

1. As I worked my way through this final chapter in Ephesians, the one thought that kept coming to mind is the expression: "Trust in the Lord". I started thinking about what that expression meant.
 - a) It is the realization that we can't earn being loved by God or anyone else for that matter.
 - b) Christianity to me includes the idea of letting go of one's fears and worries and knowing that somehow God will see us through everything we have to deal with in life.
 - c) What God wants from us is to trust in Him, and trust that He will guide us through our lives. It is about trusting Him by following how the bible (especially the New Testament) teaches us how to live. That is a good summary of Ephesians, and this final chapter.
2. In this final chapter, there are three specific issues, which initially seem like they have nothing in common: They are our Christian relationships with our families, our relationships with other people that we must deal with in life, and finally our trust in God for protection from demonic spiritual forces we cannot see. What I kept asking myself is, "Why would Paul want us to focus on these three issues as his final points in this letter?"
 - a) The more I thought about this, the more I kept coming back to the idea of "Life is all about trusting God". It is about trusting Him with our relationships with other people and it is about trusting Him to battle other forces that exist, but we cannot see or comprehend.
 - b) Let me put it another way: Can we have a relationship with our parents and our children without God's help? Yes we can, but why would we want to deal with a relationship so important without the help of the creator of the universe who wants to help us to live out that relationship in a manner that is pleasing to Him?
 - c) A similar principal applies to our relationship to those people we are forced to be with. This chapter talks about relationships between slaves and slave masters. In Paul's time, roughly two thirds of the Roman world was slaves. Such slavery was common whether Paul liked it or not. Today we have relationships in work and other relationships with people we may not normally desire to have such a relationship with.
 - d) The point of all of this is that it is our trust in God to give us Christians the strength and ability to see us through our relationships with people whether they are pleasant or not.
 - i) Of course it is possible to get through other relationships without God's help, but why turn down the greatest resource in the universe, when there is a God who wants to help us with our relationships with other people?
 - ii) One of the main principals Ephesians teaches is how much God desires to be in the middle of such relationships and having us trust Him through those relationships.
 - iii) What Paul does in effect is give us pointers on how to best deal with people including the ones we are "stuck with" in our lives.
 - e) Finally, there is the issue of our relationship with demonic spiritual forces we cannot see.
 - i) If life is not difficult enough as it is, there are demonic spiritual forces that exist that don't want us to be good witnesses for Jesus. The reason God allows such forces to exist is as a motivational tool for us as Christians to stick close to Him. The point is we as saved Christians have all the power we need to have victory over such demonic forces. All we have to do is to draw upon that power we have received from God to overcome such forces.
 - ii) That is what this whole chapter, and in effect the whole book of Ephesians is all about: It is about God providing all the power we as believers need to be able to face whatever life throws at us. That includes our relationships with other people and it even includes our relationships with demonic spiritual forces we cannot see.

3. With that challenging introduction completed, we are ready to take on the final chapter of this book. Verse 1: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.
- a) It may help at this point to remember where we left off in Ephesians. We last left focusing on the relationships between husbands and wives. That section was not saying that all people have to be married. That last section was just saying that if we are in a marriage then here is what God expects of us in that marital relationship. The main point to get out of that lesson is we can't fix our spouses. In effect, our spouses are God's problem to deal with. Our job is focus on our own relationship with our spouses through God. At the same time, God can take care of His relationship with our spouse and He doesn't need our help in order to fix or change our spouses.
 - b) Which surprisingly, leads us to Verse 1 of this final chapter. The key point doesn't change from Chapters 5 to 6, just the relationship examples. The point is still God's desire to lead us in our relationships with people, but now the focus is on our relationships with our children and our parents.
 - c) With that little speech out of my system, I am now ready to talk about Verse 1 itself.
 - i) Notice the verse is addressed to children. Therefore, this verse is specifically addressed to children who are both old enough and care enough about their relationship with God the Father to want to comprehend this principal.
 - d) It may help to state what this verse does not say: It does not say, "Children, obey your parents because your parents are good people." It does not say, "Obey your parents because they always make the right decision for your lives."
 - i) This verse comes back to the principal of submission that I discussed in the last lesson. The point is that children are to submit to the will of their parents. If parents make a bad decision, God holds the parents accountable, not the kids.
 - ii) Yes there are exceptions for abusive situations, but that is not the focus of this verse. The focus is the concept that just as husbands have to submit to God's authority, and just as the wives have to submit to the husband's authority, so children living in the same house as their parents must submit to their authority.
