

Ephesians Chapter 6

God's Divine Pattern For Relationships: Parent and Child- Ephesians 6:1-4

Paul continues his discussion regarding submission in the body of Christ by turning to the relationship between children and parents. This is the second area of mutual submission which is to exist as a result of being filled with the Spirit. Although there is a clear line of authority between parents and child, as there is between husband and wife, nevertheless even within those lines of authority there is to be a mutuality of submission. Children are to obey their parents, but parents are not to abuse and exasperate their children. Wives are to submit themselves to their husbands, but husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. Employees are to submit to their employer, but employers are to treat their employees with respect and consideration as well.

The Command - Ephesians 6:1a

Children, obey your parents in the Lord:

Unlike the relationship between the wife and the husband, which is one of voluntary submission, children are commanded to obey their parents. The word for obey, *huperakouo*, means to “listen under or obey without question.” The word for submit in Ephesians 5:21 and inferred in Ephesians 5:22, is that of *hupotasso*, which means to “line up under.” Children are to obey their parents without question, wives are to voluntarily submit to the husband. The point here is one of degree. There is no passage in the Bible which commands a woman to “obey” her husband like there is for children. Rather, the Bible teaches that the wife is to voluntarily submit to her husband’s leadership, but that is not a blind submission, nor does it have the character of unquestioning obedience. The woman is to be a helpmeet for her husband, sharing her wisdom and insights with her husband. The child is to be in strict subservience to their parents, obeying them whether they have a knowledge of why or not.

Reason #1 - It Is Right - Ephesians 6:1b

for this is right.

Having just commanded children to obey, Paul now gives two reasons why this obedience is required. The first reason is given at the end of verse one and is simply stated as “it is right.” In most societies today it is assumed that children are to obey their parents. In fact, no ancient or modern society has as one of its basic beliefs the notion that children are to be independent of their parents control and authority. Only in our modern culture are we starting to believe that children should have equal rights to that of parents, and be able to make all of their own choices whether they have the ability to make right choices or not.

Reason #2 - It Is Commanded - Ephesians 6:2

Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

A second reason children are to obey their parents is that it is commanded by God. In the decalogue we find the commandment given, “Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” Later on in the explanation of

the law, it was made very clear that an insubordinate or disobedient child was to be put to death. In other words, disobeying one's parents or cursing them was a capital offense in God's eyes (Exodus 21:15-17). Christ condemned the Pharisees for invalidating the law of God by withholding support from their elderly parents under the pretense that they had committed their wealth to God (Matthew 15:3-6).

Interestingly, the command to honor one's parents was the first commandment given with a promise (Exodus 20:12). Children who obey their parents are more likely to be successful in life as well as avoid many of the traps and pitfalls which befall those who are disobedient to parents. Also, obedience to one's parents brings the blessing of God whereas disobedience to one's parents brings a curse.

Thus the child's responsibility to their parents is clear, they are to obey them in all things as well as honor them. To do so is not only right, it is commanded by God.

Reasons It Is Wise For Children To Honor Parents¹

1. A child who obeys his parents will be regularly protected from harm.
2. A child who obeys his parents will be protected from bad habits and influences.
3. A child who obeys his parents will be more likely to develop positive character traits.

The Parent's Responsibility - Ephesians 6:4

And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Whereas the child is commanded to obey the parent, the parent is commanded to bring the child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The word for nurture, *paidea*, refers to discipline. Biblical discipline is not to be seen as something negative, but as something positive. Often when we think of discipline, we think of the negative aspect of punishment. However, the Biblical concept of discipline, as it relates to a child, has more to do with the positive inculcation of divine truth and principles than it does to the negative aspect of punishment.

In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 we read, "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." Note the continual aspect of teaching that the parent is to do with the child. Wherever, and whenever there is opportunity, the parent is to be instilling into the heart of the child God's divine truth. This is seen in verse 20-21 of the same chapter, "And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand...". One of the reasons the parents are to teach their children is so the child will not forget God as they see God's faithfulness in history.

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), pp. 198-99.

The second word used in Ephesians 6:4 is that of admonition. This word is *nouthesia*, and means “instruction.” One of the greatest gifts a parent can give their child is instruction in the Word of God. Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:15, “*And that from a child thou hast know the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*” Apparently Timothy’s mother and grandmother instilled in him a love for the Word of God and a knowledge of the truth from a very early age. Most likely one of the main reasons Timothy was such an important and essential figure in the early church was the fact that he was groomed for the position from the time he was a young child until the day he replaced Paul. The legacy of Timothy’s parents lived on.

Why is discipline and instruction necessary? It is so the father will not exasperate his child. Children who are brought up without discipline and instruction become exasperated. Parents who fail to discipline their children pay not only a high price themselves, but their child pays the price of an undisciplined life.

How Parents Exasperate Their Children²

Unreasonableness - parents load their children with too many rules or regulations, or constantly push their children beyond their capabilities.

