



This Sunday we finished our Autumn series in Ephesians on something of a damp squib. Rather than a final rousing paragraph urging the church to press on and step out in faith – Paul warns them of the reality of the work of the devil and of their need to stand firm.

We noted that v10-11 set the agenda for the verses and then the v12-20 show us how to do that.

Be strong in the Lord (v10-11)

We noted that after 5 chapters of Paul rejoicing and applying the gospel to end on the devil, was a strange thing. Except – they need to be aware of the battle that they are in – being church is hard, in part because the devil loves to turn Ephesians on its head, creating disunity and division, making us unforgiving and bitter with each other, urging us to stand on our rights and not submit or not lovingly lead. And so the call for us to ‘stand’ (here and also in v13) is not a call for inactivity – but rather it’s a call to remain where the gospel has put us. And how do we do that? 3 things...

1. How? Know your enemy (v12)

To be forewarned is to be forearmed and so initially Paul urges the Ephesians to wake up and have an awareness of the reality of the battle that they are in. We see flesh and blood – the reality is there are powers behind them. Our struggle is against them.

2. Put on your gospel armour (v13-17)

We’re a forgetful people – we noted how the armour that Paul lists and outlines all tie back in with the gospel (and various themes of the letter). Thus each of the parts he describes (belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel boots, shield of faith, helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit – the word of truth) are – in one sense – nothing special – they are all things that the Christian already has. In the midst of these things, the devil wants us to forget them, move on from them or doubt them. For example rather than truth he will sell you lies about everything (your sin, your God – everything) or the temptations, doubts and disbeliefs that he throws as fiery darts. For each we are to counter them with truth. Remember you are righteous in Christ. The only offensive aspect of the kit is the sword, which is the word of truth. We spoke of the need both corporately and individually to not neglect the word.

3. Pray in the Spirit (v18-20)

Paul urges the Ephesians to pray these verses – he asks them to pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests for all the Lords people. We noted that to pray in the Spirit means to the Father, by the Son, in the Spirit and so is praying in lien with Gods will, aware of the spiritual nature of the battle that we find ourselves in. It’s on all occasions because we’re never not in a battle and it’s for all people because there’s no special category of people - you never become immune to the battle.

Paul’s prayer for himself is for courage (not fearlessly) and clarity (to speak well). We noted that this section parallels the section in Colossians 4 that we looked at in September as we thought about the kind of church we want to be this year in speaking to people about God.

Here are just a few questions that might get things going, please feel very free to ignore / adapt for your group:

What have been your key challenges and encouragements from Ephesians?
Do you think much or have an awareness that you’re in a spiritual battle? Why / why not?

V10-11

What does it mean for Paul to say ‘be strong in the Lord’?
How are we to *stand*? What do you think he means by the devils schemes?

V12

What does Paul mean in this verse?
What would it have meant in Ephesus? What would it mean for us?

V13-17

Why does he describe armour in these verses?
What is this armour? How are we ‘dress ourselves’ in this armour?
If you were the devil, how would you take you down?

V18-20

What does Paul urge them specifically to pray for?
Why does he want them to pray for these things?
How are we to pray so *consistently* all the time?

Mention & pray for 1 thing to take away from this study.