 - iii) Like I said in the last lesson, it is not about who is superior as a human, but just about submitting to God's ordained order of authority. I said in the last lesson, if a husband makes a bad decision in a marriage, then that is God's problem to deal with the husband, not the wives problem to fix. The same principal applies for children. They are under one's parent's authority, and they are held accountable for the children's upbringing.
 - iv) Older children may think that this system is not fair or they think they know better than their parents. The point is if we are still living under our parent's authority, we must accept God's order of command and remember the fact that our parents are accountable to God for the decisions that they make on their children's behalf.
 - v) Children will fight their parents decisions, over time they will usually appreciate how we parents have acted in their best interest
 - e) What if we are adults taking care of our elderly parents? Does this principal still apply? That is a different situation. Yes we must always respect our parents' wishes, but if we are grown up, in effect we as adults are accountable directly to God.
 - i) What I mean by that is if we are married, our first priority is to our spouses over the desires of our parents. If we are single adults and are financially providing for ourselves, then we are a "household of one". We must still respect the desires of our parents, but to the limit that we are first accountable to God and then to our older parents. Yes, if needed, we should provide for our aging parents and take care of them, but the issue of the moment is all about our relationship as grown men and women and our accountability to our parents.
 - ii) How parents are to act with their own children is the topic starting in Verse 4.

4. Before we get to Verse 4, we still have Verses 2 and 3 to cover: Verse 2: "Honor your father and mother"--which is the first commandment with a promise--³ "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."
- a) Verse 2 lists one of the 10 commandments. Those commandments are listed in the Old Testament in Exodus 20, and Deuteronomy 5. There are hundreds of commandments in the Old Testament but those ten are considered a summary of what God desires in our relationship with Him and with other people.
 - b) Here's the point of as it applies to these two verses: Of those 10 commandments given, the only one that states a promise right after that command is given is the one about honoring one's father and mother. The promise is that "it (life) may go well with you".
 - c) My question is, why have a blessing tied to this commandment? Why not bless Commandment #1 which is about honoring our relationship with God? What about the commands to not steal, or lie or murder? Why have a blessing for obedience to parents?
 - i) The bible does not say why it is written this way, so what I am about to say is just speculation. I suspect part of the reason that this commandment has a blessing is because it is the only one addressed to children, and therefore God wants children to get a reward for obeying that command.
 - ii) Let me try this principal another way: As adults, policemen do not congratulate us when we don't steal, lie or murder. God does not give us a pat on the back when we are loyal to Him, because these commandments are what we must obey, not just asked to obey. (I'll save the discussion about the commandment about keeping the Sabbath for another day.)
 - iii) OK John, of all of these commandments, why do children get a special blessing just for being obedient to their parents? For starters, it is not because their parents are correct in every decision that they make as parents. It is about learning the concept of submission and learning to accept the idea of having authority in life.
 - iv) Children don't have to learn that their parents are in authority. They just naturally know that for their own survival. As children get a little older and start to think for themselves, they need to be reminded and learn the "chain of command" about authority and accept the idea that they are under their parent's authority.
 - d) This leads me to discuss how children are blessed by this commandment. The blessing is not about say, how many toys a child will receive. The blessing is not a guarantee that one's childhood will be happy all the time. The blessing is that the child will learn and respect the concept of authority.
 - i) This is about children learning the order of authority that God has designed for them. It is about learning that they must be submissive to their parents just as their parents should be submissive to God with their own lives.
 - ii) What if I am say, 16 years old and my parents are not believers? As long as we live in their house and under their authority, we must obey them. (Yes, there are exceptions for abusive parents, but I'm not talking about that here.) The point is children must still respect their parents' desires of as long as they are part of that household. When they are on their own, then they are directly accountable to God for the decisions without the "middle men" of the parents in their lives.
 - iii) My main point of these two verses is that children do get a special blessing for obedience, in that they learn about God's desire of authority, where He puts parents in the role of being responsible for raising the children. If parents fail to do this properly, God holds the parents responsible for bad child behavior. Once children reach adulthood, then they are responsible for their own decisions.
 - a) Children don't usually think this system is fair, but what they learn over time, is that submission is the best way to live one's life and that is the blessing that they learn from such submission.

5. Verse 4: Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.
- a) After getting three verses for children, we get one verse for parents.
 - i) This verse is for mothers and fathers. The idea of the word "father" is that it refers to the head of the household. If moms are at home taking care of children, or there is no dad in the life of the children, then this verse applies to moms equally as much as it applies to dads.
 - b) OK, time to define the word "exasperate" as it is used in Verse 4 above.
 - i) The amplified bible says, "irritate and provoke your children".