Fault-finding - parents constantly nitpick and criticize their children even when the child does well.

Neglect - parents are too busy with their own lives to spend time with their children.

Inconsistency - parents make promises only to break them or are inconsistent in their discipline.

Overprotection - parents do not allow their children to suffer some of the bumps and scrapes of life.

Favoritism - parents sometimes favor one child over the other thus producing bitterness and resentment.

Discouragement - parents sometimes discourage their children from the dreams by telling them they will never make it.

Stereotyping - parents sometimes do not allow their children to be themselves but try to force them into being something the parent wants instead.

Bitter Words and Physical Abuse - sometimes parents abuse their children physically and vocally.

God’s Divine Pattern For Relationships: Employees and Employers - Ephesians 6:5-8

The final area in which Paul discusses the topic of mutual submission is that of employers and employees. Although in the Biblical sense the terms used were master and slave, the concepts

² R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians*, (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 200 and William Hendricksen, *Galatians and Ephesians*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), pp. 261-62.

and principles carry over into the employer/employee sphere today. The only real difference today is that we have more freedom in choosing our masters.

The Command - Ephesians 6:5

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh,

As with the start of each section regarding mutual submission, Paul directs his command to the one who is to submit first (wives were to submit to husbands, children are to obey parents, employees are to obey employers). Also, as with children, the word for “obey” is *hupoakouo*, which means unquestioning obedience. There is no allowance for insubordination or grudging acquiescence to one’s employer. Paul summarizes the responsibility of an employee to their employer using four adverbs: respectfully, sincerely, conscientiously, and pleasantly.

Respectfully - Ephesians 6:5b

with fear and trembling,

The idea behind “fear and trembling” is not an irrational or quaking fear, but an attitude of respect and honor. Employees are to treat their employers with respect and deference as a testimony to God. Furthermore, this respect is to be given regardless of the character of the employer (or boss). We read in 1 Peter 2:18, “*Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the perverse.*” Why is this necessary? It is so can exhibit godly character not only to our employer, but also to the world around us as they observe our behavior. This is seen in Titus 2:9-10 where Paul commands Titus to, “*Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*” The idea behind what Paul is telling Titus is that when servants are obedient to their masters and treat them with respect and honor, they adorn the doctrine of God. What doctrine is that? It is “*the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men.*” When employees take advantage of their employers and mistreat them or show them disrespect, it brings dishonor upon the name of Christ and makes the gospel something to be avoided rather than something to be accepted.

Sincerely - Ephesians 6:5c

in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

The second attitude an employee is to have towards their employer is one of sincerity. The parallel passage in Colossians 3:22 has the same idea, “*in singleness of heart, fearing God.*” The idea behind this is that when we obey our employers and treat them sincerely and with respect, we are actually treating the Lord with sincerity and respect. Why? Because when we obey our employers, we are actually obeying Christ. Even if our employer is an unbeliever and one who may mistreat and abuse us, nevertheless when we obey him, we are obeying Christ.

Conscientiously - Ephesians 6:6

Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

Thirdly, we are to obey our employers even when they are not looking. It is easy to be busy when the boss is around in order to look good or get that next promotion, but it is another thing to be diligent in one’s service when the boss is not there. Believers are to be diligent workers

whether or not the boss is present. Why? It is so we do the “will of God from the heart.” It is God’s will that we be diligent and conscientious workers.

Again, the reason for this is that when we obey our employers, we are actually obeying Christ. Since Christ is ever-present with us, in a sense our “ultimate boss” is always there. As a result, when we work to please Christ, we will work to please our employer and as a result of that we will adorn the doctrine of God. Colossians 3:23 tells us, “*And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men.*” We should attack each task given to us by our employer as though we were given that task by Christ.

A note of caution is in order at this point. It is possible that some of us may work for Christian bosses. What should our attitude be towards them? Pauls tells us in 1 Timothy 6:1-2, “*Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren: but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit.*” Instead of treating a believer boss as a buddy, or as an equal, the Christian employee is to treat his Christian employer with double honor, working as hard for him as he would for an unbeliever. For a Christian employee to take advantage of a Christian employer is to blaspheme the doctrine of God. It is true that in the body of Christ all our equals, nevertheless in the workplace God has ordained employers and employees.

Pleasantly - Ephesians 6:7-8

With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men: Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.

The final attitude an employee is to have is that of pleasantness. It is one thing to obey one’s employer in order to keep one’s job, or to get a promotion, it is another thing to obey one’s employer with cheerfulness. Many times we exhibit an attitude of grudging obedience, or attempt to do just enough to keep from being fired or to lose a promotion. The believer, on the other hand, is to cheerfully and pleasantly obey their employer in just the same was as they would cheerfully and pleasantly obey Christ.

