

Ephesians 6 vs 6-24

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[0 : 00] To Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 10. Ephesians 6 and at verse 10.

Just before we start the reading, let's remind ourselves how Paul got to the point of saying, finally. He's been teaching that we should maintain unity, that we should be careful to protect the unity of our relationships in the church.

And he's been giving instruction as to how, as Christians, we should live in this world, knowing that we represent God as we do. We represent God in our living.

And so he's been saying to Christian husbands and wives that you need to mutually support each other and mutually submit to each other out of reverence for Christ.

The wife is required to submit to the authority of her husband. And the feminists leap up and down and get really annoyed about that. And if they read on a wee bit further, they would see that Paul is saying, and husbands, be ready to die for your wives.

[1 : 35] As Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to present her spotless. I remember Selwyn Hughes many years ago put it like this.

He said to a men's meeting, he said, if you want your wife to treat you like a king, try treating her like a queen. Very wise.

So he's teaching about husbands and wives, how they love each other, how they look after, they put the other one first all the time. This is Christ's way of marriage.

And he says, children, obey your parents. Fathers, don't exasperate your children. Slaves, obey your masters. And not just when they're watching you. And he says, masters, remember that you've got a master in heaven.

And don't be harsh with your slaves. Treat them fairly. Treat them kindly. Because as far as father is concerned, he doesn't have favorites.

[2 : 47] He doesn't love masters more than slaves. And so, at verse 10, he says, Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Therefore, put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground. And after you've done everything, to stand.

Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.

[4 : 01] With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Pray also for me that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains.

Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should. Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.

I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are and that he may encourage you. Peace to the brothers and sisters and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. Well, brothers and sisters, what are we to make of this? In some ways you could say, we've got to the end of our series on Ephesians and this is the grand finale.

But in another sense, the grand finale actually happened in the first three chapters. Because you can't improve on what God has done for his people that was spelled out by Paul in the first three chapters.

[5 : 21] We need to refresh our memories of it today, I think, to allow ourselves the amazement that must have come to these Greek thinking people that Paul was writing to.

You need to bear in mind that the heavenly realms for the Greek mind were a place of terror. The heavenly realms in the Greek mind was the place where the gods dwelt.

And the gods were considered to be, like you and me, only much, much worse. If your anger could be out of control, you didn't want to get on the wrong side of a Greek god if he was angry.

Because he would wreck your ship. Or he would strike you dead with a thunderbolt where you were standing. And so the Greeks were terrified of their gods.

And these were make-believe gods. These were gods out of their own understanding. But nonetheless, the heavenly realms were a terrifying realm.

[6 : 28] It was a terrifying place. So when Paul says to the Ephesians that Jesus is now seated in the heavenly realms, far above all principalities and powers and every name that's named, he's actually saying it's your saviour who's in charge in the heavenly realms that you fear so much.

Not these make-believe gods. It's your saviour who's in the heavenly realms. The heavenly realms are real, but not the gods. The heavenly realms are real. And it's your saviour who's in charge there.

And then he goes on to say the most astonishing thing. He says, and you in Christ have been raised up and seated with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. So you occupy the heavenly realms as well.

This must have been absolutely staggering to people of a Greek cultured mind with all their understanding of how the gods were and where they dwelt and all the rest of it.

And suddenly Paul is actually saying to these Christians, you need to understand that your God reigns supreme over absolutely everything. And he has placed his son in the highest place.

[7 : 42] And then in Christ, because one died for all, one died as a representative of all. If you believe in Christ, you have been raised up in him.

And what he enjoys, you enjoy. What God has done for the head, he has also done for the body. You cannot read the first three chapters of Ephesians without coming to that conclusion.

I'm going to sum that up again. What God has done for the head, he has done for the body. When we read in the first chapter that God has raised Jesus up and seated him in the heavenly realms, we think, well, we think, no surprise there.

Of course he has. I mean, look at what Jesus has accomplished. Yes, of course we're not surprised to find Jesus raised up and seated in the heavenly realms. He has far above all principalities and powers.