 - ii) Most English bible translations use the word "provoke" instead of "exasperate".
 - c) So does this mean we should never allow our children to be angry? Whoever says yes to that question, has never raised children. ☺
 - i) I believe the idea here is about not having our children hate us due to abuse.
 - ii) Let me explain this concept further: Children are often going to hate the decisions parents make, but they are still going to respect their parents in the long run if they know their parents have their best interest at heart and the parents are doing the best they can to raise them right. They may not like the decision for the moment, but they usually won't hold a grudge for life if they know the parents are doing the best they can to help them grow into mature and responsible adults.
 - iii) So does this mean I can't yell at my kids when I am angry? That idea misses the point. The point is we as parents are dependant upon God for how we raise our children. Just as we are dependant upon God to help us in our other relationships in life, so the best way to be the type of parent that God desires is to trust Him in all the decisions that we make. In practice, that means praying for God's help in the decisions we as parents have to make in raising our children.
 - iv) When I am angry with my kids, I should stop, collect my thoughts and ponder, how is the best way to work with my children at the moment? Remember that our children in effect belong to God and not us. Our job as Christian parents is to do our best to raise them to be responsible adults.
 - v) Personally, I never have a problem apologizing to my children when I make a mistake. If anything, they respect me more knowing that I am willing to admit faults at times. Hopefully that encourages them to admit when they make their own mistakes that it is acceptable to confess their sins when they do mess up.
 - d) This leads me to the rest of the verse. The point here is that it is parents' responsibility to raise our children not only to survive as adults but to learn to live their lives to make a difference for God in all that they do. Our job as parents is to teach our children how to survive on their own. In effect, our job as parents is to work our way out of a job. ☺
 - e) One thing I have also learned in life is that we have to accept the way our children turn out. I'm convinced there is an element of random luck (for the lack of a better term) in how our children turn out in life. I have seen bad children come out of great homes and some great people come from really bad upbringing. My point is that we have to accept the fact that God alone knows how our children will turn out in life no matter how well we raise our children.
 - i) Is that an excuse to be a bad parent? Of course not. Odds are always better if a child comes from a good home. My point is how we raise our children is never a guarantee of how that child will turn out in life. We as parents have to accept God's sovereignty and our children's ability to make their own decisions in life. That is a part of "growing up" just as much as our ability as parents to properly raise our children.
 - f) OK, enough overly simplistic parenting advice. ☺ Time to move on to the next topic..

6. Verse 5: Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.
- a) Before I discuss Paul's little speech here to slaves, let me talk a little about what the world was like at Paul's time. As I mentioned earlier, roughly two thirds of the Roman world were slaves. Slaves had no rights and masters could treat them however they wanted to.
 - b) Not all slaves were the "lowest of lows". Some were well educated. Some bible scholars believe Luke (author of Gospel of Luke) was a slave even though he was a trained doctor.
 - i) If slavery is such a horrible thing (of course I believe it is), why didn't Paul, or even the early Christian church try to stop slavery? The answer is that they had "bigger fish to fry". Paul was busy explaining that even though one was a slave, one could be mentally free by learning to trust God with every aspect of one's life. That includes one's relationship with one's slave master.
 - ii) Further, the early church was just trying to survive, and that took priority over dealing with slavery. I would argue that a major reason slavery eventually died in the Roman Empire and later all most of the world was due to strong Christian beliefs. The belief that all people are equal in the eyes of God drove the desire to bring an end to slavery at different points in history in the world.
 - c) OK enough ancient history. For the most part we don't have much slavery today, so how does this apply? For starters, all people usually have to obey somebody other than God in order to survive. It may be a company, or a boss, or a landlord, or even a government.
 - i) The point is most of us have relationships other than God where we have to serve somebody else. It could even be a relative we have to take care of. For the most part these verses are talking about people who are tough to deal with.
 - ii) Think of Paul's letter to the Ephesians this way: He already discussed the two biggest relationships in most of our lives, which is marriage and family. That leaves the next biggest relationship we have in our lives: people we must answer to in life. That includes our bosses, our companies, our government or even someone living under the same roof as us.
 - a) One of the main points of this section is not that we have to like that person we have to be obedient too. But at this moment in our lives, we are required for some reason to be obedient to them. The text doesn't say anything about our slave owners (or whoever they are) treating us well, but just about doing what we are called to do at that moment in time.
 - b) I was thinking for the moment about prisoners of war. They are required to be obedient in the most horrible of situations and do what they have to do in order to stay alive. They too must be obedient not so that they can enjoy the moment, but to do what they can in order to survive. They still must try to escape if they can, in the meantime, they must be obedient.
