

# Bible Survey – NT - 3.5 – Epistles – Ephesians

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## 1. INTRODUCTION:

- a. Author – the letter is attributed to the Apostle Paul, and the internal evidence of the letter also makes this claim. We know from internal Biblical records and church history that Paul spent some 3 years in the development of the Church in Ephesus [Acts 20:31]. Church tradition has always agreed to Pauline authorship and the theology and writing style of Ephesians is certainly Pauline. Though there remain a few who question Paul's authorship, there really is no other credible candidate to put forward and the overwhelming evidence internal and external suggests that Paul was the author.
- b. Date of Composition – it is widely understood that the Book of Ephesians is part of Paul's prison epistles – while there is some debate upon what city and hence what time the imprisonment occurred.
  - i. Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea from AD 57-59 [Acts 24:27], and then in Rome for his 1<sup>st</sup> Roman imprisonment from AD 60-62 [Acts 28:30]. It is most likely that the letter was written from Rome during Paul's 1<sup>st</sup> imprisonment there under house arrest. After 2 years he was set free and continued his ministry.
  - ii. Ephesians, Colossians, & Philemon were written at the same approximate time – around AD 60-62. The letters to Ephesus and Colossae share many content similarities, and demonstrate a close relationship to these cities and the region. It is concluded by internal and external analysis that these letters predated the letter to the Philippians.
  - iii. Paul sent the letters by Tychicus who hand delivered them [Eph 6:21; Col 4:7]. Onesimus was a run-away slave who returned to his home and master Philemon, with a special commendation and appeal from Paul. The letter to Philemon is a very personal letter from the apostle interceding for Onesimus and requesting Philemon's charity and mercy regarding his runaway slave.
- c. Purpose of Letter to the Ephesians – to prepare and equip the Church [the people of God] to know the richness of Grace in God available to them, and to encourage them to fulfill their mission purpose with passion and confidence.
  - i. History of the City – Ephesus was a large city of approximately 250,000 people making it the third largest city in the Roman Empire behind Rome and Alexandria. Ephesus was an important crossroads of civilization in the Ancient Roman Province known as "Asia" which included modern day Turkey. Politically, the city had become the provincial capital of the province of Asia. The Roman governor who ruled the province resided there. It was a "free" city, meaning that it was essentially self-governed with little interference from Rome. Free city also indicated that the city was thoroughly Roman, and its citizens not overly encumbered in tribute paid to Rome. It was a regional center of commerce located on the western coast of Asia Minor at the convergence of three great highways, with a port on the Aegean Sea.
  - ii. Pagan Religion – Ephesus was the center for the worship of the fertility goddess known to the Greeks as "Artemis" and to the Romans as "Diana" (Acts 19:11-41). The temple with its statue of Artemis was one of the wonders of the ancient world. Thousands of priests and priestesses were involved in service to the temple, many of which were dedicated to cult prostitution. The temple also served as a great bank for kings and merchants according to the Greek philosopher Pausanias – 2 AD, as well as an asylum for fleeing criminals. To what extent the temple phenomena contributed to the general moral

- deterioration of the population cannot be adequately assessed, but one of Ephesus's own citizens the renown philosopher Heraclitus, said that the inhabitants of the city lived lives of excess and debauchery. Ephesus was a center for magical practices and the “black arts” of divination and sorcery [a sort of voodoo]. It was understood that cosmic powers controlled the fate of humanity, and the authority of the Pagan gods was encouraged through fear and foreboding of these capricious deities who could be placated and/or manipulated through magical spells and offerings. Generally speaking, life was seen as a struggle between beneficial and evil cosmic forces. There were also benign forces that could be invoked through offerings and magic.
- iii. The church at Ephesus – was probably founded jointly by Aquila and Priscilla, and later involved Paul (Ac 18:18-19; 19:1-10). The Ephesian population was considered to be ‘cosmopolitan’ and also transient because of their wealth and business activity in the region. The city’s reputation and history as a Pagan center of vice and corruption, and the necessity of cities in this era demanding that all business conducted within its domain vow their fealty to both Rome and to the Pagan God Artemis. These factors would have made it difficult for Christians to conduct business and also in so many other ways... not the least of which would have been spiritual warfare.
  - iv. It is clear that this letter is a very special Epistle to a church Paul clearly loved dearly. The theme of ‘Love’ is highly significant – with the verb form of the word employed 7 times, the noun form 10 times, the participle form used 3 times, and the adjective form used 2 times.
  - v. In most of the Epistles or New Testament letters, there is a clear problem or purpose into which the Apostle is writing to address. The focus on love appears to support and encourage the Christian community with mutual interdependence... the best way to survive in hostile territory is in a loving community. The nature of the Pagan evil that permeated the city helps explain Paul’s discussion of the nature and preparation for engaging in spiritual warfare.
  - vi. The Ephesian’s seem to be a church that is doing well and Paul is seen encouraging them rather than scolding them, obviously Paul’s being in prison and not knowing when or if he will return to see them adds strength to his desire to encourage and prepare the church. The Epistle to the Ephesians is a letter speaking of the big picture of the eternal purpose of God – with redemptive history finding its consummation in Jesus, and working out the Great Commission in the Church as we await physical renewal at the end of days at Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
  - vii. The Kingdom of God has been initiated with the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, replacing the Law of the Old Covenant and reversing the segregation of the People of God meaning the Jews and Non-Jews. In the Spirit... we become one people with a high calling – chapters 1-3. The high calling requires a change of identity with a unity of faith, and personal and corporate maturity in faith – chapters 4-5. Life in the Spirit requires internal harmony in contrast to increasing external conflict, requiring wisdom and preparation – chapter 6.

