was their status, i.e., they were in Jesus Christ from the moment of their new birth, and it did not change.
- The armour's purpose was to resist the devil in the evil or wicked day. They would need to withstand or stand up, hold their ground against the devil once and for all when it countered. They need to realise that in light of what Jesus Christ had done on the cross, they could stand against the devil in His strength. It is literally “all things having worked out to stand.” That is, “the ones who having worked out or accomplished once and for all for yourselves carrying the victory to its ultimate conclusion, live or be caused to make a stand once and for all living in the finished work of Jesus Christ.’

⁶ Wuest, “Ephesians and Colossians,” part 4, 142.

¹⁴ Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

- Paul ends the last verse with them being told to be caused by Jesus Christ to stand up and stand firm once and for all. They were ready to resist or bring the devil to a standstill at any time. He then began this verse by commanding them to stand up and stand firm once and for all. By repeating this, it becomes clear that they were not doing it but backing down or taking a backward step against the real enemy.
- So, having stood up to the mark, Paul then went on to explain the character of God that they had received in Christ Jesus. He used the armour on a combat soldier.⁷

- He began with the truth of God or that fact that He is all truth, not the spiritual forces behind the goddess Artemis. Like a belt that wraps truth around exposed and vulnerable parts of your body for protection, such as areas like the groin and kidneys. It was also to hold other armour parts in place for protection. Additionally, to have somewhere to hang the sword when not in use. So, Paul started with God's truthful nature instead of the devil's deceitful nature behind Artemis. God is sincere, truthful, and forthright, so the local Christ-followers in Ephesus were to be the same.



- So, Paul had said to them, “you are the ones who having already put on the belt of truth once and for all as it is for yourselves to be able to stand strong.”
- The righteousness was illustrated as the soldier's breastplate to offer the vital internal organs some protection from frontal attack. This breastplate would be fastened to the belt to keep it in place securely. So, God's truth would keep His righteousness in their lives. It is His righteousness, not theirs, which was mentioned here to be able to rightly stand against the devil. They receive the gift of new birth based on His righteousness, and based on this, and they were to live their lives.
- So, Paul again said to them, “you are the ones who have already put on the breastplate of God's righteousness once and for all as it is for yourselves to be able to stand strong.”

¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

- As with the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness, Paul again used a participle, aorist, and middle (something done for one's benefit) verb.⁸ It was their responsibility to realise that they had the status of being truthful, righteous, and, in partnership with Jesus Christ, sharing the gospel of peace. It was their status or standing and not something they needed to work up or work towards in their lives.

⁷ “The Equipment of a Roman Soldier.” <https://matthanna123.wordpress.com/equipmentoftheromans/> (2nd July 2022).

⁸ Friberg, Barbara & Friberg Timothy. (eds) *Analytical Greek New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1986), 600.

- The sandals of the Roman soldier were bound to their legs by solid leather straps so they would not come off their feet quickly. They were robust leather sandals with hobnails in the sole so as not to wear out and were for the soldiers to be able to walk the distances needed for conquest. Also, the soldiers would have been prepared and ready to attack or for an attack as they had a firm footing. So, Paul told them that the gospel of peace is like sandals that can endure any condition.
- Paul again told them, “you are the ones who have already prepared and put on the shoes of the Gospel of Shalom once and for all as it is for yourselves to be able to stand strong.”

¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

- Now in practice, Paul points out this is how it functions. Unlike the belt, breastplate, and sandals, Paul again used a participle, aorist, and active verb⁹ when describing the fact that they had already taken up the shield of faith. In other words, where he had used the middle deponent, he used the active tense for the shield. In other words, although it would benefit all of them, they had to be involved in using their gift of faith.
- Paul then said to them that “in addition to all,” some translations use ‘above all’ or ‘besides all’ as the shield of faith. It was a big oblong shield, about 1.2 m by 0.75 m in size. The shield carried on the left arm was curved to protect its user and was made from wood, with metal edges and covered with leather. The shield could be dipped into water to wet the leather to quench the arrows or spears that had been set on fire, which might hit it.¹⁰
- The Word used for the arrows or spears is only used here in all of the New Testament. These would have the tips wrapped in cloth, dipped in tar, and then fired or thrown at the oncoming army. If they hit the shield made from wood, it would catch on fire, which is why the leather on the shield needed to be wet.
- Paul was trying to get the Ephesians ready at all times because they did not know when the devil would fire or throw his fiery weapons at them. They had already received the faith of God, and so in that faith, they were to stand against the wicked one.
- Paul once again said to them, “you are the ones who having already received the shield of faith once and for all as it is for yourselves to be able to quench the presently burning arrows or javelins of the wicked one.”

¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

- The next thing Paul brought to their attention was their new life (salvation). He illustrated this with the Roman helmet to protect the head.¹¹ It was an essential part of the armour as a hit in the head could disable, knock unconscious, or kill the soldier.
- Paul was telling them they had already received the helmet of the new birth for their benefit. So, live with the assurance of this great truth of new birth.
- The devil would have been battling for their minds to make them doubt that they were born anew. It would have been



⁹ Friberg, *Analytical Greek New Testament*, 600.

¹⁰ Williams, David J. *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 220-221.

¹¹ “Roman Helmet.” <https://imperiumromanum.pl/en/roman-army/equipment-of-roman-legionary/roman-helmet/> (2nd July 2022).

the main battleground, especially since Ephesus was a spiritual hotspot of darkness. Paul was reinforcing the truth that they had already received this new life when they accepted the finished work of Jesus Christ, and there was nothing they could add to what He had done.

- Not only that, but it also highlights the main defensive and offence piece of equipment they had already received, the sword. It was a short sword about 600 mm long, used for close hand-to-hand combat. It was sharpened on both sides of the blade to cut whichever way it was used.
- Paul called it the sword that belongs to the Holy Spirit, which is present and always God's living Word. It is more than merely Paul's spoken or written words; they are God's spoken and written Words. He was pointing out that they are as powerful as the spoken Words of creation and the Torah's written words.
- Paul said to them, "I command you to realise that you are the ones who have already received the helmet of new life once and for all as it is for yourselves. In addition, I command you to realise that you are the ones who have already received the sword, which belongs to the Holy Spirit, the Word of God at new life once and for all as it is for yourselves."

¹⁸ With (Lit. *Through*) all prayer and petition pray (Lit. *praying*) at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be (Lit. *being*) on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

- He went to reveal to them that they were to always talk with God about all things, in all kinds of prayer, and at all times. It was to be done directed and empowered by God the Holy Spirit. It needs to be done with great alertness for all the holy ones (saints). The Ephesians were to stay alert or watchful, giving reliable awareness to this relational activity.
- Paul said, "I command you praying ones always to be talking with God in the power of the Holy Spirit not only for yourselves but also for all of the holy ones."

So, Paul had left the critical instruction until the last building on what he had already said to the local Church in Ephesus. I had picked up on the fact that Ephesus was a spiritual hotspot overseen by the demonic realm. He wanted them to see this truth and stop reacting to the people around them and those in the local Church. Instead, he wanted them to act from the premise that they were under the direction of the Holy Spirit. In addition, when they received their new life, they came out from under the rulership of the dark spiritual forces and, at the same time, became the Heavenly Father's children. At that moment, they had become one with Jesus Christ, i.e., He was in them, and they were in Him. That being the case, they had received the Holy Spirit with the character of God. Paul illustrated this as the whole armour of God. They were then to live from this perspective and not be drawn back under the wicked domination of the demonic realm.

Some concluding thoughts

So, coming back to the opening question,

Q. Why did Paul leave this subject of who we are really fighting until last?

There is a lot in these verses; we can see why Paul left them to the last point to deal with for the Ephesians. They built on the foundation of the previous parts of the letter. Especially on unity, being one body with One Head, Jesus Christ. The devil as the enemy was up to his old trick of breaching discord among the local Church. He has not changed his strategy as it still works today. Stop for a

moment and think about the Church over the last 2000 years and today. We still believe his lie, and this is no unity. So why would he change his strategy if it still works?

But how are we to respond to what we have seen here? One thing we can do is to stop and reflect on what we have heard. How does that truth that He is what Paul said to the local Church at Ephesus encourage us? What could happen if we recognised that we are in the army of our God in partnership with Him against the spiritual darkness and not each other? How would we deal with someone attacking or standing up against us today?

It is never people we are fighting with, never, never, never. But always spiritual darkness. It is not our neighbour, another Christ-follower, a work college, someone at school or in the shopping centre; it is never people against which we are fighting!

We need to apply this; otherwise, it is simply an academic process. Then we need to respond to what the Holy Spirit has been saying to us.

In response, we need to ask through this process:

- What can personal application be found in the passages?
- What is God teaching me today?
- That is, "What is God saying to me?"

How should I respond to what is being said, or so what?

- What are you going to do about it?
- What do you need to do to respond?
- Pray and respond