 - d) This leads me back to the text. Paul says we are to serve such masters with respect and fear, not of their slave-masters (or whoever), but fear of God. Let me put it another way:
 - i) For some reason probably unknown to us, God is allowing some of us to be in that situation. Like being a prisoner of war, that situation may come to an end one day, but in the meantime, there are things God wants us to learn by being in that particular situation. We may not particularly like the situation we are in, but we are called to serve that slave-master (again, or whoever) not because we enjoy it, but because for that moment in time, that is what we are called to do.
 - ii) By thinking in terms of being obedient to Christ, we can have freedom, despite the fact we may be in effect slaves of that situation. The way we can have freedom in slavery is to realize that we are slaves to Christ, and it is His will for that moment in time for us to be obedient to somebody no matter what that somebody is like.

- e) You may say, "Yeah John, but you don't know what the person is like I have to deal with. You don't know how mean that person can be." Think about the prisoners of war again and how they are not there out of choice. Putting aside the issue of whether or not God wants us to escape from a bad situation, the point is we are there, there is nothing we can do about the fact we are there for the time being and God is quite aware of our situation.
 - f) The perfect biblical example here is Joseph in the book of Genesis. God had him spend many years in prison for a crime he did not commit. During that time in prison, Joseph was a model prisoner and was made the head prisoner due to his cooperation with the guards and I suspect because he didn't let being in jail bother him. That jail time prepared him for the role of being second in command of all of Egypt. Let me explain:
 - i) That time in jail, taught Joseph how one can be free and be a prisoner at the same time. It taught Joseph how to organize people even though he was a prisoner. It taught Joseph how to wait on God. Did Joseph know if or when he would get out of that jail? That was not his problem, but God's. Does God know if and when we will get out of our own "slave" situation? Yes He does and that is His business to know if and when we are ready to change our situation.
 - g) Like a prisoner of war, we may have to make the effort to change our situation, but in effect it is up to God to determine the success of that effort. In the meantime, God also calls on us to accept our "slave" role in life, not forever, but just for the time frame that God knows He has for us.
 - i) Does that mean we have to like our slave-like situation? Of course not. It just means we are to use that time to serve Jesus by serving whatever person God calls us to serve during that time period. I never said it was easy. I just believe that in order to mentally get through such a period, we have to accept the idea that this person or group is in charge of some or all of the decisions we make in life and in effect to serve them (whether they are good or bad) is in effect serving Christ.
7. Verse 6: Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.
- a) The first point of this verse is that we never know whom we will win for Christ by our behavior in our role as a "slave". If others are in a similar situation, a positive attitude may get others to wonder how we can have such joy at that time. That alone becomes a great witness for the love of Christ that will sustain us in that slave like relationship.
 - b) The same principal applies to how our "slave master" sees us. If they see that we refuse to be down no matter how they treat us, it will make them wonder about their own life and how they can have that type of happiness. By the way, I usually find such oppressors get worse before they get better. They often want to see our breaking point. We may even break down due to the tasks we have. God never promises life will be easy, just that He alone will provide us with the strength to get through such times in our life.
 - c) Notice the phrase "win their favor" in Verse 6. The idea is that it is God's desire that we win the favor of others. The idea is about leading them to Christ. However, that should not be our only motivation to do what is right. The point is we are to be obedient to those who do rule over us, even if they are oppressive. We are not just to be motivated to make our "masters" happy, but our primarily motivation should be to win Christ.
 - d) The verse specifically says not just to do this when they are watching you. The idea here is that we don't develop two attitudes: One when the "boss" is watching and a lazier attitude when they are not watching. If we serve Christ with our lives and know that God is always watching us, then our motivation is to be consistent in our behavior all the time.
 - e) OK, what about when I am tired? You expect me to be consistently good when I am having a bad day or I am tired? I am not saying we have to be perfect. I am saying that by drawing on God's strength He can get us through the specific times when we don't feel we have the natural strength to get through such times.

8. Verse 7: Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men,⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.
- a) These are the final two verses on the topic of being a slave. As I stated in the last verse, it should be our motivation to serve as if God Himself is our boss and not the "mean person" who we must answer to in our slave-like relationships.
 - i) Yes that mean person may still be trying to make our lives miserable, but we aren't being obedient because he or she says so, we are to be obedient because it is God who is watching over our behavior.
 - b) If we are that miserable in a situation, shouldn't we try to get out of it? If it is possible to change a situation, then we should do so on our own time. What I mean by that is if we are at a job, we owe that company their time when we are on that company's payroll.