That's no surprise. But the surprise comes in chapter 2, when we discover that God has done exactly the same thing for the believer. That's the surprise.

[8 : 44] Now, I don't know how you have a grand finale after that. Okay? I really don't know how you have a grand finale after that. How do you better that than to say that Jeanette Kerr and Colin and Stephen Palmer there and others are raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly realms?

That that's our position in Christ. There's a real challenge, brothers and sisters, to the way that we think.

There's a real challenge to the way that we think. We don't think of ourselves in these terms. But this is literally true for Paul. You're not going to get the benefit of what Paul has written to the Ephesians if you question these things.

It is literally true that we have been raised up and seated in the heavenly realms, put in the position of authority that Jesus occupies. with principalities and powers and dark angels and demons beneath our feet.

So that when we fight, that's why Paul is able to say things like, we are more than conquerors. Do you remember the old hymn? What was it called?

[10 : 12] Sorry, my mind is just suddenly going to blank. I remembered the hymn and forgot it within a split second. Don't get any older. You'll remember the hymn if I tell you the line that comes from it.

From victory unto victory, his army he shall lead. What's it called? Stand up, stand up for Jesus.

There we go. Thank you. Thank you for coming to the rescue of an old codger. Stand up for Jesus. From victory to victory, his army he shall lead.

That's how lines like that do not make sense unless we're already in a position of victory. It is total nonsense for Paul to say we are more than conquerors if we don't already have a victory.

So we need to change the way that we think brothers and sisters. We need to get back into it. In fact, one of the greatest dangers that could happen today is we all go home and we say, right, well, we've done Ephesians.

[11 : 28] We've done Ephesians. God forbid that we've done Ephesians. I'll tell you when we've done Ephesians. We've done it when we're living it. We've done it when it's part and parcel of the way that we think.

And we really do have this understanding of ourselves. You know, there are people in life that you meet who've got a bearing about them, haven't they? The queen is an obvious example.

She has such a bearing about her. She's had some of the most horrendous things happen to her throughout her long reign. And yet somehow or other, she's always had the bearing of a monarch, hasn't she?

I'm a great admirer of our queen. And I think she has a real bearing about her, which sadly some members of her family seem not to have. But the queen herself has this bearing about her.

When I was a lot younger, I moved in very heady circles, I have to tell you. And this wee laddie, I came from this sort of place where the kids bite the dogs.

[12 : 33] But the fact of the matter is that I moved in very heady circles. And a lot of my friends were old Etonians. They had been to Eton and Harrow and places like that.

And they had a bearing about them, these people. Because they understood that they were being groomed by their education. They were being groomed for leadership. They expected to become senior figures in the government one day.

Or senior, or captains of industry. They expected that. It was bred into them. And they had this bearing about them. I want to tell you, we'll begin to benefit from what Paul has actually said in his first three chapters.

When we have some kind of bearing about us. When we begin to think about ourselves quite differently from the way that we do right now. We really do need to ponder on these chapters and understand that we are not the people that we think we are.

We're not just ordinary Joe Bloggs or Gene or whatever. We're just, we are so, so different from that. Because God has given us an elevated status as a gift that we could never have accomplished or achieved for ourselves.

[13 : 50] And it's not a call to put a strut on. Because Christians don't strut. Jesus didn't strut. It's not that kind of bearing that we're talking about.

But we're talking about a self-understanding that changes the way that you look at life. Because actually you're a representative of the kingdom of God on earth.

You're a member of a colony of heaven on earth. You are the king's own children. God once said to the children of Israel, He said, My name is blasphemed among the nations because of you.

What's He saying? He's actually saying, You're giving me a bad reputation. Because the nations know that you represent me. And they look at you and all they see is a mirror image of themselves.

Because you're behaving exactly like the nations round about. Instead of living according to the way that I have set out for you by Moses. If you would obey my law, if you would listen to me, you wouldn't live the way that you do.