Why should we obey our employers pleasantly and cheerfully? It is because we will receive of the Lord according to how we obey our employers. God will reward us according to our faithfulness, whether our employer is good or bad. If we desire to be commended by God, then our attitude towards obedience to our employer needs to be one of cheerfulness and pleasantness.

Employers - Ephesians 6:9

And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

Paul finally turns to employers, or masters, and commands them to treat their employees with the same respect that their employees are to show to them. This is the golden rule of management. When an employer treats the employee well, then the employee will do their best for the employer.

How is an employer to treat their employee? It is without threatening. The idea here is that the employer should not constantly threaten the employee with disciplinary action, unless of course the employee is not doing their job. Some employers only know how to berate and

criticize their employees, not knowing that one positive complement will cause an employee to work all the more harder to be a good employee.

Underlying the employer's treatment of their employee should be the realization that they themselves are under God. They should desire to treat their employees with the same attitude and action that they would want God to treat them. And how does God treat them? He treats them without respect of persons. In other words, God does not have two sets of rules, one for employees and the other for employers. Rather, he has one set of rules and all will be judged without distinction. Employers will not receive special treatment by God, rather they will be treated exactly the same as anyone else.

Spiritual Warfare - A Biblical Perspective

Before we actually get into Ephesians 6:10-20, we need to step back and take a look at the subject of spiritual warfare as taught in the Bible. The concept of Spiritual Warfare has become one of the main areas of attention in modern times. Fueled by the popular books by Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing The Darkness*, many have concluded that believers are engaged in an invisible war with highly organized legions of demons. They have come to the conclusion that demons are in control of major nations, cities, and governmental institutions. As a result, many believers are looking to a new breed of warrior, the "Spiritual Warfare Specialist," to help them understand the enemy and how to meet him. Because of the popularity of this movement, it is necessary to subject it to close examination in light of the Scriptures, and see what is really true, and what is false.

What We Are Told

1. Satan is the major cause of all physical disease and lack of blessings for believers. In many circles the path to healing is taught to be the process of identifying and casting out the demons of disease (although many would just say that one of the major causes of disease is demonic oppression).

The Hunters [Charles and Frances] provides a case in point: "When a doctor says there is no cure, our spiritual antennas pick up the fact that it is a spirit." They have concluded that all incurable diseases are caused by evil spirits. Demons inhabit not only people, but also homes, cars, and other mechanical devices. This produces great consternation for the believer who wants to experience blessings promised to him (Ken L. Sarles, "A Theological Evaluation of the Prosperity Gospel" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 [Oct.-Dec. 1986]:336, 344-45).

2. The world is under the control of territorial demons. Each nation, region, city, and town has its own demon in charge of demonic activity in that area. It is not possible to successfully fight these demons unless one knows of their existence and name.³
3. The way to overcome Satan is by power encounters. These are miraculous and often spectacular encounters between good and evil, God and Satan. Some say that without these power encounters the gospel message itself is ineffective in leading men to salvation. Note the following quote taken from the *Los Angeles Times*:

Under the militant banner of "spiritual warfare," growing numbers of evangelical and charismatic Christian leaders are preparing broad assaults on what they call the cosmic powers of darkness.

Fascinated with the notion that Satan commands a hierarchy of territorial demons, some mission agencies and big-church pastors are devising strategies for "breaking the strongholds" of those evil spirits alleged to be controlling cities and countries.

Some proponents in the fledgling movement already maintain that focused prayer meetings have ended the curse of the Bermuda triangle, led to the 1987 downfall in Oregon of the free-love

³ Dean Sherman, *Spiritual Warfare for Every Christian*, (Seattle: Frontline Communications, 1990), p. 87ff.

guru Baghwan Shree Rahneesh, and for the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, produced a two-week drop in the crime rate, a friendly atmosphere and unclogged freeways.

This is not the cinematic story line for a religious sequel to "Ghostbusters II," yet the developing scenario does have a fictional influence: interest in spiritual warfare has been heightened by two best-selling novels in Christian bookstores. "This Present Darkness" by Frank Peretti, describes the religious fight against "territorial spirits mobilized to dominate a small town." A second Peretti novel has a similar premise.

Fuller Seminary Prof. C. Peter Wagner, who has written extensively on the subject, led a "summit" meeting on cosmic-level spiritual warfare Monday in Pasadena with two dozen men and women, including a Texas couple heading a group called the "Generals of Intercession" and an Oregon man who conducts "spiritual warfare bootcamps" (John Dart, "Evangelicals, Charismatics Prepare for Spiritual Warfare," 17 February 1990, F16).