### 2. Outline of the Contents:

#### a. Structure 1:

- i. 1:1-14      Doxology

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- ii. 1:15-23 Prayer
- iii. 2:1-10 Grace – Reconciliation of Individuals to God
- iv. 2:11-22 Equality of believers – Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles in the Church.
- v. 3:1-12 Paul’s unique ministry
- vi. 3:13-21 Prayer
- vii. 4:1-6:9 Conduct of Believers in the Church
  - 1. 4:1-16 Living in Unity
  - 2. 4:17-32 Living in Holiness
  - 3. 5:1-6 Living in Love
  - 4. 5:7-14 Living in Righteousness
  - 5. 5:15-6:9 Living in Wisdom
- viii. 6:10-20 Spiritual Warfare – the Church in Spiritual Combat
  - 1. 6:10-11 Exhortation
  - 2. 6:12 The struggle
  - 3. 6:13-20 The resources
- ix. 6:21-24 Closing Thoughts

### b. Structure 2:

- i. Chapters 1-3 – a Christian’s inherent wealth in God through Christ Jesus
- ii. 4:1-6:9 – the Christian’s walk with God
- iii. 6:10-24 – the Christian’s resources in Spiritual Warfare

### 3. THE OUTLINE AND MESSAGE OF EPHESIANS:

#### a. The Spiritual Nature of the Church – 1:1-3:21:

- i. 1:1-14 – Trinitarian theology of Father/Son/Spirit is called out “by the praise of His glory.” Paul’s focus on articulating correct theology for the Ephesians suggests they were under some duress... the nature identified as Spiritual oppression:
  - 1. Paul clarifies that the New Covenant blessings are spiritual and heavenly... therefore non-earthly.
  - 2. In contrast the Old Covenant blessings were material and earthly... therefore non-heavenly.
  - 3. The Old Covenant had blessings and curses dependent upon obedience and conformance to behavioral standards [Deut 26:16-28:68]; the New Covenant is all blessing in Christ... therefore no condemnation [Matt 5:1-12; Rom 8:1] .
  - 4. God’s pledge to all true believers is the Spirit who indwells and unites all of the faithful.
- ii. 1:15-23 – Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving:
  - 1. V18 – “the eyes of your heart” have already been enlightened, thus you will know....
  - 2. V21 – Rule-authority-power-dominion [c/r 6:12] – these may well be aspects of spiritual beings or types of spiritual service. Paul [as well as Rabbinic Judaism in general] definitely held that angels aided the faithful, while demons contended with them – this is a spiritual battle in the heavenly realm played out on earth with human lives being held in the balance.
- iii. 2:1-3 – Dead in Sin – this is the natural state of Fallen humanity... there is no hope of eternity with a perfect God in heaven in the sinful state of being.

- iv. 2:4-6 – Alive in Christ – “I am made alive and we are now in” the presence of Jesus and God in heaven. The Spirit within each true believer/disciple is a direct link to heaven. This is an amazing change in status that we Christians all too often fail to capture the significance of.
- v. 2:11 – You were aliens [strangers in a strange land with no rights and no hope] – but now you are One People – the new Israel [you have a home, a heritage, a place, and a great new hope]. Jesus broke through the wall the Mosaic Law that had caused with the separation between the Jew [clean] and Gentile [unclean] – now however, no wall exists in God’s Kingdom.
- vi. 3:2 - God called Paul and revealed “Truth” [revelation] directly to him. In the New Covenant, Gentiles are fellow heirs and partakers of all of God’s promises to His people.
- vii. 3:3-7 – God revealed His mystery to me, and I have faithfully revealed it to you.
- viii. 3:8 – It is not about me – it is all about Jesus.
- ix. 3:14 – “Bow my knees” – all ministry and all life in the Spirit is all about prayer and worship. Dependence upon and obedience to the Spirit is foundational to all ministry.
- x. 3:16 – Prayer for Spiritual Power – for the Church is to be strengthened by His Spirit in your innerman... this means we have the power to stand against any opposition.
- xi. 3:17-21 – The power of God is the priority behind any sermon – rather than just teaching truth or preaching transformation, the pastor should be filled to overflowing with God so God’s Presence flows through the pastor/teacher to the people. This truth requires our evaluation:
  - 1. Where is the power of God in our churches? There is a big difference between the power of God being released in and through the Church, and merely dispensing the wisdom of men and knowledge about God. There is too much of the latter, and not enough of the former.
  - 2. The problem of Spiritual anemia that the Church suffers from is because too many people are praising a good or even a great preacher/teacher rather than our wondrous God Himself. People are caught up in talented musical and teaching expressions that evoke an emotional response, rather than entering into the Presence of God and allowing Him to rule in our hearts and lives. The former is entertainment, the latter is transformational.
  - 3. When people leave our services they should marvel about how great our God is, not how nice the service was or how nice the teaching was. The former is feeding the sheep, the latter is merely pleasing them.
  - 4. Effective teaching/preaching and worship puts us into contact with the Living God where people’s lives are progressively transformed by the Spirit – Christian life is all about transformational life not merely the conveying of knowledge or wisdom.
  - 5. There was then and there is now a flood of spiritual information and misinformation which confuses many, even pastors and leaders. This letter is sent in the effort about clarifying life in the Spirit.
  - 6. Call to focus on the Truth – look at Jesus.
  - 7. People need to hear words of Heaven – of heavenly purpose and identity. Earthly focus is material and not transformational.