 - c) Paul's point in this section is not about how to change a bad situation if one is able to, but about how to get through such a situation and how to see God's hand working through such a situation. When I personally have to deal with really tough people, I make it a point to pray for them. It amazes me how that usually eases the situation.
 - d) Now notice Verse 8. It says that the Lord will reward everyone for the good we do. I believe that God will see us through such tough situations and provide us with the strength to face what it is we must face in our lives and somehow we will be rewarded for our efforts.
 - e) OK, it's time to see things from the other person's (slave master's) perspective.
9. Verse 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.
- a) The first thing the verse says is for slave masters to treat the slaves "in the same way". That does not mean if say, an employee is mean to you, we are to be mean to them. It means we treat those under us as fellow humans and not someone inferior to us.
 - b) Over my adult life, I have hired a good number of people to work for me. I expect my employees to put in a full day's work and not waste the time they are being paid to work. I understand the need for breaks and I never expect someone to work after hours without compensating them in some way. Expecting someone to do more than what they are paid for is a good example of not "threatening them".
 - i) I do know of business that push new employees extra hard knowing if they "make the cut". They will earn special rewards for those who make it that far. Most of the time the employees are aware of that reward as well so in that sense it is fair.
 - ii) My problem is with employers who take advantage of such situations for their own gain. That is an example of "threatening them" that God does not approve of.
 - c) Finally, let me comment on bosses (slave owners) not threatening people as stated in Verse 9. A Christian boss may wonder, "How do I motivate employees if I don't threaten them every now and then to punish them for bad behavior? A couple of thoughts:
 - i) I think Paul meant that if a slave master knew a slave was a Christian, that master shouldn't single out that Christian slave and say in effect, "I expect more out of you because I know you are accountable to God in this relationship we have".
 - ii) I believe a boss has every right to remind an employee (or however else a "slave master" applies to our lives) how they are supposed to act and correct them when they are not doing what they are supposed to do. Suitable punishment can be found without resorting to say violence or even yelling at those under us.
 - d) A good cross-reference is Leviticus 25:43, which says in effect that slave masters should not be severe in how they treat their slaves. The idea for that culture would be to not beat their slaves for disobedience, but simply try to correct bad behavior in a way that is pleasing to God. If a person in that culture refuses to obey their master, there are more suitable forms of punishment, which would still do the trick without severely them.
 - i) The challenge of being a good boss is learning how to motivate each employee.

- e) OK, enough about tough relationships with other people we must deal with. In effect we now move on to a tougher relationship issue, which is about how we face demonic spiritual forces that we cannot see. With that I present Verse 10.
10. Verse 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.
- a) Before I discuss the specifics of Verse 10, I want you to consider the possibility that Paul is speaking in a progression. As difficult as it is to have God's will done in a marriage, I would argue it is a little more difficult to have God's peace in our relationships with children and parents. I would argue that our relationship with slave masters (i.e., people we are required to be around, but don't necessary like the idea) can be more challenging than it is to have peace than our relationships with spouses, parents and children.
 - b) I would say that an even more challenging relationship is about dealing with evil forces we cannot see but we accept by faith that they exist. From Verses 10 through 18, Paul is going to discuss how we can have victory and peace even we are fighting against forces we literally cannot see. The key question is, assuming such forces are real, how can we possibility have victory and peace in such battles?
 - c) It is probably necessary here to briefly discuss the reality of demonic forces. Let me explain why such demonic creatures exist and why God allows them to exist.
 - i) Know that Satan was created to be one of God's top angels. He God gave Satan free will, and he chose to rebel against God. (I based on Ezekiel, Chapter 28.)
 - ii) I believe Satan argues to God that people are not worth saving. He lies to people in order to discourage us from getting close to God or from staying close to Him.
 - iii) So why did Satan rebel against God? I believe the answer is he was tempted by the desire for power. If he sees he cannot drive all people away from God, why does he still choose to rebel? As best I can tell, is that he desires so much to be right in his cause, he refuses to give up the battle.
 - iv) Why did God allow him to rebel and not "kill him on the spot?" God wants to prove to Satan and any other creature that chooses to rebel like him that God will win despite whatever power such creatures have in the first place. Just how we as people win over Satan, is the topic of Verses 10-19 that I will get to soon. ☺
 - d) The final question to pose is how we do know all of this demonic stuff is real? When we see or read about the depths that some people sink too in life, it lacks human explanation. The best way to explain the horrors that exist in this world is to accept the concept that an evil force (or forces) exists in the first place that cause people to sink to that low depth.