Mark Bubeck, an evangelical writer relates this experience:

I often found myself crying out to God for revival during extended sessions of prayer. In the midst of one such prayer session an unusual, strong spiritual awareness suddenly overwhelmed me. I don't know how else to describe it. Although I did not hear a voice, there was a powerful communication to my spirit: *Before a revival like the one for which you are praying can come, there will have to be a strong encounter with Satan.*⁴

4. Christians are to take the offensive against Satan. We should seek out and engage the enemy face to face. Just as Christ delivered men from the power of Satan, so should we deliver men from demonic oppression.⁵
5. Homes that we move into may be infested with demons because of some occult activity years and years before. The sensitive believer can recognize and exorcise these demons through the power of the Word and Christ.⁶
6. We may be the victims of generational curses. Sins that our forefathers engaged in may be specifically energized by Satan. This means that it is possible for us to be victimized by demonic forces in many areas of our lives without our knowledge or permission.⁷
7. Christians can be "forced" to sin by demonic oppression. Jimmy Swaggart was exorcised of the demons of lust by Oral Roberts over the phone. This removes the responsibility for sin from us and places it on demons.
8. Specific sins are energized by demons who specialize in that area. For example, we are introduced to the demons of lust, greed, homosexuality, hate, murder, stealing, and every other vice that victimizes men by many leaders in the spiritual warfare movement.

Who needs deliverance? Anyone in the lineage of Adam has inherited the iniquity (ungodly desire) of his father (Ex. 20:5, 6). Without deliverance by Truth this person is in bondage, unreality, deception, negativity, foolishness, sickness, and evil, and he doesn't even know it...

In deliverance we are released from the spirits and desires that twist our heart and deceive our mind. What is a "spirit?" Anger is a spirit. Irritation and self-pity are spirits. Hatred, jealousy, illness, worry, deception, arrogance, fear, rebellion, resentment, phobia, shyness, conceit, confusion, smugness, sadness, accusation, addiction, pride, cruelty, legalism, homosexuality, religiosity, complaining, lying are all names of spirits.

Every word in the dictionary that describes any kind of evil, wicked intent, or sin against God is the name of a demon or evil spirit...If at any time in your life you have ever expressed any such spirit or desire, then you still have it hidden inside, unless you have been delivered from it (*The Truth In Deliverance* [Austin, Texas: Alpha-Omega Energies, n.d.], pp. 3-4).

⁴ Mark Bubeck, *The Satanic Revival*, (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishing, 1991), p. 11.

⁵ James Robison, *Winning The Real War*, (Lake Mary Florida: Creation House, 1991), pp. 115ff.

⁶ Thomas B. White, *The Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, (Ann Arbor: Servant Publications, 1990), pp. 90ff.

⁷ White, pp. 81ff.

9. Believers have the power to bind Satan and pray hedges of protection about themselves and loved ones. In many places this has become a common method of dealing with sins. Instead of repenting of fornication we are told to bind the demon of lust. Again, this removes the responsibility of sin from us and pins it on a demon.
10. We are encouraged to learn prayers of deliverance specifically designed to combat Satan and demons. In fact, there are whole books given over to specific prayers that one can “fill in the blanks” and use.⁸

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of His blood, I pull down all levels of the stronghold of _____. [Choose items from the following list of areas of Satan’s strongholds that you desire to pull down and smash. You may think of other things—the list is suggestive, not exhaustive.]⁹

Two Errors To Avoid

When approaching the subject of Spiritual Warfare there are two extreme errors to avoid. This is best brought out in C.S. Lewis’ book, *The Screwtape Letters*:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors, and hail a materialist or magician with the same delight.¹⁰

Error # 1 - All Evil Is a Result of Direct Demonic Forces

This view puts a demon “behind every bush.” Whenever anything bad happens, it is directly the result of demonic activity. Whenever we sin, it is because “the Devil made me do it.” All natural disasters find their source in demonic activity. Natural results of this viewpoint are:

- An excessive interest in the demonic.
- A feeling of constant oppression.
- A tendency to write personal sin off as the result of a demon.
- A tendency to “second-guess” all bad events as to why Satan is doing them or what we can do to counter them.
- A tendency to attribute physical disease to Satan, and the role of the believer is to deliver people from those demons.

Error #2 - Satan is Minimally Involved in the Evil in this World

This view minimizes the activity of Satan. Unfortunately, it directly contradicts the clear teaching of Scripture that Satan and his demons are involved in evil in this world. Natural results of this viewpoint are:

- A failure to recognize that Satan is indeed involved in a cosmic struggle with God.
- A failure to realize that bad events could be caused by Satan.

⁸ White, pp. 113ff.

⁹ Bubeck, pp. 182-84.

¹⁰ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, (New York: MacMillan, 1961), p. 3.

- A tendency to fight the Christian battle in our own strength rather than rely on the power of the Holy Spirit.
- A dulling of the realization of the battle we find ourselves in as believers.