**b. There are 2 Parallel Tracks of Spirit Life that play out in this next section – 4:1-6:9:**

- i. **Spirit Life in each Disciple** – Developing Christian Spiritual Warriors:
  1. To 'Walk' is how we are to live our life as Christians:
    - a. Walk in a manner worthy of our calling – 4:1
    - b. Walk no longer as Gentiles but as children of the King – 4:17
    - c. Walk in love – 5:2
    - d. Walk in light – 5:8
  2. To 'Be' is who we are in our new nature:
    - a. Be imitators of God – 5:1, 25
    - b. Be filled with the Spirit – 5:18
    - c. Be subject to one another – 5:21-22
    - d. Be obedient – 6:5
    - e. Be strong – 6:10
  3. To 'take' is to accept what God has said about our new identity – Take up the full armor of God so you can resist the devil – 6:13ff
  4. To 'Stand' is to take our position in confidence – Stand firm – 6:14
- ii. **Spirit Life in the Community of the Church** – 4:1-6:9:
  5. The Call to Unity – 'Being Christians' not 'Doing Churchianity' – Developing Fundamental Qualities of the Heart in the Christian Fellowship – 4:1-3
    - a. Humility
    - b. Gentleness
    - c. Patience
    - d. Tolerance
    - e. Diligence to preserve unity in the bond of peace in developing 'Christian Character'
  6. The grounds of Unity – Being one... Unity in Faith – 4:4-6
    - a. One body
    - b. One Spirit
    - c. One hope
    - d. One Lord
    - e. One faith
    - f. One baptism
    - g. One God and Father
  7. Spiritual Transformation is the Goal of the Spirit – to form Jesus' nature and character within the disciple in community – 4:7-16:
    - a. Does not happen by stopping one behavior and starting another... Instead it happens when we look at the Glory of God – in that moment we understand His Greatness and Wonder, and our own inadequacy... and as Isaiah exclaimed – 'woe to me... I am ruined' – Isaiah 6:1-5.
    - b. It is demonstrated in:
      - i. Our hearts – what we love and hold dear.
      - ii. Our commitment – what we identify as our priority.
      - iii. Our action – the things we do as a result.
    - c. It is how we live our life – walk by faith and being renewed.



- ii. Powers
- iii. World forces of darkness
- iv. Spiritual forces of wickedness
- b. Book of Revelation sheds light on the spiritual realm – much of the dialogue is directed to the angels associated with the churches [Rev 2:1-3:22].
  - i. The interaction between the church and the angelic being is a partnership with humanity.
  - ii. There are some who would teach that the word translated as “angel” may also be translated as “pastor.” The actual word used means “messenger” but the context indicates it is an “angelic being” not the “human pastor” of the church. It is clear throughout the Book of Revelation that the Spiritual realm and earthly realm are engaged in war and that humanity and angels are partners in this struggle.
- c. Angelic beings are referenced throughout scripture:
  - i. Gen – Abraham, Jacob, etc.
  - ii. Job
  - iii. Prophecy – Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah

### 2. EPHESIANS AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION – Dr. David Smith:

Dr. David Smith is the founder of THE ODYSSEY... he is a seminary professor, pastor, and spiritual formation leadership developer. Feel free to go online to [TheOdyssey.org](http://TheOdyssey.org) and check out his ministry. The material that follows are from notes and was experienced during one of Dr. Dave’s many seminars. It is our understanding that he will develop this material into a new book.

- a. Chiastic Outline of the Letter – X is the main point of the Chiastic Structure – the author begins here then writes in a supportive fashion paired thematic couplets. For example, G relates to the central thought in answering the “what” of the thought, while G’ answers the “how” of the central thought.

- A. Introduction – Initial Greetings of Grace and Peace – 1:1-2
- B. Our Identity in Christ – 1:3-14
- C. Knowing the Hope and Power of Christ in the Inner Person – 1:15-23
- D. The New Nature we have in Christ – 2:1-10
- E. Members of a New Reality – 2:11-22
- F. Making Known the Mystery of Christ’s Love – 3:1-13
- G. Knowing the Love and Power of Christ in the Inner Person – 3:14-21
- X – CENTER – Therefore, Living According to our  
True Identity in Christ – 4:1-16
- G’ Walking-out our New Identity in Christ in the Inner Person – 4:17-32
- F’ Walking in Love as Christ Loved Us – 5:1-16
- E’ The Power to Live as Members of this New Reality – 5:17-33
- D’ The Power for New Relationships in Christ – 6:1-9
- C’ The Power and Hope of Christ made Real in our Lives – 6:10-13
- B’ The Power to Walk in our Identity in Christ – 6:14-20
- A’ Farewell – Final Greetings of Peace, Love & Grace – 6:21-24

### b. Chiastic [Concentric] thinking versus linear thinking:

- i. Linear thinking is the typical thought development most scholars follow in writing thesis arguments. Essentially they begin with an introduction that presents their thesis, develop their argument in favor of their thesis in a progressive fashion in the body of the writing that proves their thesis, then end with a conclusion that restates the thesis. The “outline” is similar to these notes you are reading... the main points are clearly stated then supported by supportive thoughts.
- ii. Chiastic or concentric thinking is a fundamentally different approach to thought development. In chiastic thought development, the thesis is presented at the center of the Chiasm, and the supporting thoughts then radiate outward in 2 reflective or mirrored directions. This mirrored radiation is apparent in the chiastic outline above.
- iii. Chiastic structure was helpful in helping the mostly illiterate hearers of these teachings remember them. This seems strange to us because we live in a predominately literate society.
- iv. In chiastic thought development, the most important concept is found in the middle... thus “living according to our true identity in Christ” is the chiastic structural thesis of Ephesians. The writer would start from the middle and radiate outward, while the reader would have to see the couplets and follow them into the middle to discover the author’s main point.
- v. We make a critical mistake from a modern point of view in thinking the ancients were simple and not very bright... that is academic arrogance... they were very bright and equally smart, but they lived in a different sort of society and with a different world view.

