

Exegetical Paper: Ephesians 6:10 – 20

by

Joe Fleener

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Dr. Albin Huss & Prof. Mark Farnham
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INTRODUCTION

“The Armor of God,” this is such a common phrase among Christians, but how many really understand the text from which this comes? Ephesians 6:10-20 is a section of scripture for which a tremendous amount of material has been written through the centuries. The purpose of this paper is not to rehash this wealth of information, much good and some not so good. The purpose is rather to work through the passage verse by verse exegeting the text, asking primarily, what did this text mean to those who read/heard it first? Secondly asking what does this text mean for believers of all time? This can be thought of as developing an exegetical proposition and a theological proposition, respectively. Although the theological implications for all believers are inherently practical, this paper will not directly develop practical or homiletical principles. For further discussion, as the text develops, the contemporary metaphor for the original readers will be investigated. Traditionally it has been viewed that Paul's referent was a Roman soldier and the contemporary referent of the recipients would also have been a Roman soldier. However, some have suggested that there is the possibility that Paul's source referent, rather than a Roman soldier was the Divine Warrior from Isaiah, and the contemporary referent of the recipients, was an arena fighter rather than a Roman soldier. This paper will attempt to demonstrate whether the traditional view, or this “new” suggestion is more valid when held up to the text, or possibly a combination of the two.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although the phrase ἐν ἑφέσῳ does not appear to be original to the letter as it was written by Paul¹, it is clear from the context of Acts and the letter itself, along with historical data, that this letter's primary destination would have been the city of Ephesus. The letter then

¹Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*. (United Bible Societies, 1971), 601

would have been circulated throughout Asia Minor to many other churches. Considering Ephesus as the primary point of destination it will be the focus of this historical background.

Paul visited Ephesus on his second (Acts 18:19-21) and third (Acts 19:8-10; 20:31) missionary journeys. It was during this third trip that Paul stayed in Ephesus for two years. Paul was probably not the first person to preach Christianity in Ephesus, but he probably had the largest impact on the people and the Diana cult economy.

Ephesus was one of the great Roman cities. Perfectly situated geographically for trade by sea and by land, it was wealthy and full of sin and vices. To add to this, the large temple to the Goddess Diana was on the hill overlooking the city, where criminals would seek shelter and temple prostitutes would perform their work. Because of trade and the temple, this city attracted large numbers of travelers and pilgrims. Being one of the primary ports in Asia Minor and one of the more significant Roman cities, this city would have been familiar with Roman soldiers and their battle gear. At the same time Ephesus housed one of the great arenas outside of Rome, which was used for gladiatorial arena fighting. These two images, all too familiar to the eyes of an Ephesian believer, will play a part in the exegesis of the passage. It was here that Paul helped build up and grow a vibrant church for Christ, and it was to this location that Paul primarily sends the letter.

At the time of the writing of this letter, Paul was in prison in Rome. In Acts 23:23 Paul is moved by night to Caesarea and then in Acts 24 he appears before Felix the governor. After appearing before Festus in Acts 25 and Agrippa in Acts 26 with no increased possibility of being freed from prison, Paul then exercises his right as a Roman citizen and appeals to Caesar. In Acts 27, he is sent to Rome. It is from Rome, that he sends this letter back to the areas of Asia Minor surrounding Ephesus.

It is within Ephesians that Paul most clearly reveals the sovereignty and plan of God for the church. It is here that he shows the content of the “mystery of the gospel,” -- that of bring Jews and Gentiles together as one in Christ. The first three chapters contain rich truth about God and his plan for the church. The final three chapters contain challenging exhortations on how the individual believer is to live his life in light of the theological truths revealed in chapters 1-3.

The passage this paper is focusing on comes near the end to the entire letter. After revealing the great high truths of chapters 1-3 and exhorting the people to “walk” according to these truths, Paul now reveals the difficulty that they will face in attempting to follow this path. He shows them who their real enemy is and displays for them the equipment God has given them, that if utilized will guarantee victory.

