

Monday, February 25th

Read Verses Ephesians 6:1-4

6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

In the ancient world, there were “haustafeln”, or household codes, in which people like Aristotle would say, “Here’s how wives should act. Here’s how children should act.” These codes were very common. Paul follows the same model in today’s passage, continuing the household codes from last week. But Paul does something that was absolutely unheard of in the ancient world. After he says, “Wives and children should do this,” he then goes on to say, “Now, let’s talk about what husbands and fathers are supposed to do, because it’s a two-way street.” It’s mutual submission. Insisting on one-way submission is oppression, and that is not what God’s message is.

“Children, you’re under the authority of your parents and you need to accept and respect their authority. Children need to submit to their parents. Then, Paul turns the tables and he says, “Fathers, don’t exasperate your children.” Paul is saying, “Don’t exercise your authority. You have authority. But don’t exercise it in such a way that they are frustrated, which leads to anger, which leads to rebellion.” If you are in a position of authority, recognize that you have a tremendous responsibility to exercise authority in such a way that you enable those whom you lead to respond in the way that God desires.”

Smith, Craig. “Too Full to Fail - Identity Theft Reboot.” *Identity Theft Reboot*, 19 Feb. 2017, <https://bit.ly/2NbFpHa>.

Tuesday, February 26th

Read Verses Ephesians 6:5-9

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶ Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

When we hear the word “slaves,” our natural tendency is to think of 18th century American slavery, and that is not the kind of slavery Paul is referencing here. That is not Biblical slavery. What Paul is calling slavery, we would probably refer to as indentured servants. We

are not referencing people with no rights, or people who are treated as objects or who are bought and sold. That is not slavery in the ancient Biblical context.

Paul is instructing servants to respect the authority of those who were over them and to obey them. He gives a motivation, which is important. It's a motivation that not only applies in this relationship, but in all relationships of authority. He says, "Submit as though you're submitting to Jesus, as though you're serving the Lord. When you submit to someone who has authority over you, you are actually submitting to Jesus." In other words, what he is saying is every act of submission is actually an act of worship and worship attracts the presence of God. We are to invite the power of the Holy Spirit into these relationships and treat submission as an act of worship.

Paul goes on and then he flips it around as he says, "Masters, treat your servants in the same way." It's a two-way street. He gives an important thought for all of those who are in positions of authority. He says, "Don't forget that you're under the authority of Jesus." Paul is explaining that all earthly authority is simply a matter of a temporary relevant position. We will all stand in front of Jesus one day. All earthly authority will be gone. Any authority we have is insignificant compared to the authority that Jesus has over us.

At the end of the day, don't forget these examples are given to us to help us understand what it looks like to engage in mutual submission. Mutual submission along with persistent thanksgiving and authentic worship, both corporately and individually, are means by which we allow ourselves to be filled by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the big idea.

Cole, Steven J. "Ephesians." *Bible.org*, 2007, <https://bible.org/series/ephesians-0>.

Smith, Craig. "Too Full to Fail - Identity Theft Reboot." *Identity Theft Reboot*, 19 Feb. 2017, <https://bit.ly/2NbFpHa>.

Wednesday, February 27th

Read Verses Ephesians 6:10-13

The Armor of God

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, 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. ¹³ Therefore put on the full armor 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.

Finally is an important word because it tells what we are about to read from Paul is the heartbeat of his message, "Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power". What he says is push into your relationship with God because it is in the strength of your relationship with God that you are going to find access to His mighty power.

The reason this is on his heart is because he understands that we are living in a world in which we are at war. It is vital for our survival as a Christians that we realize when we

became Christians we were drafted into God's army. Daily we are engaged in a battle with an unseen spiritual enemy that seeks to destroy us. Otherwise, when trials hit, we will think something is wrong. We will wonder why God has allowed this. We won't understand the reality of our situations. Really, what Paul says here is we have to put on the full armor of God because we are facing a powerful enemy.

Putting on God's armor means that in every trial and temptation by faith we appropriate Christ's strength in place of our weakness. By faith we cry out to Him for deliverance and strength to persevere. By faith we rely on His promises, just as Jesus modeled defeating Satan by quoting Scripture in Luke, chapter four.

Paul uses a number of words to talk about the enemy. As he describes them as rulers and authorities, we might be inclined to think he's talking about government officials but he's not. Every single one of these words that Paul uses is a word the Ephesians used to refer to demonic spirits. These creatures, which exert powerful influence in the world, are our enemy. Don't lose sight of it, he says. It's easy for us to focus on flesh and blood, but Paul says that is not our enemy.

The devil and his forces consistently attempt to undermine the work God has done in us. They try to disrupt our identity in Christ, by undermining how we see ourselves and the truth that God speaks over us as His children. The barriers of division between God and us, have been demolished by the blood of Christ. The walls of hostility between us and others have been torn down in the flesh and the sacrifice of Jesus. The devil works really hard to rebuild what God has destroyed, to rebuild divisions and separations. He works really hard to steal our identity. And so, Paul says, "Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." The word "schemes" is an interesting term. The Greek word basically means deceptive techniques. It's interesting that Paul doesn't say we need to withstand the devil's attacks. He says that we need to withstand the devil's deceptions.