### c. Interpretation of the letter to the Ephesians:

- i. The key to understanding the interpretation of Ephesians from the chiastic structure is at the center – to live in our true identity in Christ. The immediate mirror radiations are G - knowing the love and power of Christ in the inner-person, and G’ – walking [working] out our new identity in Christ in the inner-person.
- ii. The chiasm is set up by B – knowing our true identity in Christ, and B’ – Believing what God says about our true identity in Christ. The reason this is so important is because we are surrounded with so many voices including our own that often confuse or denigrate what God says.
- iii. To support the work God is doing, C and C’ – means knowing and holding onto the hope and power of Christ in the Spirit within us. God not only gives us the remedy in Christ, He reinforces the truth through the Spirit, and provides the power to realize this new reality.
- iv. In this context, spiritual warfare is the battle for the mind and heart of the individual. There may be other spiritual powers and manifestations working against us, but they have no power over us if we hold to what God says and take Him at his Word. The result of this conflict are choices:
  1. We can doubt ourselves and believe the lie we hear the adversary whispering in our ears, and slip into weakness and ineffectiveness.
  2. We can take God at His Word and dispel the lies by the power of the Spirit.
- v. The adversary operates by lies, half-truths, deceptions, and fear. When in stand in Christ with faith believing, the power of God overwhelms the power of the adversary and we are free to live lives of passion, purpose, and consequence.

- vi. Simply stated, this is the message of Ephesians... the question is then, why don't we believe God? This is at the heart of Spiritual Warfare... the demonic powers and forces of evil want nothing to do with a devoted disciple standing on God's truth... but they will try to influence their understanding and belief and render them weak or ineffectual.
- d. Our "True Identity" as a Christian is simply stated in 1:1-14:
  - i. We are "Saints" – verse 1
    - 1. This means that we belong to God as His treasured possession... whether I feel like it or not.
    - 2. We begin our Christian pilgrimage with the theological reality of 'Justification' – we are 'sinners saved by Grace.' We are declared as being 'righteous' because of the salvation we received through the Blood of Jesus... our sacrificial Lamb of God.
    - 3. We continue our Christian pilgrimage as we cooperate with God in the ongoing process of 'sanctification' where the character and nature of Jesus is being formed in our minds and hearts. As we mature we are more characterized as 'saints who sometimes sin' because we are no longer under the bondage to sin and death, yet we remain living out our life on a fallen and broken creation.
  - ii. We are "Chosen" – verse 4
    - 1. The theological conundrum of 'election' [predetermination] and 'free will' [a self-initiating cooperation with God] is one of many issues that are not easily resolved. Suffice it to say most modern theologians agree that humanity has a part to play in accepting and applying the free gift of Grace through Jesus.
    - 2. I think a better way of understanding this is that God invites us to join Him, and we have the responsibility to accept His offer. This is how I would interpret the "Parable of the Great Banquet" – Luke 14:15-24.
    - 3. There seems to be a role we play in accepting the provision of Grace God has provided us, but once received we are told we are God's favored guests – His chosen family.
  - iii. We are "Fully accepted" – verse 4
    - 1. As children of God, we are not just 'forgiven' or 'chosen' but we are accepted as 'Holy and Blameless.' All those who are indwelt by the Spirit of God are simultaneously in creation and in eternity. God sees us as the perfect reflection of Jesus we will be in Heave.
    - 2. Though I may stumble and even fall, God is quick to forgive and embrace me as His child and heir. The guilt I feel may be deserved, but God sees us as clean and without blemish.
  - iv. We are "Adopted" – verse 5
    - 1. As God's adopted child I am an heir with Jesus as God's cherished child.
    - 2. Though we may not always feel we deserve this designation, this is the position God has elevated us into by Grace.
  - v. We have a sense of "Destiny" – verse 11
    - 1. God has a purpose for me and my life... I was born for great things in advancing the Kingdom of God.
    - 2. Christians need to understand that all who God adopts have a role to play in advancing the Gospel of Grace as His ambassadors.