[14 : 57] You would live a totally different way and the nations would learn what I am like. You're giving the nations round about the impression that your God is exactly like their gods.

They have gods that they worship by having sex with animals. You're having sex with animals. That sort of thing was going on in ancient Israel.

It was appalling. And they bore the name of God. That's a serious thing. God takes His name very, very seriously. And all of us as parents, we know full well that it's not always possible to protect ourselves from the things that our kids do that can reflect badly on us.

Well, actually, as a parent, God has the same problem. And He loves us dearly. But He expects us to represent Him here in this world.

And that means that we can't be mistaken for the people of the world. We must not be mistaken for the people of the world. And so He then goes on to say, since in chapters 1 to 3, you've got this totally different understanding of who you are and indeed where you are because you've got a dual address.

[16 : 18] You're on the earth, but you're also positioned in heaven. As a result of that, you should therefore have a different lifestyle from everybody else. And so wives submit to your husbands.

That was unheard of in ancient Greek society. Wives submit to your husbands. Husbands, love your wives and be prepared to die for them. Children, obey your parents.

Masters treat slaves as though they're your brother and sister. These things are radical. They were rebel used to me. And what were they going to do?

They were actually going to be, if they lived that way, they were going to be saying to the world, actually, we're in this world, but we're not of this world. You can't mistake us for Babylonians.

Because we belong to the living God and we live as He teaches us. And His Spirit is within us. The Spirit of His own Son is within us. And if that calls us to sacrifice and lay down our lives for the good of people who hate us, then we will love our enemies and we will obey God rather than men.

[17 : 26] So you're looking at something astonishing here. So when Paul comes here to this 10th verse of chapter 6 and says, Finally, what's he doing?

Well, a few weeks ago, we looked at what salvation really is. And we said, salvation actually has two halves to it. The first half of salvation has to do with our being put right with God, our being justified freely by His gift of grace.

The second half has to do with how we respond to Him and what He's done for us. So the first half is about His work for us. And the second half of salvation is about our walk with Him.

The first half is about His saviourhood, what He does as saviour for us that we can't do for ourselves. The second part of salvation is about His lordship and the obedience that we owe to Him as Lord.

So there's His work and His saviourhood, and that's His. He alone can do that work.

[18 : 41] He alone has accomplished that work. He alone can save. But then comes our response. How do we walk in this world as those who've been saved? How do we recognize that He is Lord and trumpet to the entire world around us that He is Lord?

Well, Paul says, if that's your desire, if you want to live a godly life, you will be persecuted. And so finally, he says, you're going to have to reckon with the reality of opposition.

Now here, brothers and sisters, something I think is a very sad thing to have to say, but I know literally, probably thousands of evangelicals here and around the world, and I can tell you it's a minority of evangelicals who actually take spiritual warfare seriously.

It's a minority of Bible believers who actually take this little section of chapter 6 and do anything practical with it.

In fact, I could line up for you several ministers that I know right now, ministers, Baptist ministers, who don't believe in the devil, who don't believe in principalities and powers and think this is something to do with mythology or whatever.

[20 : 07] Paul gives us a clue of how his mind is working here. If you look forward to verse 20, he says, verse 19 and 20, he's asking for prayer.

Now this is a man who has been through the most astonishing things. And he's praying here, he's asking for the prayers of the saints.

He says, I want to be able to speak words. I want to be able to do so fearlessly so that I may make known the mystery of the gospel. He says, I'm an ambassador in chains.

I represent God, but I'm in chains. And when I get my opportunity to speak, I don't want to be fearful. I want to be fearless. Please pray for me that I'll be fearless.

And we can hardly imagine that a man of Paul's caliber would need a prayer like that. Of course he would be fearless. Actually, no. There's no of course about it at all. Paul is an absolute realist here.

[21 : 09] He's saying, no, no, no, no. I know the cruelty of the Romans. I know what they're capable of. I know what they could do to me in the next few hours.

I'm Caesar's prisoner. Caesar has the earthly power of life and death over me right now. And he can decide not only if I die, but how I die. And he says, I just, I want to be fearless.