What The Bible Teaches About Satan

1. **Satan hinders the believer - 1 Thessalonians 2:18.**
2. **Satan can tempt the believer on occasions - Luke 22:31-32.**
3. **Satan deceives believers and unbelievers alike - 2 Corinthians 11:3; 14-15.**
4. **Satan can cause physical diseases - Luke 13:11-17; 9:37-43.**
5. **Satan can persecute and oppress the believer - 2 Corinthians 4:8-11; Revelation 2:10.**
6. **Satan's forces are highly organized - Ephesians 6:12; Colossians 2:15.**
7. **Satan is the ruler of this world, the prince of the power of the air - Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.**
8. **Satan can be resisted by the believer in the power of God - James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 4:4.**
9. **Satan is a defeated foe - Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15.**
10. **Satan perverts God's Word - Matthew 4:4-11; Genesis 3:1-5.**
11. **Satan blinds the unconverted - 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.**
12. **Satan snatches away Gospel truth from those hearing it - Matthew 13:19.**
13. **Satan is limited by God - Job 1:6-12; 2:1-6.**
14. **Satan propogates false doctrine - 1 Timothy 4:1-2.**
15. **Satan accuses the believer before the throne of God - Revelation 12:10; Zechariah 3:1.**
16. **Satan can cause natural disasters - Job 1:19.**
17. **Satan can demonize men, but the Scriptures do not teach that demons can indwell believers**

There is no clear example in the Bible where a demon ever inhabited or invaded a true believer. Never in the New Testament epistles are believers warned about the possibility of being inhabited by demons. Neither do we see anyone rebuking, binding, or casting demons out of a true believer. The epistles never instruct believers to cast out demons, whether from a believer or unbeliever. Christ and the apostles were the only ones who cast out

demons, and in every instance the demon-possessed person was an unbeliever.¹¹

18. God may use Satan as His instrument of divine judgment - 1 Samuel 16:14; 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:18-20.

19. We can give Satan an "advantage" by involving ourselves in sin - Ephesians 4:26-27.

Excesses of the Spiritual Warfare Movement - A Biblical Critique

1. The Spiritual Warfare movement places too much emphasis on Satan as the cause for personal sin and too little emphasis on the flesh.

Although we are told in the Bible that our three major enemies are the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, we must understand that without the Flesh, Satan would not be able to tempt us to sin as many think he does. Without the Flesh, the World would lose its power over the believer. Our major enemy as a Christian is our own fallenness. Throughout the New Testament Paul talks about his struggle with his Flesh, not with the World or Satan. James tells us in James 1:13-15 that it is through the flesh that we are tempted, *in and of ourselves*. We do not need Satan to be tempted to sin. Our flesh is sufficient to tempt us to do any sin. The classic passage on the power of the flesh is found in Romans 7:13-23:

Romans 7:13-23 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that {it is} good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

The struggle between sin and the believer takes the form of three woes or laments in this passage. These three laments start with "For we know" (verse 14), "For I know" (verse 18), and "I find then" (verse 21). In each of the three woes we find a condition, a proof of that condition, and a resultant struggle with that condition.

Woe Number 1 - Sold Under Sin - Romans 7:14-17

The first woe described by Paul is the fact of his own carnality. Carnality is used to refer to the fact that all believers still retain the sinful flesh from which springs all manner of evil. At first, this concept may sound like it contradicts Romans 6 in which Paul proves that we are dead to the sin principle, but in actuality it does not.

The reason for this is that although we have indeed become dead to the sin principle, we still reside in our physical bodies with all of it's sinful desires and habits. Although we have been

¹¹ John MacArthur, *How To Meet The Enemy*, (Victor Books, 1990), p. 22.

freed from the obligation to serve it, we still must say "no" whenever it makes demands on us. This is the paradox of the Christian life. Although God has given us power over the flesh, we must choose to obey God instead of the flesh. This is the struggle Paul mentions in verses 15-16. He knows what he is to do, the problem is that he does not always do it. Verse 16 states that his failure to do that which is right does not make the law bad, it just shows his own evil. The source of that evil is found in verse 17, the sin that dwells in Paul.

How can that be! Paul spent a whole chapter, (chapter 6), showing that we are dead to sin and have been freed from its bondage to serve Christ. How can he turn around in chapter 7 and state that sin still dwells in us? The answer to this is to understand the difference between the sin principle, the new life of the believer, and the flesh.

When we were justified before God, the sin principle within us was crucified with Christ. This can be understood as the old man. 2 Corinthians 5:17 specifically states that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation". In other words, the sin principle in the life of a believer has been rendered inoperative. On the other hand, anyone who is in Christ has had a new life created within them. This can be understood as the new man. Lastly, the flesh is that part of us in which the sin principle held sway and as a result is still under the influence of what it finds natural, that is, sin.

By understanding these differences, we can understand verse 17. Paul, the new Paul created in Christ, does not nor cannot sin. However, the part of Paul consisting of his flesh can do nothing but sin. It is here where we find the struggle. It is not between an old nature and a new nature within us, instead it is between the flesh and our spirit.