3. Though I may not always feel like it, when I cooperate with the Spirit and sanctification takes hold of my life as Jesus' character and nature are developed within me, I am salt and light... I am the fragrance of Jesus to a broken and fallen world order awaiting Jesus return.
- vi. We are "Secure" – verse 13
  1. The indwelling Holy Spirit is a seal or pledge as God's promise He will fulfill the work He has begun in us – Philippians 1:6.
  2. Because God has a firm grip on me, I can enjoy a deep sense of peace and belonging to God.
- e. As Christians we need to choose to live in our true identity in Jesus – Eph 6:10-20
  - i. Spiritual Warfare is described in militaristic terms, but the battleground is in my mind and heart.
  - ii. Our energy is not to be expended 'fighting against Satan' but believing what God says and acting in a way and manner that honors Him and fulfills His invitation [calling] on my life.
  - iii. Spiritual Warfare is the "Battle of the Mind" – who will I believe? Will I believe God and live as His Spiritual child? Will I believe Satan and live as a confused material being.
- f. Christian Identity as demonstrated in other portions of Scripture:
  - i. I'M COMPLETELY ACCEPTED BY GOD
    1. I am God's child – John 1:12
    2. As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus – John 15:15
    3. I have been justified – Romans 5:1
    4. I am united with God being ONE with Him in Spirit – 1 Corinthians 6:17
    5. I have been bought with a price and I now belong to God – 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
    6. I am part of the Body of Christ – 1 Corinthians 12:27
    7. I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child – Ephesians 1:3-8
    8. I have been redeemed and forgiven my sin debt – Colossians 1:13-14
    9. I am complete in Christ – Colossians 2:9-10
    10. I have direct access to God through Jesus – Hebrews 4:14-16
  - ii. I AM SECURE IN GOD'S GRACE
    1. I am free of condemnation – Romans 8:1-2
    2. I am assured that God works for my best interests in all circumstances – Romans 8:28
    3. I am free and cannot be separated from God's love for me – Romans 8:31-39
    4. I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God – 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
    5. I am hidden with Christ in God – Colossians 3:1-4
    6. I have God's promise that He will complete the work He started in me – Philippians 1:6
    7. I am a citizen of Heaven – Philippians 3:20
    8. I have been given the Spirit of power, love and grace that overcomes fear – 2 Timothy 1:7
    9. I am God's own and the evil one cannot separate me from God – 1 John 5:18

### iii. I AM SIGNIFICANT AS GOD'S BELOVED

1. I am a part of Jesus and His Grace works out through me – John 15:5; Philippians 2:12-13
2. I have been chosen to grow and bear fruit for God – John 15:16
3. I am God's Living Temple – 1 Corinthians 3:16
4. I am a minister and ambassador of God's Grace – 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
5. I am seated with Jesus in His Heavenly Realm – Ephesians 2:6
6. I am God's work of art – Ephesians 2:10
7. I am free to approach God in complete confidence – Ephesians 3:12
8. I can do anything God desires in the strength of Jesus – Philippians 4:13

g. Spiritual warfare is not a power to encounter... it is instead a truth encounter. When we believe the truth as God decrees we emerge victorious. When we believe the lies we remain defeated and weak. Our work is to believe and partner or cooperate with God... to 'work out' what He is already 'working in' – in our lives (Philippians 2:12-13).

3. APPLICATION TO "PUTTING ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD" Eph 6:10-20 – the "Armor of God" is the outworking of the application of Dr. Dave's insights into what Spiritual Warfare is all about. The armor describes the "Supernatural Resources" every Christian disciple actively has for their use. The armor is described as belonging to God who provides it for us and enables us to employ it.

a. Secondary or "Fixed" Components – these relate to what God has already done for us... His love for me; His gift of Righteousness [right standing with God]; and freedom to engage life with courage and confidence. We are free to choose to embrace by faith this life, and allow God to transform my life. The alternative is to remain in doubt and fear... right where the adversary would have us... being weak and ineffective Christians.

i. The Belt of Truth – 6:14a... is of course the Bible, but here the application is in believing what God has said. The image of the belt is what holds our outfit together... it is the foundational integrator of the full armor of God.

1. From the context, knowing the Truth plays out in 2 ways:

- a. "Knowing and believing what God says about Himself." Thus, having and holding views of God that are less than what God says about Himself is at the heart of Spiritual warfare. Anything less than Scriptural truth is a lie or distortion, which is what gave rise to the Fall with Satan suggesting to Eve that God's intent and motives were not to be trusted. Believing that God is other than what He said He is... is at the heart of the judgment against the wicked servant in the parable of the talents [Matt 25:24-30, C.R. Luke 19:20-22]. The wicked servant mischaracterized his master as hard and cruel instead of being fair and just, and the wicked servant was judged accordingly by his own words.
- b. Knowing and believing what God says about us as His children as heirs in Christ. This refers to having and holding true views of our identity in Christ, and is what Paul is driving home in this epistle.

2. Identity is crucial in Scripture and holding untrue views of God's or our own identity is at the heart of Spiritual warfare. This is all about experiential knowledge and objective truth... God is Good and trustworthy because He has proved Himself so in the experience of our life. The alternative is merely a cognitive understanding... meaning a mind that knows, but a heart that doesn't believe because there is no experiential reality to ground it.
- a. This is all about identity and trust... know Who God is and what He says about Himself, and trusting Him that what He says about us is anchored in His Character and Love, not necessarily our performance or our imperfect faith. As a result, our faith is being perfected as we cooperate with the Spirit believing His Word.
  - b. Identity is also the key to Spiritual power, which is anchored in the character of God, which when appropriated allows us to live in freedom.
  - c. Putting on the belt of truth involves the choice to believe God because we have already experienced His faithfulness... therefore I know I can trust Him.
  - d. Identity is the key component in disciple's stance against the prevailing world mindset – this is the crux of Spiritual warfare in our era:
    - i. "Secular Humanism" – The world argues that humanity is nothing more than smart animals who just happened by happy accidents to be at the top of the food chain. There is no purpose or reason behind this secular humanist mindset of this development change of events, nor do we have any right to expect to retain this position. We live in a material world without hope of eternity.
    - ii. "Imago Dei" – means we as humanity have been created in the image of God, and we enjoy many attributes that God has disclosed in Scripture about Himself. This Scriptural mindset states that humanity is the crowning achievement of God's purposeful intent. We are not merely smart animals, we are the image of God the Creator... we are creative because God is creative, we are loving because God is loving... etc. In the Biblical perspective... all of the components of humanity are an imperfect reflection of God's perfection as a result of the Fall. While God demonstrates all these components all the time in perfect balance and harmony, humanity demonstrates them imperfectly and inconsistently out of balance.
    - iii. "Imago Christi" – means we as Christians are the reflection of Jesus Christ in the world... our life and community is an imperfect reflection of Jesus which is being perfected by the Word and the Spirit in the mind and heart of Christians. This process we call "sanctification" which will not be completed in this Fallen and imperfect world... but it will be completed when perfection comes at the end of the age. Then we will "shine like stars in the universe" – Phil 2:12-15.