And I'm not taking it for granted that I'll be fearless. I need your prayers. I need your prayers. Okay, so, now here's a little question for us all then.

What do we think about Paul here? Is Paul, is he absolutely realistic here or is he dealing in fairy tales? If he were alive today, would he still believe in principalities and powers and rulers of the present darkness?

Would he still believe in that? Or would he take a more scientific approach and say, well, of course, we don't believe in those things today. Huh? The scholars have voted the devil out and so, of course, he's gone.

[22 : 20] But simple folks would like to know who carries his business on. You see, the fact of the matter is, folks, that we're dealing with something absolutely real here.

We need to understand that the reason a lot of people don't believe is because the God of this age, Satan, a real being, a real person, has blinded their minds so they cannot see and come to a knowledge of the truth.

There is a real malevolent being and you could not exaggerate the malevolence in this being. You could not exaggerate it.

It's completely off the scale. They're teaching very little children in public libraries how to accept the LGBT message.

They're having drag queens and drag kings in full costume come into the public library and sit and do the story reading time with the kids. These things are being endorsed by local authority.

[23 : 35] They're being endorsed by government level. And those of us who dare to say anything against these things are immediately in trouble with the authorities. You could not exaggerate the malevolence of Satan towards the human race.

He resents the fact that the image of God is in each one of us and anything that reminds him of God he hates. And the people who are his servants right now, unwittingly his servants, are hated by the devil as much as the people he uses them to attack.

Our struggle, he says, now let's hear this. Do we hear this? Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. Our struggle is not against people.

My enemies are not the people who voted differently from me in the last election. My enemies are not the LGBT movement.

My enemies are not the followers of Islam. And that sets me free, you see, because Jesus comes along and says, love your enemies. So these people that Satan wants you to think are your enemies are not your enemies.

[25 : 05] Because our struggle is not with people. Our struggle is against principalities and powers, against world rulers of this present darkness. My brothers and sisters, our Christianity and our church is never going to go anywhere at all if we don't get this right.

If we don't understand that Paul is placing something on us here that is not an optional extra for Christians to believe. our struggle is not against flesh and blood.

We are actually wrestling against principalities and powers. And we are told that in order for us to benefit from what Paul has taught in the first three chapters and in order for us to live out our lives with the godliness and the graciousness that he has taught in the last three chapters, we better expect opposition and we are going to get it from the devil and the powers of darkness and the devil will use other people to get at us.

Now, I will be honest with you, when I discovered that the LGBT flag was among all the international flags the other day, I felt anger rising in me.

I will say that publicly, I do not care who knows that that is my attitude, I felt anger rising in me, I thought, the cheek of it, that we have got a group of people who are not a race and they are not a nationality but they have managed to sneak their flag in there as though they were an actual people group that should be treated with the same respect as a nation or as a race.

[26 : 56] And I felt anger rising in me and then later in the day as I had huffed and puffed about this for quite a while, I realized that God was saying to me, David, you're playing right into the enemy's hands because you're seeing the people of this flag as your enemy and they're not.

They're people for whom my son died. And the enemy is the powers of darkness that are behind this evil movement. And if you don't get that right, you're going to end up fighting people and falling right into the devil's trap.

That's what causes all the wars in the world. We all target the wrong enemy. If we don't get this right, if we disbelieve what Paul is saying here, if we think, oh, that's Paul's opinion.

Listen, I want to tell you folks, I've got a commentary on my shelf that has remained on my shelf for the past 40 years and I haven't opened it because I got to a part of the introduction and I thought there's nothing in this commentary I would want to read any further because of something that this scholar, and he's a well-respected scholar, I could tell you his name but I won't.

He's a well-respected scholar and he says this in his introduction and I quote, it's a commentary on the epistle to the Romans and he says, from time to time I believe that Paul is wrong and I have not hesitated to say so.

[28 : 31] Unquote. From time to time I think that Paul is wrong and I have not hesitated to say so.