Woe Number 2 - The Garment of Flesh - Romans 7:18-20

The second woe is the filthy garment of sinful flesh that we reside in. Paul states very specifically that it is his flesh in which no good thing dwells. His spirit desires righteousness, but his humanness hinders the expression of that desire. We will not say more about this since the preceding quote pretty much explains the fact that our flesh is the real culprit in our sin, not our spirit.

Woe Number 3 - The Principle of Sin in Our Flesh - Romans 7:21-23

The third woe is the principle of sin which resides in our members. This fits with our previous assertion that the source of sin in our lives is the flesh in which we reside, not the sin principle which was nailed to the cross. The word "law" in these verses can be best translated "principle". Paul finds two principles, the principle of sin in his members, and the principle of the spirit in his mind.

Paul describes the condition of his life that whenever he would do good, evil was close at hand. We have the same problem. Evil is not very far from us in word, deed, or action. Verse 22 shows Paul's true attitude towards the law, that of delight. For the true Christian the law of God is something that is eagerly obeyed from a heart of love, not obligation. Unfortunately, we have the principle of sin which wars against this desire and it is here where the conflict is joined.

2. The Spiritual Warfare movement encourages believers to become familiar with Satanism and the occult, a practice clearly forbidden by the Bible.
3. The Spiritual Warfare movement falls to a mystical form of Christianity when it teaches that we can pray hedges and bind Satan.

4. The Spiritual Warfare movement incorrectly seeks out encounters with Satan when it assumes that we have unlimited authority over Satan through the power of Christ.
5. The Spiritual Warfare movement attributes many results of the fall, such as death, disease, and natural disasters, to the direct work of Satan.
6. Nowhere does the Bible indicate the existence of territorial demons.

Scripture implies that Satan's hordes are highly regimented (cf. Eph 6:12), but nowhere does the Bible say that Satan has assigned them to every geo-political unit. Nowhere does the Bible give an example of a believer confronting or rebuking geographical demons. Nowhere does God's Word say that we are to command demons to give up any territory. In fact, nothing in Scripture offers any instructions for territorial warfare. No self-styled "expert" in the practice can legitimately claim to have gained his knowledge or skills from the Bible.¹²

7. Nowhere in the Scriptures are we told to confront Satan in "power encounters."

Spiritual Warfare - Ephesians 6:10-20

We now turn to the subject of spiritual warfare as depicted in Ephesians 6:10-20. In these verses we find the call to battle, the armor of God, and the provision of prayer.

The Call to Battle - Ephesians 6:10-12.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Paul closes the book of Ephesians with a call to spiritual warfare. For the believer, our entire life is one that is spent in battle in one way or another. If we are not fighting our own fallen flesh and its lusts, we are fighting the world. If the world lets up a little bit, we are fighting Satan. If things are light on that front, we are fighting both the world and our flesh. Our entire life is just one big fight. This is what Paul had in mind in 2 Timothy 4:7 in which he writes, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Paul was somewhat glad that his lifelong struggle was about to be over. In 1 Timothy 1:18, Paul tells Timothy, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare" and later on in 2 Timothy 2:1-5 Paul likens the Christian life to that of a soldier. However, in perhaps no other passage than this one, is the picture of spiritual warfare so vividly described.

What is our provision for this battle? It is the armor of God. Paul uses the metaphor of a soldier's armor to describe God's provision for us as we fight the noble war. God had not left us defenseless, but has given us sufficient protection to assure us of victory. There is no excuse for losing the battle. Using the armor of God we are able to stand, *histemi*, against the schemes of the devil. The word for stand, *histemi*, refers to the ability to stand unmovable and sure. We can be unmoved and stable against Satan's attacks through the provision of the armor that God has given to us.

Who is our battle against? It is against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual wickedness in high places. These are all terms used to refer to the demonic powers arrayed against us.¹³ Although it is true that oftentimes our battles appear to be with other men, or

¹² MacArthur, *How To Meet The Enemy*, p. 43.

¹³ John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), pp. 340-43.

humanistic philosophies, nevertheless the mastermind behind it all is Satan. He is the one who is the ultimate source of all rebellion in the universe, and he is the one who is ultimately behind all the scheming. The word for wiles, *methodia*, refers to schemes or strategic plans. It has the idea of stealth and deception.¹⁴ Satan's number one strategy is to deceive and destroy.

The Armor of God - Ephesians 6:13-17

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Before Paul describes the spiritual armor that we have, he exhorts us to take it and use it. It is one thing to have been given the armor, it is quite another to take it up and use it. Many times we fail in our spiritual battle with sin and Satan because we do not take advantage of the provision of God. We refuse to use the power he has given us. If, on the other hand, we take up the whole armor of God, we are able to stand in the evil day. Note, however, that we must take up the whole armor of God, not just a bit and a piece here and there. It would be silly for a soldier to prepare for battle only to leave his sword at home, or forget his breastplate, or go into battle barefoot. The success of our warfare hinges upon us taking the whole armor of God.