PARAGRAPH LIMITS AND PLACE WITHIN THE BOOK

Before discussing the place this section has within the book of Ephesians, it must first be demonstrated that verses 10 – 20 form a single paragraph. Some commentators would see two paragraphs, one from verse ten through 17 and the other from verse 18 through 20.

Verse 10 begins with Τοῦ λοιποῦ² which here is functioning as a summary indicator signifying the final point to be made in relation to the preceding material. Therefore this is introducing a new paragraph. This introductory phrase in verse ten is followed by a series of imperatives coupled with participles in verses 11 through 17, clearly showing the connectedness of these verses.

Verse 18 begins with the preposition Διὰ signifying not the beginning of a new section, but the continuation of a thought. All that is contained in verses 10 through 17 is to be done “with” all that is revealed in verses 18 through 20.

²The accusative variant Τὸ λοιπὸν has much broader textual support as compared to the genitive. Even so the NA27 does not even reference the variant and chooses the genitive. However, it seems clear that in the context either variant would carry the same meaning. See the discussion in Hoehner, pg. 819, footnote number 1.

It is not until verse 21 that Paul changes subjects and focus completely. Here he introduces Tychicus and in verses 21 and 22 expands on his role as their informer/encourager.

When discussing the place of this passage within the book, one is immediately confronted with the question of whether this passage is summarizing and concluding the entire book or just the preceding section from chapter four verse one. Hoehner argues against this being a summary of the entire epistle stating: "...the author of Ephesians gives no obvious hints of links with the whole book nor is there any sort of recapitulation or an emotional call to action based on those facts..."³

However, there does in fact seem to be a relationship between this passage and the entire epistle. Moritz has demonstrated, quite convincingly, the repetition of themes and terminology.⁴ Therefore, Paul is drawing a conclusion to his entire letter beginning in these verses using an incredibly vivid picture to settle in the readers/listeners mind all that has been said thus far.

EXEGETICAL OBSERVATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS FROM EPHESIANS 6:10-20

Text: 6:10 Τοῦ λοιποῦ, ἐνδυναμοῦσθε ἐν κυρίῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ.

Translation: 6:10 Finally, be strengthened in the Lord that is in the strength of His power.

Taking the genitive form of Τοῦ λοιποῦ from the NA27 text, Paul introduces the conclusion to his letter with this summary statement, "finally." As mentioned above Moritz has demonstrated that several of the themes from the following verses are addressed throughout the first five chapters.⁵ It is in this passage that the reader/listener learns of the opposition he will face and the hope in Christ he has for all that Paul has taught in the preceding parts of the letter.

Immediately Paul reveals the tone of this passage with the list of five imperatives. The verb present imperative ἐνδυναμοῦσθε could be middle in form, but is best seen in this passage

³Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians An Exegetical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 817.

⁴Thorsten Moritz, *A Profound Mystery The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians*. (New York: Brill, 1997), 181.

⁵Ibid., 182

as a passive. It has the meaning here of “be made strong” or “be strengthened.” This signifies that that strength the believer is in need of, does not come from within himself, but from an external source.

This source is indicated by the use of the preposition ἐν denoting the sphere of the believer's strength. The believer's strength is to be found in the Lord. The και is functioning exegetically giving a more specific meaning to the general statement. The believer's strength is to be found “in the Lord that is in His strength.” Even more specifically, this is followed by another genitive of sphere τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ giving further clarification to the sphere, in which lies the believer's strength. The believer is being challenged to be strengthened in the Lord, that is, in the power of the Lord's strength.

Text: 6:11 ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου·

Translation: 6:11 Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand against the schemes of the devil

In verse 11 Paul begins his series of aorist imperatives with ἐνδύσασθε meaning “to put on clothes” either literally or metaphorically. The imperative, being a command, is by its very nature indicating urgency on the believer. The middle voice indicates this is something the believer must do to himself/herself.