So basically what this scholar is saying is that there are times when you pick up the epistle to the Romans and you're reading the word of God and then suddenly you come to another verse or a few verses or another chapter and it's not the word of God anymore it's just the word of Paul.

So sort of, you know, that's his view but I've got mine. My brothers and sisters, if the epistle to the Romans is only the word of Paul then we're in a mess.

And if this scholar is capable of deciding which verses of the Bible we should believe and which we should reject then that scholar is entitled to be the next Pope because that's the ancient feud between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches.

The Roman Catholic Church has always maintained that the Bible is not the final authority. That the word of the Pope and the Cardinals is the final authority. The traditions of the Church are the final authority.

[29 : 51] When William Tyndale was hated for translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into English a Roman Catholic bishop had a go at him across the dinner table.

And the Roman Catholic bishop said, and I quote and you would hardly believe that this came from the lips of a man. But he says we'd be better without God's word than the popes.

Hello? This is what the bishop said to Tyndale back in the 16th century. We'd be better without God's word than the popes. And Tyndale said this in response.

He said, if God spares my life these many days I'll see to it that the plowboy knows more of the scripture than you do. That was Tyndale's point when he was translating the scriptures and so we come here and we have to ask ourselves serious questions about what Paul is saying here.

If our struggle is not against flesh and blood do we believe what Paul's saying or is that just the word of Paul? Because there are plenty of Christians who disagree with Paul here.

[31 : 04] They don't think there is a devil. they don't think there is an unseen realm of evil beings. If we disagree with Paul then maybe we should just join the Roman Catholic Church.

It's as serious as that folks. Our struggle is not against people. It's against these evil beings. And that's why we need to put on the full armor.

I'm not even going to go into the full armor today. There is no need because the work of Jesus is our armor. And if we understand the work of Jesus then we prayerfully clothe ourselves with that work every day in life.

We shouldn't really tackle a day without turning to this chapter I don't think and saying Lord thank you for what your son has done for me. And I just take all that to myself and I go out into this world clothed with Christ clothed with what he has done for me.

Confident. Not in myself but in what he has accomplished for me. So brothers and sisters here it is. Paul is saying at the end of his letter I'm an ambassador in chains.

[32 : 17] But there's an irony in that because he's chained to his audience. I love this. I mean this man has written the most astonishing letter to the church.

church and he's written it as though he were the free one. It's the Roman soldiers who were the prisoners. They were prisoners to Paul's message. They were chained to him 24-7.

And Paul would be thanking God that these men couldn't get away from him and he was able to preach the gospel to them. but he's a realist as well and he's saying I know the hatred that there is against us.

I know the opposition that we will face and that you will face and I'm warning you about that opposition now and for the same reason that I know about that opposition I'm praying that you will pray for me so that when the chance comes for me to proclaim the gospel perhaps in front of Caesar himself my knees won't buckle and my tongue won't stick to the roof of my mouth and I won't quake with fear but I'll deliver the word of God boldly and fearlessly as I should because even Caesar needs to hear that word.

Let's pray. Lord God our Heavenly Father we bless you you're absolutely amazing to us that your servant would write with such power with such authority from the dank dungeon of Rome to encourage the church not just in Ephesus but right down through the ages to our very day 2000 years later and that we could stand on his word as it really is the very word of God spoken and dictated by your apostle Father we bless you we know that you would have answered the prayers of his heart we know that when the chance came for him to declare the gospel again he would do so fearlessly we know you would have answered his prayer we know you would have been there for him we know you would not have let him down and so

[34 : 42] Lord we ask you please help us go home today absolutely determined that we will not question what's on your page but if you tell us that the opposition we really face is not from people but from the powers of darkness and that we need to fight as you understand the fighting and that we need to take the armor of God to ourselves and the sword of the spirit which is your word that we would learn how to do that and that prayerfully we would look to Jesus to see us through the battles that will come our land is becoming more and more hostile to you father we pray that we may be friends to our enemies and that we may represent your holy name for your glory in Jesus name Amen