

LD – 6.3 – Discipleship Studies 6.3 - Spiritual Warfare

Excerpts from www.authenticdiscipleship.org Pathway Biblical Literacy/Bible Survey/Epistles/Ephesians

1. EPHESIANS AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION – Dr. David Smith:

Dr. David Smith is the founder of THEODYSSEY... is a seminary professor, pastor, and spiritual formation leadership developer. Feel free to go online to TheOdyssey.org and check out his ministry. The material that follows are from notes I took during one of Dr. Dave's many seminars.

- a. Chiastic Outline of the Letter – Internal structure was a common element that helped ancient writers convey their thoughts. 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 evolving] thinking versus linear [progressive step] 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.
- 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 this:
 1. G - knowing [accepting] the love and power of Christ in the inner-person.
 2. 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 1st about Himself, and 2nd about us.
 - 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... we need not fear the demonic powers and forces of evil, because they want nothing to do with a devoted disciple standing on God's truth... but they will try to influence our understanding and belief and attempt to render disciples 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 'chosen or election' invokes the thought of predetermination; while 'free will' or personal/responsible human choice invokes a self-initiating cooperation with God. This 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 children of God... simultaneously alive in creation and in eternity. God sees us as the perfect reflection of Jesus we will be in Heaven.
 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 now* salt and light... *I am now* 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 the human 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 [or 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

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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. The bottom line of this discussion, is that Spiritual warfare is not merely an adversarial power to encounter... it is instead a foundational identity and truth encounter [Spirit & Truth]. 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).

2. APPLICATION – "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

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described as belonging to God who provides it for us and enables us to employ it. It comes in 2 components:

- 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 both knowing and 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 inner life 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 of Scripture. 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. Because of all of this, Dr. Dave concludes that Spiritual Warfare is the ‘battle for the mind’:

- i. Will you believe the truth God says?**
- ii. Or will you believe the lies you hear the adversary and the world say?**
- iii. 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.**
- iv. 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.**
- v. 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.**