 - i) As I like to say every so often, if you don't believe the devil is real, oppose him for a while and watch what happens. Try telling other people about Jesus and you will be amazed how things just happen to prevent us from completing the task of sharing Jesus with others.
 - e) The good news of this topic is that God does not call us to battle such evil entities without giving us the ability to battle them in the first place. Just like the way we have joy in our relationships in marriage, family, and even slave-like conditions, we can have victory in battling forces we cannot see by trusting God to lead us through battling such forces.
 - f) OK, now that I've scared everyone half to death, ☺ it is time to talk about these verses.
 - g) The first thing Verse 10 says is to be strong in God's power.
 - i) To explain this, think of somebody who joins the army. Training to be a soldier is more than just to be handed a gun, and then told to go kill bad guys. One has to learn how to fight, and one has to learn to take orders from superior officers.
 - ii) In effect, that is what God calls us to do as Christians. Such demonic forces exist whether we like it or not. God does not want us to "hide in a corner" to avoid such evil forces. We have to accept the reality that we have to fight such spiritual battles. We must trust in the power of God to win such battles.

- h) Paul is going to explain to us the weapons we use to fight such battles, but before he gets into the topic of "equipment", the most important concept to grasp is that we must trust in God Himself to help us in such battles. That is why we pray for God's protection for our own lives and the lives of other believers.
 - i) Verse 11 tells us to put on the full armor of God in order to battle against demonic forces. So, what is that armor? Paul gives us those details in Verses 14 through 18 coming up.
- 11. Verse 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.
 - a) Paul tells us here that the battle we face as Christians is not against other humans, but against demonic forces that are working to draw people away from the God of the bible.
 - b) Here is where Verse 12 gets interesting: Paul does not just say fight against "Satan and his assistants", but Paul lists different categories of demonic forces we must face as if we could tell the difference between one type of demonic creature from another.
 - i) Paul does this so we can understand exactly what it is we are fighting against.
 - c) With that little speech all done, let me explain the concept of "rulers and authorities":
 - i) The idea here is that Satan's forces work in ranks the same way an army has top leaders, "middle-mangers" and front line soldiers. The point here is that Satan's army is organized and we have to accept the fact that Satan is organized.
 - ii) When Paul mentions "rulers and authorities", he means top demonic angels in charge of specific territories. In the book of Daniel (10:13), there is a strange story of a good angel named Michael who wanted to help Daniel. The text says Michael couldn't help Daniel for 21 days, as Michael the good angel was busy fighting the "Prince of Persia" whoever that (demonic) creature was. A point of that story in Daniel is that there are demonic "princes" (for the lack of a better word) in charge of specific territories of land, including the area where you and I live.
 - d) Let me quickly discuss another group Paul is mentioning here. If one can imagine the most evil thing a person could do, one can imagine the powers of this dark world. Think of those who have ordered the killings of millions of other people, or think of individuals who have committed really horrible crimes, and you get the idea of these types of forces.
 - i) So why does God allow such evil to exist? The short answer is He allows free will to exist and even allows evil to win some battles. Such evil people always lose in the end, as good people eventually overcome such evil. God calls on us to fight such evil, which is why God calls on Christians to fight against demonic forces behind that evil. God does not want innocent people to die at the hands of an evil person, which is another reason God calls on us to fight such evil.
 - e) Let me add one final thought before we get into the topic of how to stand up against such evil. If you have ever been in prayer and all of a sudden an evil thought comes to mind?
 - i) If that is true, than you can understand how the power of evil that can penetrate our lives even when we are seeking God. If you have read the Gospel accounts a number of times, you may have noticed that demonic forces were not afraid of being in the same neighborhood as Jesus. Satan can't lead people away from Jesus unless Satan is willing to get close to people in the first place.
 - ii) My point here is just because we are saved does not mean Satan can't find ways to attack us when we least expect it. He can't take away our salvation but he can try to make us ineffective witnesses for Jesus and that is the underlying point of why he does things like put bad thoughts in our minds. When we get such thoughts, what we should do is give them to God and say, "You deal with this".
 - f) OK enough discussion about the bad guys. ☺ It is time to learn how to win these battles.

12. Verse 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.
- a) Going back to my illustration of being a soldier, that soldier is trained on how to win battles. In Verses 13 through 18, we are taught how to use the weapons God has (big emphasis on "has") already given us that He wants us to use to battle such forces.
 - b) When Paul wrote this letter, he was probably chained to a soldier. This list reads as if Paul looked at that Roman soldier and thought, let me use his weapons and clothes as illustrations of how we Christians are to battle the type of demonic forces we much face.