In his discussion of the armor, Paul divides it into two groups. The first group is introduced with the word "having" and includes the Belt of Truth, The Breastplate of Righteousness, and the Shoes of the Gospel. "Having" is an aorist verb which means that the believer is to never be without these pieces of armor. The second group is introduced with the word, "take up" and includes the Helmet of Salvation, the Shield of Faith, and the Sword of the Spirit. This refers to the fact that these pieces of armor are to be taken up when the battle is joined.

How Satan Attacks Believers¹⁵

- 1. Satan attempts to impugn God's character and credibility - Genesis 3:1, 5.**
- 2. Satan tries to undermine present victory by causing trouble that tempts us to forsake obedience to God's standards and calling.**
- 3. Satan attacks believers through doctrinal falsehood and confusion - Ephesians 4:14.**
- 4. Satan attacks believers by hindering them in their service to God - 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 12:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:18.**
- 5. Satan attacks believers by causing divisions - John 17:11, 21-23; 1 Corinthians 1-3.**
- 6. Satan attacks believers by persuading them to trust their own resources - 1 Chronicles 21:1-8.**
- 7. Satan attacks believers by leading them into hypocrisy.**
- 8. Satan attacks believers by leading them into worldliness - Romans 12:1-2.**
- 9. Satan attacks believers by leading them to disobey God's word.**

¹⁴ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, p. 338.

¹⁵ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 345-48.

The Belt of Truth - Ephesians 6:14a

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...

The first piece of armor that we are given is the belt of truth. This refers to the attitude of genuineness and ready commitment that is to mark the believer at all times.¹⁶ The belt, to a Roman soldier, was a necessary piece of equipment as it was designed to hold up his tunic, keep his robe from flopping around on the ground, and serve as a place to attach his weapons. Whenever the soldier prepared for battle he would tuck his tunic into his belt. To be “girded up” was therefore a figure of speech which meant “to get ready.” As a result, the believer is to always be ready for battle. We can never let our guard down, nor can we afford the luxury of taking a day off. David took a day off in the Old Testament, and would up committing adultery with Bathsheba and murdering her husband. Peter took some time off and denied the Lord. We need to always be ready for warfare having ourselves totally committed for battle in the truth.

Breastplate of Righteousness - Ephesians 6:14b

...and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

The second article of armor we are to have on at all times is the breastplate of righteousness. Probably one of the most necessary pieces of armor to the Roman soldier was the breastplate. It was usually made of heavy leather or linen overlaid with metal or the hooves of animals. Some breastplates were even made of metal and hammered to fit the contours of the body. The breastplate would fit over the upper torso and cover the vital organs of the heart, lungs, and liver.

Although there are many interpretations as to the meaning “breastplate of righteousness,” the best understanding is that this refers to the personal lifestyle of living day-by-day in obedience to God’s commandments.¹⁷ When we are obedient to God’s commandments, we do not open ourselves up to the chastisement of God nor will we give place to the devil. If, on the other hand we are disobedient, then we give an advantage to Satan as we open ourselves up to his personal attacks.

Results Of An Unholy Life¹⁸

- 1. Failure to live a holy life will rob the believer of joy and victory.**
- 2. Failure to live a holy life will result in fruitlessness.**
- 3. Failure to live a holy life will result in the loss of reward.**
- 4. Failure to live a holy life will bring reproach on the name of Christ.**

Shoes of the Gospel - Ephesians 6:15

And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

¹⁶ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 349-50.

¹⁷ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 352-54.

¹⁸ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 353-54.

After the breastplate, the second most important piece of armor to a Roman soldier was his shoes. Many times his very life would depend on the quality of his footwear. Unlike today, shoes were not common in ancient times, and often were not of the quality we have today. The shoes of a soldier were made of heavy leather in which bits of nails or other metal were embedded to provide traction. A soldier with bruised and bleeding feet would become easy prey for the enemy.

The shoes of the believer refers to the fact that we are now at peace with God.¹⁹ Our battle with God is over, and we can stand firm in our confidence that he is on our side. When we face our spiritual battles, we never need to worry about the fact that God is there, pulling for us, and providing his power to us in order to have victory.

Shield of Faith - Ephesians 6:16

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

The shield of the Roman soldier was a necessary part of his armor used to protect him from the blows of the enemy as well as fiery darts or arrows. A Roman soldier actually had two shields. The first was a small, round shield usually made of metal or heavy leather that was used in hand to hand combat. It was designed to catch the blows given by a sword or knife. The other shield was very large, large enough for a man to stand behind. It was made of heavy leather, dipped in oil, and used in sieges to protect the entire soldier from the arrows and darts of the enemies. In fact, the oil they were dipped in had the quality of quenching the flames of fiery darts when the darts became embedded in the shield.