- ii. **The Breastplate of Righteousness – 6:14b...** is righteousness and character transformation brought about by trust and obedience. The purpose of the breastplate is to protect the heart and vital organs. Righteousness is about bringing our external actions into harmony with what God is already doing in our internal life – Phil 2:1-13.
1. Our right standing with God is based upon what Jesus has accomplished on my behalf. My innerlife is protected... that is what God has already accomplished in me. My character is being transformed and as a result I become more consistently obedient. I then consciously order my life and priorities around God's will and purpose.
  2. This is much more than mere legalistic obedience, or even behavior modification... it is about deliberately and consistently choosing to act rightly. This both protects and encourages the innerlife development God has accomplished. Note that this has already occurred. Believing what God says He has done is my action in cooperating with the Spirit (Rom 8:1-2).
  3. God's "Imputed Righteousness" – the result of the Grace of Jesus is a legal designation relating to the Law of Moses... it is a once and for all time designation for every Christian... we are made right or put into right standing with God. God's "Developmental Righteousness" is the result of the work of the Spirit sanctifying us in the inner life... where we become increasingly more like Jesus. By the Grace of God we are not disqualified by our failures, and we are not defined by our failures either... but rather by our desire to honor God and increasingly become a reflection of Jesus.
- iii. **Feet Fitted with Readiness – 6:15...** is allowing the Spirit to bring our hearts [our interior world] into alignment with the Gospel message of our peace with God. Having your feet properly prepared is all about mobility and stability... this provides confidence in holding our position in courage founded in God. When a warrior's feet are incapacitated, they are immediately immobilized. Having our feet protected means we know we can move with confidence being sure of our footing. We can then keep our eyes on God and the future (Ps 25:15). This is an invitation to be "crazy brave" and "wild in faith"... being caught up in the Spirit to live life with purpose, passion, and confidence (Rom 5:1; Philippians 4:7).
1. Being ready means the journey is no longer fearful... we can walk in security knowing God goes on before us and also behind us. This is not about being stupid, nor is it to be foolhardy; however it is being prepared to engage life and its challenges whatever they are. The result is the ability to be secure and courageous.
  2. Knowing God is in charge of the journey ahead of us, and that we are adequately prepared to engage it, we are free to step out in confidence. Knowing God has our back means we don't have to continually look over our shoulder. While it is good to be observant and thoughtful, we don't need to be paralyzed by fear.
  3. In what way does peace with God provide full mobility? The antithesis of peace is turmoil. Internal peace results from our peace with God which comes from the dynamics of repentance and forgiveness. This cleanses and clarifies our hearts and our minds, and develops with increasing intimacy and dependence on God. As a

result, our actions are increasingly more clear and decisive. We are able to act and react with confidence.

4. The 'Good News' of the peace with God sets us free to live with vitality and courage. Courage is the byproduct of understanding and acting in our true identity in Jesus (Ps 27:1).
- b. Primary or "Moveable" Components – When our identity and faith are protected with the secondary [fixed] components provided by God's Grace that secure our identity, we are free to choose to follow God and employ these additional defenses. These gifts of the Spirit are likened to war tools that are picked up and employed depending on the threat and conflict. It is important we understand the enemy's tactics... that he attempts to distort or subvert the truth. Such was Satan's tactic against Jesus in the desert. Satan is powerful, but he is a created being, and has no ability to create anything. He can only be one place at a time, and he cannot read our minds or control our thoughts. He and his demonic minions can however, whisper in our ear words of persuasion and deceit. As Christians, we must choose who we will listen to and believe.
- i. The Shield of Faith – 6:16... is active defense against the lies that would subvert our faith. Faith means taking God at His Word... it is hearing Him and believing Him. Abraham believed God and was called righteous. David believed God and was called a man after God's own heart. The shield is choosing to believe what God says is true.
    1. A often quoted Scripture in support of this concept is Romans 8:28 – "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." This is not a license to get whatever we want presuming our faith is strong enough... instead it is having our minds and hearts so aligned with God that we are compelled by His love, and knowingly engaged as an instrument of His will.
    2. Too often people make God a sort of genie in a bottle... that if we pray with enough faith... etc., that we'll receive what we ask. God hears all prayers, and He answers all prayers in His time table... though some answers may be "no" or "not now."
    3. The story of David and Goliath is often preached to the delight of the congregation with the notion that "if you have enough faith and don't doubt" you too can slay your Goliath... whatever the giant you face. While not theologically untrue, this is not the exegetic message here. The confrontation that David stepped into is a correction of the failure the Israelites made in refusing to enter the land under Moses. The spies saw "giants in the land" and were afraid. This was the city of Gath. Instead of believing God and engaging them in faith, they withdrew with their proverbial "tails between their legs." Saul's army was revisiting this old failure. The meaning of David's courage is a reflection of what we've been talking about... his secondary defenses were secure and he knew who he was and who God is which undergirded his action. Faith is not trying to believe enough, rather it is taking God at His Word. David had personal experience of God's faithfulness in the past against the lion and the bear (1 Sam 17:34-37). David also had his own primary tools which were different than Saul's tools, he stepped forward with what he knew that God had already enabled him to succeed with.