 - c) In this verse, Paul used the term "the day of evil". Not everyday in a soldier's life is fighting enemies. There is preparation time prior before any battle. So we must prepare in our Christian life for battles as well. One should be in prayer about spiritual battles regularly as we never know when we need God's protection in this battle.
 - d) Finally, notice the term "stand your ground". The idea here is demonic forces will attack us if we are making a difference for God. By trusting in Him, we don't have to run away from that battle, but in effect we can stand right where we are, because God provides us with all we need in order to overcome anything our spiritual enemies throw at us.
 - e) OK, it is time to discuss the individual weapons themselves, beginning in the next verse.
13. Verse 14: Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,
- a) As I read these specific items, I thought about airline pilots. When a pilot is about to go up in the air, he or she usually go through a checklist to make sure everything is ok. Even if a pilot has flown thousands of times, they never fail to do their checklist. Think of that illustration as a prayer list as we can use with each of these items in the next few verses.
 - b) The first item Paul mentions we need to battle such evil forces is the "belt of truth".
 - i) Roman soldiers didn't wear pants, but long robes. It is hard to run in a robe, so they had to have a belt to tie up their robes to run better.
 - ii) The idea here is not about us literally wearing a belt. The idea is about the truth of remembering that God exists, Jesus died for our sins, we can't sin enough to lose our salvation, and that Satan is real and is opposing God's will. What I mean by all of that is in order to withstand whatever demonic forces throw at us, first we need to know the truth of the reality of the spiritual world, good and bad.
 - c) The second item Paul mentions is the "breastplate of righteousness". The literal idea of a soldier's breastplate is to protect one's vital organs, and in particular the heart. In modern language, think of wearing a bulletproof vest. God's truth will protect us from lies we may hear. For example, the lie that all of this spiritual stuff is in our imagination.
 - i) One of the reasons God calls on all Christians to regularly pray, regularly study His word and regularly get together with other Christians is so that we can remind ourselves of His truth. That way we can combat the lies that demons throw at us.
14. Verse 15: and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.
- a) Paul mentions "feet" in the sense we have to walk in this world. That means that we as Christians must interact with nonbelievers. In that interaction (think of being around nonbelievers when you think of the word "walk" here), we need God's protection.
 - b) The idea of God's peace is that we don't have to worry about the results of our lives, if we accept the idea that He is in charge of our lives. To put this in context of spiritual warfare, we don't have to worry about whether or not we win or lose such spiritual battles, because we are trusting in God and He can lead us to victory in such battles.
 - c) Think of it this way: When things are going wrong, we still have to make the best decisions possible given the information at hand. We have no idea whether or not there are demonic forces behind whatever we are dealing with in life.
 - i) The peace we have is knowing we still have to work through the situations we face but the results are God's business, and therefore, we can have peace at such times.

15. Verse 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.
- a) Roman shields were made out of wood. The shields were large and square in shape. Soldiers would combine their shields to form a big "turtle shell" for protection. Enemies would fire flaming arrows at those shields to get them to catch on fire. The illustration here is God's shield is "coated" enough to withstand any "flaming arrow" thrown at us.
 - i) Think back to my illustration about having bad thoughts while in prayer. The idea is that the power of God will not prevent such thoughts from entering our mind, but God gives the power to withstand the "flames of such demonic arrows". That power is by giving such bad thoughts to God to deal with in the first place.
 - ii) A biblical quote would be good here: "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians (10:5b, NIV).
 - b) It is also important to state again that Roman shields work best in "unison". As their army they would put their shields together when they attack in formation. In a similar way, our "shields" work best when we pray with other Christians for God's protection.
16. Verse 17: Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
- a) A helmet protects the head. The idea is we know about our own salvation and that information is stored in our brains. We must protect that knowledge from the demonic forces that want to discourage us to be good witnesses for Jesus. The way we stand strong against lies told about our relationship with God is to regularly be involved in God's word, prayer and time spent with other Christian believers. The idea is to remind ourselves of the knowledge of the truth to protect us from demonic based lies.
 - i) The idea is that we are asking God to protect our head (knowledge) from lies.
 - b) The second concept in this verse is the "Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God".
 - i) Since Paul explains what he meant by "sword", I don't have to add a lot to this other than to say it applies to the word of God.
 - ii) It is interesting to note that the Greek word translated sword, is not the long sword that we visualize medieval knights using to fight. The word used for swords here is a small sword that Romans used in hand-to-hand combat.