The believer is to put on the πανοπλίαν, “armor of God.” It is here that one begins to ask the question, what is being illustrated by the use of “armor?” Traditionally the view has been that the referent in the mind of the Ephesians was a Roman soldier.⁶ However, Moritz suggests an alternative contemporary referent of a arena fighter. Moritz also suggests that it is equally important to ask, “what is the source of the author's metaphor?”⁷ As we proceed through the descriptions of the pieces of armor we will ask these questions, seeking answers from the context and historical background. To be certain Paul is using armor as a metaphor for he goes on to

describe it as the armor “of God”, most likely a genitive of origin, indicating that it is God who provides the armor.

Paul goes on to describe the purpose of clothing oneself with the armor from God, by the use of the preposition πρὸς followed by the articular present middle infinitive τὸ δύνασθαι⁸, meaning “to be capable of.”⁹ This is followed by the aorist active infinitive στῆναι meaning to “hold one's ground, to resist.”¹⁰ Within the context, this is speaking of a defensive resistance and pictures one who has a firm hold on his position and will not lose rank.

Paul explains that the believer must stand firm, πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου, “against the schemes of the Devil.” The use of the preposition πρὸς here indicates close combat even the idea of “face to face.”¹¹ μεθοδείας is not used prior to the New Testament and is only used here and in 4:14 in the New Testament. It has the idea of “scheming, craftiness.”¹² The plural may be being used to indicate that it is not just one big scheme of the Devil, but the many and multi-faceted schemes that the believer must stand against.

Text: 6:12 ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

Translation: 6:12 because our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.

Verse 12 begins with the causal conjunction ὅτι giving further reason why the believer is to put on the armor of God. The reason Paul gives is the nature of the enemy and therefore the nature of the πάλη “struggle.” The primary meaning of πάλη is “wrestle” or “engagement in a

6Hoehner, O'Brien, Neufeld,

7Ibid., 205

8Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 592.

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challenging contest.”¹³ Although this does open the possibility for Moritz's suggestion that the contemporary referent is an arena fighter, Gudorf has successfully shown that the fully armored Roman soldier was an accomplished wrestler and fully able to withstand face-to-face combat.¹⁴ Here Paul once again uses the preposition *πρὸς* followed by the accusative to indicate face-to-face combat. Additionally, Paul uses the personal pronoun *ἡμῖν* here to indicate his common standing with the readers/hearers, he is in this same struggle. Although translated possessively it is a dative of reference, “the struggle with reference to us.”

Paul clearly states that our struggle is not physical “against blood and flesh”, but spiritual. Paul changes the normal word order of “flesh and blood,” perhaps for variety, or emphasis, whatever his reason for the change, the meaning seems to be the same, he is not talking about a physical struggle. The adversative *ἀλλὰ* introduces to enemy as being the opposite of “blood and flesh.”

Following the adversative conjunction is a series of prepositional phrases each introduced by the preposition *πρὸς* meaning “against.”¹⁵ This rapid fire listing of prepositional phrases without intervening conjunctions is used for emphasis. Rather than attempting to see in the list different enemies or four different categories of enemies, Paul is simply emphasizing the enormity of the struggle, by listing four descriptions of the believer's enemy. This enemy is described as “rulers,” “powers,” and “world-rulers.” A further description is given by the use of “darkness.” By indicating that the enemy is of “this darkness,” Paul is using a familiar term to the New Testament to describe to “the realm and power of sin, the place where the God of light does not dwell.”¹⁶

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14Michael E. Gudorf, “The Use of *πάλη* in Ephesians 6:12,” *JBL* 117 (summer 1998): 332-34.

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16Hoehner, 827.

Paul goes on to indicate the locale of these enemies as being “in the heavens.” This has given rise to much discussion as to the location of the struggle being described by Paul. Each time in Ephesians this prepositional phrase is used ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10), it is describing a locale. It seems clear from the immediate context that here this phrase is referring to the realm of the Devil and his followers. However, at least an implication toward the locale of the struggle cannot be ruled out. The believer according to Ephesians is now presently both a citizen of earth and heaven. There are some aspects of this struggle that will be played out on Earth, while other aspects will be played out in the heavens.