4. Exercising faith is an act of the will... it is a choice to align my life with what God has already done and said is true as grounded in Scripture. When the assault comes we can choose to retreat or ignore it, or engage and face it. A 'shield' is of little use to a warrior who is not facing their challenge. The impetus to 'stand our ground' is all about trust, confidence, and courage. When you know God and stand upon His truth in confidence, the opponent of our soul has no power over us.
  5. Not knowing God and His goodness and not knowing His Word and His will complicates abiding in faith. Trust and confidence develop with hearing, knowing, and loving God... and it is the shield that extinguishes the arrows of lies, doubt, and adversity.
  6. Moreover, the bigger and more powerful you know God to be, the greater your Spiritual Vitality and the more effective the shield becomes (Philippians 2:12-13).
- ii. The Helmet of Salvation – 6:17a... protects a mind that has been purified and enlightened by Scripture. Salvation is understanding what God has done for me in light of redemptive history... there is a past, present and future being played out with an eternal perspective, and I am caught up in this. It is also knowing that God is not done with me yet... my salvation awaits for me in eternity... it is more than what I see here and now in front of me. This is what Paul spoke of in running to win his race – Acts 20:24; 2 Tim 4:7; also Heb 12:1.
1. "Saving grace" is what we often term that which moved us from a life centered on ourselves and our own perspectives, to life focused through Jesus on God and eternity.
  2. "Salvation" however, is what awaits all disciples in heaven. We have the "now" of the indwelling Spirit... Who is the Pledge of the "not yet" which is life with God in heaven for eternity.
  3. The 'now' is an uncertain future in a flawed and fallen world... the 'not yet' is a certain future in a perfect eternity. The helmet protects my mind where my hope is known and from knowing Jesus is actively working out His plan in my life.
  4. Putting on the helmet is putting aside the emotions, fear and anxiety of the now, and reframing things in light of eternity.
  5. The helmet involves preparing my mind for action by bringing my thinking into alignment with God's eternal perspective. What He has done, is doing now, and is committed to do in the future (Rom 8:22-25).
- iii. The Sword of the Spirit – 6:17b... is the Bible, but here the application is knowing the Word and *speaking* the Word against untruth. The sword referred to here is a short sword used for up close and personal combat. The sword pictured here is the "Gladius" or a short tapered sword used in close combat. It was a fearsome weapon used both offensively and defensively.
1. We often get stuck because of our personal failures and the accusations we hear from the enemy that reverberates in our mind and heart and often forces us to ponder the strength or even relevance of our faith. We ponder "how can I truly be a saint when all I see is the sinner?" Paul in Romans 7:7-8:17 reflects convincingly of this problem. As believers we begin our Christian journey as 'sinners saved by

grace’... but as we mature we understand that we are ‘saints who sometimes sin’. However, God sees us as we will be in heaven... as the perfect image of the son and daughter He loves... the perfect reflection of Jesus. This is what the Scripture says of us.

2. In this context the sword is “speaking the Word and standing on the Promises revealed in Scripture.” This is what Jesus did in refuting Satan in His wilderness temptation – Matt 4:1-11. Using the Word defensively is to dispel lies and mistruth, and offensively to speak against moral & ethical wrong doing and injustice.
  3. Here Jesus speaks the Word with the authority given by God. Jesus didn’t try to reason with Satan, or wrestle with him... He dispelled Satan’s effort to thwart God’s purpose in the Messiah with His confidence in the spoken Truth of Scripture.
  4. The conclusion is that the power of the Word itself engages the Spirit within each believer and overcomes the power of darkness. In this context, we are not *trying* to be “salt and light”... instead we *ARE* salt and light because of the Word and the Spirit.
  5. When we find ourselves under Spiritual attack, we are not defenseless... putting faith in action is verbally renouncing the lies and affirming the truth... the truth that is objectively grounded in God’s Word.
- c. Dr. Dave concludes that Spiritual Warfare is the ‘battle for the mind’ – will you believe the truth God says? Or will you believe the lies you hear the adversary and the world say? It is too easy to fall into hearing and believing the world’s perspective... because we know we aren’t the people we want to be, or that we think God expects us to be. We need to remember who we are becoming... a perfect reflection of Jesus with my name and face... and voluntarily cooperate with the Spirit who is working out that very transformation. The choice of living in freedom, joy, empowerment and having our lives bearing the fruit of the Gospel all comes down to a decision to trust God, and to live according to what He says is true... that is the nature of faith in action.

#### 4. APPLICATION OF EPHESIANS AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION:

- a. Fast forward some 30 years...
  - i. The world has changed since Paul wrote the Letter to the Ephesians in 60-62 AD. Paul was executed not long after he completed his letter to the Ephesians, and the Judeo-Christian world has experienced waves of persecution including the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD and the scattering of Jews and Christians throughout the known world. The Apostle John left Jerusalem and had taken up leadership over the region in the 7 most prominent churches listed in Revelation. At the time of his writing, John has been exiled to the Island of Patmos and writes his final gift to the Church the Book of Revelation shortly before he died.
  - ii. Ephesus remained a major metropolitan center and gateway to the Middle East and Asia, and remained the capital city where the eastern Governor resided and ruled. It was also home to numerous temples of occult worship including the great temple of Artemis where the city rose in opposition to the Gospel preached by the Apostle Paul (Acts 19:23-41).
- b. **The Spiritual Letter to the Ephesians from Revelation 2:1-7:** To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the

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seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