The devil understands he doesn't have that kind of power, so he rarely comes at us in full force, but he often comes at us with identity theft, with an attempt to undermine our grasp on the reality of who we are in Christ. So, Paul says, "You've got to put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground." Paul is saying is we don't know when those days are going to be. We don't know when Satan's schemes are going to be more intense than other days. We don't know when the attacks are going to come against us in greater fury and strength, so we have to be ready every day. We must fight by taking up God's full armor so that we can resist and stand firm in the day of evil.

Cole, Steven J. "Ephesians." *Bible.org*, 2007, <https://bible.org/series/ephesians-0>.

Smith, Craig. "The Heart of the Gospel." *Identity Theft - Reboot*, 26 Feb. 2017, <https://bit.ly/2Nd2Yzw>.

Thursday, February 28th

Read Verses Ephesians 6:14-17

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

There are three big picture observations that will help us to not only understand what Paul is saying but what it looks like to do it practically. The first observation is when Paul says, “Put on the full armor of God,” but he does not describe the full armor or all of the pieces that would have been typical of Roman armor. Paul is illustrating the principle of preparedness, not giving an exhaustive list of all the pieces. The main thing we are supposed to understand is to be ready. We don’t know when these attacks are coming so we need to be ready with the full armor.

The second thing to note is much of the language Paul was using is borrowed from Isaiah, Chapter 52. In Isaiah 52 we find statements like, “Put on these garments” and “Blessed are the feet that bring good news.” He talks about peace. He talks about salvation. The big idea in Isaiah is that God fights for his people. We are encouraged in Isaiah 52, to take courage from the fact that we have a God who will fight on our behalf. We don’t have to win the battles, we don’t have to win the wars, we just have to be safe behind the God who will fight on our behalf. Paul is saying, this armor of God that we’re called to protect ourselves with, ultimately boils down to a relationship with the God who will fight for us. It is a key idea.

Thirdly, there are three pieces of armor closely associated with words that are synonyms for the Gospel in the book of Ephesians. Paul begins with the statement about the belt of truth. The word truth has been used in Ephesians as a synonym for the gospel message. In verse 1:13, it states, “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.” In the middle of this description of the armor, Paul talks about our feet that are made ready with the Gospel of peace. At the end of this description of the armor he says, “Take up the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.”

When Paul says, “Put the breastplate of righteousness in place”, that is a fascinating statement. The devil tries to tell us it is our righteousness that will get us into God’s good graces. That we have to be “good enough”. But that is not the Gospel. The Gospel says, we are never going to get to God on our own, we need Jesus. It is Jesus’s righteousness that will be our breastplate. Notice the breastplate is external. It’s put on us, it doesn’t come from us.

“Take up the helmet of salvation.” Protect your most important assets with the knowledge that your salvation was secured by the blood of Jesus, not by your effort. Your salvation, your place in the family of God was made permanent by your trust in the Gospel message.

In the book of Ephesians, Paul uses the concept of the word of God as a synonym for the Gospel. In other words, to put on the full armor of God is to cling to the Gospel and all of its implications. This is good news because it means that to put on the full armor of God doesn’t mean we have to get up every morning and juggle a bunch of pieces. Put on the full armor of God by clinging to the Gospel itself and all of its implications.

Smith, Craig. “The Heart of the Gospel.” *Identity Theft - Reboot*, 26 Feb. 2017, <https://bit.ly/2Nd2Yzw>.

Friday, March 1st

Read Verses Ephesians 6:18-24

¹⁸ 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 Lord’s people. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the

mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

Final Greetings

²¹ Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.²² I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

²³ Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

In the first two verses, Paul is explaining since we are in the family of God, don't hesitate to go to the Father with whatever we need. Do you need personal provision? Ask. Do you need provision for your church? Ask. Do you need to see a stronghold of the enemy destroyed out in the world? Ask. Why would you hesitate to go to a God who loves you this much? Paul's final words, his heartbeat, is for us to understand the Gospel is our salvation and our security, cling to it with everything we have. In that way, we will be ready to face the identity theft attempts that are constantly coming against us.

As Paul has emphasized in Ephesians, we are one body in Christ. If one member hurts, the whole body hurts. Praying for your fellow soldiers in the battle will motivate you to love them and work out any relational conflicts. It's difficult to pray for someone and still be at odds with them.

When you read through the Book of Acts, you don't get the impression that Paul was lacking in boldness. So why was he asking prayer for boldness in witness? There may be two reasons. First, Paul was not a strong, naturally gifted communicator. He knew that he was inadequate in himself, so he needed prayer for boldness. Second, Paul was about to go before Caesar, who would either acquit or condemn him. Paul wanted to proclaim the gospel boldly and clearly to Caesar. So, he asked for prayer. Let's make Paul's passion our passion; pray that we will be used to proclaim the Gospel to the lost with clarity and boldness.

Cole, Steven J. "Ephesians." *Bible.org*, 2007, <https://bible.org/series/ephesians-0>.

Smith, Craig. "The Heart of the Gospel." *Identity Theft - Reboot*, 26 Feb. 2017, <https://bit.ly/2Nd2Yzw>.