Text: 6:13 διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στήναι.

Translation: 6:13 For this cause, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand.

Paul uses διὰ τοῦτο here to introduce a causal conclusion. In this verse Paul basically restates verse 11, by reiterating the “reason” the believer is to take up the armor of God. Here Paul uses ἀναλάβετε which is basically synonymous with ἐνδύσασθε in verse 11 once again as an imperative indicating the urgency it is for the believer to “pick up and carry”¹⁷ this armor that Paul is about ready to describe in more detail. The active voice puts the responsibility on the believer to obey. As in verse 11, here too Paul gives the purpose for taking up this armor. In this verse the purpose is introduced by the conjunction ἵνα, unlike verse 11, but the purpose is the same nonetheless, to be capable of standing your ground. Here Paul uses the aorist active infinitive ἀντιστῆναι which again carries the defensive idea of “withstand.”¹⁸

Although in this verse Paul adds the statement ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ, “in the evil day.” This phrase initiates the discussion regarding the “when” of the struggle being described. The common use of the singular “evil day” in the New Testament refers to the end of the present age,

¹⁷Hoehner, 832

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just prior to the second coming of Christ. Even, Paul when he wants to refer to the present evil days uses the plural in 5:16. However, it seems clear from the immediate context that Paul is here referring to an ongoing struggle for the believer. Although, there is most likely a eschatological implication to the use of the phrase as well.

Paul concludes this general discussion of the armor of God with the use of a consummative aorist participle *κατεργασάμενοι* stressing that after everything has been done and all the armor has been taken up, the object is “to stand.”

Text: 6:14 *στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης*

Translation: 6:14 Stand firm therefore, having fastened your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate that is righteousness

Paul begins his specific description of the armor of God by reiterating the purpose of “standing firm”, this time by the use of the aorist active imperative *στήτε*. Again the use of the imperative indicates urgency on the part of the believer to stand. This urgency is heightened by the fact that that the purpose of “standing firm” has been stated by Paul no less that four times in three verses. Here Paul uses the inferential conjunction *οὖν*, “therefore” to show the result or inference to all the he has previously stated.

This command to stand is followed by a description of the various pieces of armor. Paul introduces the first four pieces with the use of an aorist participle. These participles probably indicate a logical antecedent to the main verb “to stand,” but more likely indicate the cause.¹⁹ Each of these participles are also in the middle voice, denoting the believer's responsibility to follow the action described.

Paul first states that the believer is to “gird” or “fasten” themselves “with truth.” Here Paul is probably referring to the girdle one would wear as an apron that the other armor pieces would fasten to. *ἐν ἀληθείᾳ* is functioning here as a instrumental dative, indicating with what

the believer is to fasten about their waist. This primarily refers to the subjective truth of God and all this is truthful and trustworthy (Phil. 4:8). This piece is essential for all the other pieces of armor, just as truth is essential to all other qualities a believer is in need of to stand their ground spiritually.

The second piece of armor is introduced with another aorist middle participle ἐνδυσάμενοι . The item that the believer is to “have put on” is a breastplate. The breastplate was a protective covering for the chest usually made of leather and sometimes chain mail. Here this breastplate is followed by a genitive of apposition τῆς δικαιοσύνης meaning “which is righteousness.”

It is in this verse that Paul begins to reveal the source of his metaphor. The first part of this verse is a clear reference to Isaiah 11:5 where God's divine warrior is described as having His loins girded with truth. The second half of the verse is a reference to Isaiah 59:17 where God's divine warrior is described as wearing a breastplate of righteousness.²⁰

At this point there seems to be no conclusive evidence as to whether the contemporary referent would have been a Roman soldier or a arena fighter. They both would have worn a girdle of some kind and they both would have had some kind of breastplate.