This is most likely the shield Paul is referring to in this verse. Our shield, faith, is our basic trust in God and his provision.²⁰ When Satan comes along and bombards us with doubts about God's goodness, faithfulness, or credibility, it is our faith in God that quenches those darts and makes them ineffective. The word for wicked, *poneros*, is a reference to Satan who is the wicked one. When Satan's darts of doubt hit us, we are apt to succumb to despair unless we are protected by our resolute faith in God's provision.

Helmet of Salvation - Ephesians 6:17a

And take the helmet of salvation...

The fifth article of armor mentioned by Paul is the helmet of salvation. The helmet of a Roman soldier was usually made of metal and specially designed to protect the head from the crushing blows of the huge broadsword. Without the helmet, the Roman soldier was vulnerable to being killed by blows to the head which would often be fatal.

The helmet of salvation mentioned by Paul is the assurance of our salvation.²¹ Satan would like to deal the believer a "fatal" blow by bringing discouragement and doubt to their life. If he can get the believer to think he is not a Christian, or get him to become discouraged in the battle, then he has scored a major victory. If there is anything taught in the New Testament, it is the fact that our salvation is secure. We may not feel like it at times, but we are nevertheless secure in God's hands (John 10:27-30). No one, not even ourselves, can pry us out of God's hand.

¹⁹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 354-56.

²⁰ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 358-59.

²¹ MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 360-67.

Sword of the Spirit - Ephesians 6:17b

...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:

Probably no piece of the believer's armor is more misunderstood than this one. Whenever we think of sword, most of us think of the huge broadsword that was swung about the head and used to cut and crush the enemy. The word for this kind of sword in the New Testament is *romphia*. The *romphia* was a sword about four feet long and swung about the head like a mace.

However, the word for sword in this verse is not *romphia*, it is *machaira*. The *machaira* was a short, stubby sword that looked more like a large knife, and was used to get up under the armor of one's enemy and deal a fatal blow by striking at a very specific area.²² The word for "word" in this verse is *rhema*, and refers to the spoken word, a phrase. The idea here is that our weapon is not meant to be swung around in an attempt to behead demons, but is the specific sayings given to us by God.

This is clearly seen in Christ's encounter with Satan in Matthew 4. Christ could have told Satan to get lost, as he was the incarnate Son of God and had power over Satan. He did not. Rather he responded three times to Satan, "it is written." Instead of confronting Satan with his own power, he confronted Satan with the sayings of God as revealed in the Word of God, the Bible. David had this in mind in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I may not sin against thee." The surest way to spiritual victory is to hide God's word in our heart so that we have it when we need it. Unfortunately, when it comes to spiritual warfare most Christians are defenseless, as they do not have the word of God hidden in their heart.

The Provision of Prayer - Ephesians 6:18-20

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

The final component in our spiritual battle is prayer. Without prayer, the armor that God has given to us becomes ineffective and useless. If we want to think about it in more modern terms, the armor of God is like a tank, prayer is the gasoline which powers the tank. Without fuel, the tank is powerless to confront and defeat the enemy. Even so, without prayer, we are powerless to defeat Satan.

Why is prayer so important? First of all, it is a requirement for vigilance. When we pray, we are admitting our own inability to see things clearly. Often when we are engaged in spiritual warfare we are like Elisha's servant in 2 Kings 6 who did not see the hosts of heaven around him. While he was freaking out because the armies of the Syrians had surrounded him Elisha prayed that his eyes would be opened and he would see the armies of heaven instead (2 Kings 6:17). We need to pray so that we can discern accurately what is going on around us.

Secondly, we need to pray for power to win in the spiritual war we are in. This is what Peter did not do in Luke 22:31-32. Instead of praying for protection from Satan, Peter was busy boasting about his devotion to the Lord. As a result, Christ had to pray for him that he would successfully endure the trial that was to come upon him.

²² MacArthur, *Ephesians*, pp. 367-73.

Thirdly, we need to pray for others that they may be strengthened to do the Lord's work. Paul told the Ephesians that they needed to pray for all the saints, especially for him. What was the subject of their prayer? It was that he be bold in his proclamation of the truth and that he be given the opportunity to speak the truth. The whole reason for Paul's existence was that he was an ambassador for Christ, and as such he desired to have the forum and fortitude to speak the truth about the gospel of grace.

Closing Remarks and Greetings - Ephesians 6:21-24

But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

As was mentioned previously, Paul sent the letter of the Ephesians to the churches by the hand of Tychicus. At the same time, he most likely sent the letter to the Colossians, as well as the letter of Philemon. We do not know much about Tychicus other than the fact that he was the bearer of at least three of our New Testament books, and that Paul send him on other errands as needed (2 Timothy 4:12, Titus 3:12). One of the wonderful things about God is that although we may not know much about Tychicus, God does, and someday Tychicus will be awarded for his faithful service to God.

Paul closes the letter of the Ephesians without any of the personal greetings, which lead us to believe that Ephesians was in fact a circular letter. Paul closes with the simple words, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."