- c. **On page 2 of this study on Ephesians we pointed out several characteristics of the Ephesian Church that Paul was compelled to speak into... reprised here for clarity:**
- i. It is clear that this letter is a very special Epistle to a church Paul clearly loved dearly. The theme of 'Love' is highly significant – with the verb form of the word employed 7 times, the noun form 10 times, the participle form used 3 times, and the adjective form used 2 times.
  - ii. In most of the Epistles or New Testament letters, there is a clear problem or purpose into which the Apostle is writing to address. The focus on love appears to support and encourage the Christian community with mutual interdependence... the best way to survive in hostile territory is in a loving community. The nature of the Pagan evil that permeated the city helps explain Paul's discussion of the nature and preparation for engaging in spiritual warfare.
  - iii. The Ephesian's seem to be a church that is doing well and Paul is seen encouraging them rather than scolding them, obviously Paul's being in prison and not knowing when or if he will return to see them adds strength to his desire to encourage and prepare the church. The Epistle to the Ephesians is a letter speaking of the big picture of the eternal purpose of God – with redemptive history finding its consummation in Jesus, and working out the Great Commission in the Church as we await physical renewal at the end of days at Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
- d. **John's Revelation message in many ways picks up and continues Paul's emphasis on Love:**
- i. The message to the church was initially very good... they were working for the Kingdom of God, holding to the truth, and persevering in their faith.
  - ii. Then the message turns very bad... "you have lost your first love." This is a Spiritual catastrophe... their love and passion for Jesus was growing cold.
  - iii. A dear missionary friend of mine was once counseled by his ministry mentor to "guard your fire." When we first come to genuine faith and when we receive our calling and submit to the Lordship of Jesus there is a passion for God that is ignited. As we travel with the Lord in intimacy our passion remains bright... but as we take our focus off the person of Jesus and instead focus upon what we are "doing" even though these may remain good things, we lose our Spiritual vitality... not unlike Peter when he took his eyes off Jesus when walking on the water (Matt 14:27-31). Zondervan's Expository Commentary explains of this event:  
"How far Peter got is unclear, but at Jesus' command he walked on the water. But his outlook changed: when he saw the storm, he began to sink. It was not that he lost faith in himself, but that his faith in Jesus, which was strong enough to get him out of the boat and

walking on the water, was not strong enough to stand up to the storm and his fear distracted him. Therefore Jesus calls him a man of little faith."

- iv. **Great faith is often misunderstood as doing great things. Jesus emphasis is not necessarily on doing stuff at all. Instead, His focus is on our "being" salt and light and Spiritually infused ministers of the Gospel. When we lose our proper focus of Jesus, we tread on dangerous ground.**
- v. **As in any relationship, our love and passion needs to be cultivated to keep it fresh and alive. It needs to be carefully fed and maintained because the adversary wants to put it out. When we are spiritually on fire for God we are dangerous to the Spirit world in opposition to Christ. When we lose our Spiritual edge, we are still saved, but we lose our power and purpose. All the other things we do are important, but nothing is as important as keeping that Spiritual flame of love and intimacy alive.**

e. **John's critique of the Ephesian Church has great import for us today:**

- i. **What was going on in the church at Ephesus? Why would they need such a harsh rebuke from the Spirit?**
- ii. **John's theology consistently holds that Love is the most important thing of all. God is fundamentally Love... and Jesus is Love Personified. Jesus' questions to His disciples... "do you know Me", and "do you Love Me?" These are not rhetorical... they are meant to probe their hearts and pierce their minds... and keep them focused on the main thing.**
- iii. **When people and/or the church forget the primacy of Love and our personal vital relationship with God... we fall back into legalism and bondage. Jesus' rebuke of the Jews in His 1<sup>st</sup> visit on earth was that they followed the Law but lost their love and passion for God. This is an important reminder to the church today... love God, live in a manner pleasing to God, and act rightly in moral and ethical purity.**
- iv. **God is all about relational intimacy... with us as individuals and with His People. It is expressed first between Disciples, and translates outward into the world. Together we are called to His Purpose, and reserved for His use.**
- v. **The primacy of the Great Commandment – "to love God and others" along with the Great Commission – "to evangelize and disciple the world" remain our priority in the Church age.**
- vi. **When people are rightly related to Jesus and the primacy of Love of God is in place... we do naturally the things that please God. When rightly related and spiritually on fire with God, we don't need to "Work at it" to become the people of God, because we "Are it" by nature.**

5. **CONCLUSION... in coming back to Dr Dave's thinking... about Spiritual life and warfare:**

- a. **Our Spiritual health hinges on knowing and believing what God says about Himself, and what He says about us: Dr. Dave concludes that Spiritual Warfare is the 'battle for the mind' – will you believe the truth God says? Or will you believe the lies you hear the adversary and the world say? It is too easy to fall into hearing and believing the latter... because we know we aren't the people we want to be, or that we think God expects us to be. We need to remember who we are becoming... a perfect reflection of Jesus with my name and face... and voluntarily cooperate with the Spirit who is working out that very transformation.**

- b. The choice of living in freedom, joy, empowerment and having our lives bearing the fruit of the Gospel all comes down to a decision to trust God, and to live according to what He says is true... that is the nature of faith in action.**
- c. Satan and the powers in opposition to God work at the periphery of our awareness. The armor encircles us and protects us... but there are inherent weaknesses in the armor due to our flawed belief about who we are in God. We are typically attacked at the weak points. Regardless of what we've done, if you are in Christ, God has redeemed you and the Spirit is sanctifying you. Gaining confidence and strength in our new reality in Christ allows us to stand against any opposition.**