Text: 6:15 καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης,

Translation: 6:15 and having fitted your feet with the preparation that comes from the gospel of peace,

Again Paul introduces the next piece of armor with a aorist middle participle. Here there is no noun mentioned to clarify with what exactly they are to “fit” or “shod” their feet. Although a metaphor is helpful to take people from the known to the unknown, Paul's focus seems to be on the explanation of the metaphor more that on the individual items of it. Whether he is referring to

¹⁹Wallace, 629 n. 41.

²⁰Moritz, 188; Hoehner, 840-41; Tremper Longman III, “The Divine Warrior: The New Testament Use of an Old Testament Motif,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 44:2 (Fall 1982): 305.

the heavy Roman spiked sandals of a soldier or the light weight sandals of an arena fighter cannot be known in this context.

However, Paul does make it clear what he is aiming to focus on, the believer is to be fit with the ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ. Paul uses an instrumental dative followed by a genitive of source followed by a genitive of content to bring clarity to this piece of armor. This is the steady and steadfast preparation that finds its source in the gospel, the contents of which is peace. This is not referring to preaching the gospel of peace, as though it is an offensive weapon of some kind, but rather it is once again defensive in focus, by giving the firm ground on which the believer is to stand fast.

Although there is clear reference in the previous verse to the Divine Warrior in Isaiah, here it is not as clear. Although one is tempted to think back to Isaiah 52:7 and peace being preached to the Jews and Gentiles²¹ it seems clear from this passage that this is not what Paul has in mind. In fact Moritz suggests that the purpose of the prepositional phrase ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης is to add clarification to something that the original readers would not have been able to find adequate explanation for in the Old Testament.²² Moritz sees this pattern throughout verses 14-17.

Text: 6:16 ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ [τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι·

Translation: 6:16 in addition to all of this, by taking up the shield, that is faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one

The fourth item in the believer's armor is introduced with two changes. 1) There is not conjunction and 2) the participle is an aorist active rather than a middle, still indicating a causal relationship to the main verb back in verse 14, “to stand,” the imperative still laying the responsibility on the believer for obedience. The introductory prepositional phrase ἐν πᾶσιν

²¹Moritz, 192.

²²Moritz, 193.

carries the meaning “above all,” or “in addition to all” the idea being, in addition to all the pieces of armor mentioned before, the believer is to pick up the shield of faith.

The shield *θυρεὸν* is the one piece of armor mentioned thus far that is clearly that of a Roman soldier. The arena fighter, if he had a shield at all, would only have had the small round *ασπίς*. The *θυρεὸν* was the large door size shield carried by the Roman army. These shields were large enough to cover the entire body and all the other pieces of the armor. When the Roman soldiers were in rank, the first line could place their shields on the ground, while the line behind them could place theirs over the first line's heads meeting the bottom their shield with the top of the first line's. In this formation the Roman's were virtually invincible.²³ Unfortunately Moritz does not mention this at all in his discussion and presentation of the arena fighter. Although it does not rule out the possibility of similarities between Paul's description and that of an arena fighter, it seems clear that from this piece of armor, the contemporary referent in the minds of the readers would have been that of a Roman soldier.

Paul further describes his shield with an appositional genitive “of faith” or “that is faith.” For the believer his/her shield is his/her subjective faith in the finished work of Christ. This faith will give him a firm stand, continuing the defensive idea Paul has been expounding thus far. Paul continues with the use of the instrumental relative prepositional phrase *ἐν ᾧ* describing this shield that is faith being the instrument that is capable of extinguishing the fiery darts of the evil one. This is a clear(a)Tj 5.2901 0 Td (t)Tj 3.36643 0 Td (6.01148 0 Td.2901 (e)Tj 5.2901 0 Td ()Tj 3.00574 0 Td

Text: 6:17 καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὅ ἐστιν ῥῆμα θεοῦ.

