

The central New Testament passage on Satanic/demonic warfare: Ephesians 6:10-20

An overview of Ephesians 6:10-20 in the flow of the book of Ephesians

1. Since Paul begins this paragraph with “Finally”, we must take it in light of what preceded.

2. This paragraph forms the last of the practical exhortations that began in 4:1.
Eph. 4:1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

a. He encourages us to live in unity & interdependency (4:1-16).
Eph. 4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

b. He reminds us to live in light of the “new man” we have become (4:17-5:2).
Eph. 4:20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,

c. He warns us about any type of sexual impurity; instead, be light (5:3-14).
Eph. 5:3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.

d. He exhorts us to live wisely by the Spirit’s influence, especially in life’s key relationships (5:15-6:9).
Eph. 5:18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit,

e. Finally, he commands us to stand strong when Satan attacks (6:10-20).

3. As the final exhortation it reaches a climax in Paul’s presentation of the life of one “in Christ.” This final word presents our struggle to live righteously over sin in cosmic terms; such living, in actuality, pits us against the very forces of hell!

In terms of a rhetorical analysis of the letter as a persuasive communication that would be read out loud to its recipients, this section functions as the peroratio. . . . [where] . . . an author not only sought to bring his address to an appropriate conclusion but also to do so in a way which would arouse the audience’s emotions (Ephesians, Lincoln, p. 432).

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- a. For this reason Paul was careful to express the victory & supremacy of Jesus in similar cosmic terms in 1:16-21.

Eph. 1:16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

- b. Likewise, the angelic beings of the universe depend upon Jesus' church to learn of God's varied wisdom (3:10).

Eph. 3:10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

- c. Could this be the reason for Paul's grandiose conclusion to the first portion of Ephesians (3:14-21)?

Eph. 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Eph. 3:20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

4. Indeed, various themes & terms lie in this final paragraph that formed Paul's prior teaching. This intentional recapitulation reminds & encourages the believer in the face of demonic onslaught.

- a. All three terms in 6:10 Paul uses in 1:19.

Eph. 1:19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his **power** toward us who believe, according to the working of the *strength* his might.

Eph. 6:10 Finally, be **strong** in the Lord and in the *strength* of his might.

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- b. Paul mentions in 2:2 of “the prince of the power of the air” as the one who dictated our lives before Jesus. But he did not express the devil’s current relationship to us now that we know Christ.

Eph. 2:2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

- c. Paul relates his apostleship to this same power in 3:7, as he does in his prayer for every believer in 3:16 & 20.

Eph. 3:7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power.

Eph. 3:16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

Eph. 3:20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

- d. Though Jesus through His cross & resurrection has triumphed over spiritual forces (1:21), Paul reminds us that they still exist (2:2).

Eph. 1:19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

Eph. 2:2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—

- e. Even the pieces of armor necessary to stand firm against the devil were previously presented in this letter.

*The term “truth” has occurred in 4:25 and 5:9 (cf. also the use of the verb in 6:16 and the use of the noun with a different connotation in 1:13; 4:21, 24), and “righteousness” in 4:24 and 5:9. “The readiness of the gospel of peace” recalls the peace greeting in 1:2, the discussion of peace and reconciliation in 2:14-18, and the mention of “the bond of peace” in 4:3. The notion of peace will be evoked again in the wish of peace in 6:23. The readers’ “faith” (6:16) has frequently been in view (cf. 1:1, 13, 15, 19; 2:8; 3:12; 4:5, 13) and will be mentioned again in connection with the peace with of 6:23. “Salvation” here in 6:17 is to *swthri ÷ on* in the Greek text, but the cognate nouns and verb (*swthri ÷ a*, *swthr*, and *swzein*) have featured before in the letter in 1:13; 2:5, 8; and 5:23. The designation of the gospel as *rJhvma qeouv* would remind the readers of the mention of *rJhvma* in*

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5:26, where it probably has the same force, and also of the description of the gospel as 'the word of truth' (οἱ λόγος θηβ αὐτῆς ἐν 1:13 (Lincoln, p. 439).
The flow & reasoning of Ephesians 6:10-20

1. This passage easily divides into three interrelated sections:
 - a. We must stand firm against demonic onslaughts by using God's ability (10-13).
 - b. To do so we must understand the makeup & role of God's armor pieces (14-17).
 - c. To stand firm we must develop a pattern of attentiveness & prayer to our vulnerability to such attacks (18-20).
2. Each section provides necessary truth if we are to stand firm under attack. Note the movement of the passage:
 - a. Verses 10-13 introduce the topic & its key features.
 - i. We need Jesus' strength if we hope to succeed when attacked by demons (10-11a); His strength is accessed only by dressing ourselves in God's armor (11b).

Eph. 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

- ii. God designed this armor to enable us to stand firm when attacked (11c).

Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

- iii. These attacks originate in the devil with cunning thoroughness & trickery (11d) & are carried out by demons (12).

Eph. 6:11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

- iv. Consequently, we must seize the armor so we will succeed at the moment of the attack (13).

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Eph. 6:13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

- b. Verses 14-17 build on the preceding by detailing the realities behind the armor metaphor.

Eph. 6:14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

- i. Each piece must be put on with haste & clarity.

- ii. Each piece is functional, not merely adornment.

- iii. We must understand the significance of these foundational realities: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and God's word.

- c. Verses 18-20 conclude by stressing the necessity of developing a lifestyle of prayer (dependence) if we are to stand firm.

- i. We must pray intentionally & habitually if we are to access the God's power to deal with demons (18a).

Eph. 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

- ii. Because of this praying necessity we must work hard and be attentive to it as a way of life for the benefit of others as well (18b).

Eph. 6:18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

- iii. And by way of example, Paul asks for prayer that Satan would not shut his mouth (through fear) when he had opportunity to speak the gospel (19-20).

Eph. 6:19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.