 - iii) My point here is that the bible is only valuable if we know how to use it. That means to be able to read and understand biblical passages in context that they were meant in the first place. I don't think it is about memorizing the whole bible, as much as it is about properly understanding the concepts it teaches us.
 - iv) Remember that when Paul wrote this letter, there was no New Testament. The point is that God wants us to make an effort to learn as much of Scripture that we can and properly apply them to our lives.
17. Verse 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 saints.
- a) Remember that the topic at hand is how to battle against demonic forces. One way we combat such forces is by praying for ourselves and for other believers.
 - b) Think of it this way: We may have a friend or family member on the other side of the world. In effect, we can be with them by praying over them at any time.
 - c) When I think of prayer, I think of getting God's will (and not my will) done. I don't know what God has planned for me or for others I pray for, so I pray for His will to be done.
 - i) I pray for people I know who are sick. I pray for other Christians in my church who I don't even know very well and I pray for missionaries I know or read of.
 - ii) I find the best time to pray for someone is when they are "fresh on our minds". If someone asks us to pray for them, the best time is right there on the spot.
 - d) Next Paul asks us to keep on praying for the saints. Do we do that because God forgets our prayers? Of course not. We do that, to remind ourselves that we battle spiritual forces and it keeps our minds on that battle by praying for other believers.

18. Verse 19: 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,²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.
- a) Notice Paul did not ask for prayer to be released from prison. He probably looked at his guard as someone he could witness to, and that guard can't run away from him. ☺
 - b) Paul also understood that hearts don't change without prayer. When we pray for those on the "front lines" working for God, we not only should pray for them regularly, but also pray that such people be effective in what God calls them to do. We pray that God's will be done through their lives, as we want God's will done through our own lives.
 - c) When Paul said he is an "ambassador in chains" I don't think he was referring to his literal chains. Paul understood his job was to do God's will, and in effect he is God's prisoner. In a previous lesson, I recently used the idea of being a prisoner of God as a topic title, so I won't repeat that concept here.
19. Verse 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.
- a) If Paul was chained to a Roman soldier, he must have dictated this letter to someone. This person was named Tychicus, who would hand deliver this letter to the Ephesians. Paul spent years in Ephesus so he knew lots of people there. Paul sent Tychicus to Ephesus to report how Paul was actually doing in prison. Paul's point is that the visit of this man would encourage Christians there to pray for each other and for Paul.
 - b) I doubt Paul ever imagined millions of people reading or studying this letter. It was probably just intended for Christians living in and near Ephesus.
20. Verse 23: Peace to the brothers, 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.
- a) Paul opened this letter with a blessing of "Grace and Peace" and closes it with similar words and an explanation of what Paul means by grace and peace. The idea of this ending is that we know understand all of the power that God has given us as believers, and we use that power (think of power as a synonym for "grace and peace" here) to go live and make a difference for God.
 - b) The idea is to use the power of God to guide us in our relationships with people and even with fighting forces we cannot see or fully comprehend in life. Do we fully understand who or what it is we battle in life? Of course not. The good news is God does understand it, and we can draw on His strength and power to deal with whatever issues or people we have to deal with in our lives. On that happy note, I'll end this letter.
21. Dear God, we ask for your guidance in our relationships. Help us in our family relationships. Help us in the relationships with people we are forced to deal with. Help us to be good witnesses for You even when we struggle in such relationships. Finally, we ask for Your help in dealing with relationships in the spiritual world. We ask for Your protection and guidance as we face against demonic forces. Help us to remember that we can have victory in such situation because we are trusting in You to win those battles for us. Guide us, as we live to make a difference for You. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.
22. For those of you who are new to my studies, the final page of my final lesson on any book lists the sources I have used to prepare this study. That list is on the next page. Read if interested. Thanks, John.

Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. I also have been reading the English Standard Version. (ESV) The copyright information for the ESV is in point #6 below. All the bible text (except the ESV) is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on the Ephesians are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to "audio" commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on Ephesians by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>
2. Commentary on Ephesians by Bob Davies. They are available in MP3® format at http://northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/tapelist.php?book_id=49
3. Commentary on Ephesians by David Guzik. It is available for free in text and audio format. The web address is <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/49.htm>.
4. Commentary on Ephesians by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>. Also available at firefighters.org/html/library.cfm
5. The Defender's Study Bible by Dr. Henry Morris World Publishing (1995) ISBN: 052910444X
6. The English Standard Version Study Bible Copyright (2005-2009) The Standard Bible Society. The version itself is copyrighted 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publication of "Good News Publishers"
7. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source.
8. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm
9. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
10. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999
11. I also refer to Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry, which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org.