Translation: 6:17 and take the helmet, that is salvation, and the sword, of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

The next two pieces of armor are introduced by the connecting conjunction *καὶ* and another imperative rather than a participle as the previous four pieces. This connecting conjunction and imperative combination makes this parallel to the imperative in verse 14 “to stand” rather than the preceding participles. Having already placed all the other pieces of armor on his body the believer is now to “take up” or “grasp in his hand”²⁴ the final two pieces, the helmet and sword. This is consistent with the dressing of the Roman soldier in his armor, he would have placed all the others pieces on and then he would take his helmet and sword.

The helmet is described by *τοῦ σωτηρίου* which is most likely a genitive of apposition, “the helmet that is salvation.” The use of the neuter *σωτηρίου* rather than the feminine confirms that this is an allusion back to God's Divine Warrior in Isaiah 59:17.²⁵ The salvation mentioned here is the conscious awareness of the believer that he is saved and that no matter what the present circumstances my look like, his savior has already conquered all.

Paul continues with the second item the believer is to “take up” -- his sword. *μάχαιραν* was the term most often used of a large knife or short dagger type sword.²⁶ Most commentators will state that this is the only offensive weapon in the believer's armor.²⁷ However, this seems very unlikely. First, Paul has obviously intentionally left out the mention of all other offensive weapons that the Roman soldier would have had in his arsenal, the javelin, spear, etc. More revealing, Paul has left out the offensive weapons and aggressive language found throughout Isaiah when further describing the Divine Warrior. Lastly, this short dagger type sword was not one a soldier would use to offensively attack his enemy, but would keep close to him to use

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25Moritz, 850.

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defensively, in case the enemy got to close. Once again, even in Paul's choice of terms and what he does not mention it is clear that he is describing the defensive stand of the believer.

Paul follows his mention of this sword with a genitive of source (the Spirit), followed by a genitive of apposition (the Word). This is further clarified by a genitive of origin (of God). This sword, which is the Word of God, is given by the Spirit and finds its origin in God. Keeping with the defensive understanding of Paul's use of these terms, he must not be speaking here of an evangelistic or expository preaching use of God's word, but the use of God's Word to defend oneself against the onslaughts of the enemy. This has been seen in the life of Paul already and, as will be seen in the next few verses, is a reality Paul is about to face again.

Text: 6:18 Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκαρτερήσει καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἀγίων

Translation: 6:18 With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints

Paul here introduces the idea of praying and being alert, by the use of two more participles. Although they could be referring back to the entire discussion, syntactically they are more likely connected to the previous verse describing the manner in which the helmet and sword are to be taken up. The prepositional phrase that begins the verse, Διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως indicates the means or attendant circumstance by which the believer is to pray. The two terms used here are probably expressing a general to specific idea. The believers are to take up the helmet and sword with every prayer, but more specifically every petition, or request. They are to grasp these final two pieces in their hand's while bathing them in prayer, knowing that the victory is in the Lord.

Paul follows the first participle προσευχόμενοι with two prepositional phrases ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι. The first indicates a temporal idea. The singular anarthrous adjective παντι is used to signify that the believer is to be praying at every available opportunity. The second prepositional phrase indicates the sphere in which the believer is to pray.

Paul then uses the coordinating conjunction και to tie in what he has just said with what follows. The prepositional phrase εἰς αὐτο carries with it the meaning “for this purpose” giving the purpose for the believer's consistent and frequent prayers. This practice of prayer is for the purpose of staying alert, one of the most important qualities of a soldier. This alertness is directly connected to the idea of prayer by the following prepositional phrase ἐν πάσῃ προσκατερήσει καὶ δεήσει. Prayer, petition or request is mentioned four times in this verse. This is not by accident, but rather for emphasis, in that the believer will not pray if he is not alert, and cannot stay alert without prayer.

These alert prayers and requests are to be “for all the saints.” περι when it is followed by a genitive after verbs or nouns regarding prayer indicates for whom the prayers are to be offered.²⁸ By the use of this phrase, Paul reminds the believer that they are not in this alone. This is a challenge to remember one's fellow soldiers in prayer, and at the same time an encouragement to stay in the ranks.

Text: 6:19 καὶ ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ, ἵνα μοι δοθῆ λόγος ἐν ἀνοίξει τοῦ στόματός μου, ἐν παρρησίᾳ γνωρίσαι τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου,

Translation: 6:19 and pray for me that I may be given the message when I begin to speak – that I may confidently make known the mystery of the gospel,

Paul just instructed the believers to pray for all the saints in general, now he specifically asks that they pray for him. He goes on to give the content of their prayer by the use of two ἵνα clauses. The first ἵνα of content contains the aorist passive subjunctive δοθῆ signifying that the words to speak were to be given to Paul by God in the time that he opens his mouth. Paul then

adds a prepositional phrase denoting the manner in which he desires to “open his mouth.” The idea being expressed here is that Paul would be able to freely and confidently make known the mystery of the gospel. The last genitive is probably an expegetical genitive “the mystery, namely, the gospel.”

Text: 6:20 ὑπὲρ οὗ πρεσβεύω ἐν ἀλύσει, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ παρρησιάσωμαι ὡς δεῖ με λαλῆσαι.

Translation: 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may be able to speak boldly as I ought to speak.

Paul clarifies this phrase the “mystery of the gospel” by giving two more details. The first is introduced with a preposition followed by a relative pronoun. ὑπὲρ followed by a genitive generally means “on behalf of, in the interest of”²⁹ or “for which”. This is referring back to the mystery of verse 19, which is contained in the gospel. Paul gives this ironic combination of “ambassador in chains” to highlight the situation in which he finds himself. He is in prison, although one cannot know for sure if he was literally in chains, (The fact that the singular ἀλύσει is used here seems to indicate that Paul is using this as a metaphor for being in prison.) but yet he considers himself an ambassador. Ambassadors would normally be exempt from imprisonment and prosecution due to diplomatic immunity.

The neuter relative pronoun refers back specifically to the mystery and not the gospel. Therefore, Paul was not in prison directly for preaching the gospel, but more so for the mystery the gospel contains. All throughout Ephesians Paul has been elaborating on and revealing this mystery. That it is the truth of Jews and Gentiles being brought together in Christ. The outplaying of this mystery within the Roman Empire and Jewish world did not make Paul a favorite among the Jews nor the Romans. This mystery was a threat to Judaism and to Roman civil order, and it was for this that he found himself in Rome anticipating a defense before Emperor Nero himself.

²⁸Wallace, 363.

²⁹BDAG, Electronic version from Bible Works 6.0

With this anticipated meeting in mind Paul gives the second ἵνα of content to their prayer. Here Paul requests that they pray that when his time comes that he will not shirk from the responsibility, but will boldly speak about this mystery as he ought to speak.

CONCLUSION

“The Armor of God”, this frequent and common saying among Christians. Many have used it in hymns, often as a picture of the offensive stance Christians are to take toward their enemy. More than any other image, probably the fully dressed Roman soldier is what comes to the mind of many believers when they hear this phrase. But, is that what Paul had in mind? Is that what the original believers would have pictured in their minds?

From the exegesis of this passage it seems clear that for Paul, he was picturing the Divine Warrior from Isaiah who would fight for His people. Working from that image he then contextualized it into the familiar image of his day, that of a Roman soldier, something with which the Ephesian people would have been very familiar.

However, at the same time Paul modified both images. Rather than an offensive Divine Warrior who was displaying His wrath on the enemies of His people; and rather than the fully equipped offensive machine of the Roman army, Paul selectively presents a fully equipped Christian who is fully prepared to stand His ground for Christ. This is a defensive picture in every way, both in what Paul uses to describe armor and what he chooses to leave out of the description. Paul wants the Ephesian believers and believers of all time to understand that God has given them everything they need to live victoriously in this life.

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