

Ephesians 6:9-12

Ephesians 6:9-12 And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him. (10) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. (11) Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Questions On The Text

How are masters to treat their slaves?

Verse 9: Masters are to behave in the same manner as their slaves are expected to. That is, with Christian consideration as to the welfare of the other. They are not to threaten their slaves, but to remember that they have the same Master in heaven who will judge them, not based on their status, but impartially.

Two things need to be pointed out in this passage. First, Paul did not consider this to be the right time to attempt to abolish the institution of slavery. Instead, he aimed at getting masters and slaves to conduct themselves in a Christlike manner. Second, all of the principles in this section on master-slave relationships apply equally in a modern setting to employer-employee behaviour.

What does God want us to do?

Verse 10: We are to be strong. Literally, this is “be strengthened” and can only happen “in the Lord.” (See 1 Samuel 30:6.) As Paul is about to divulge, there is a spiritual war that is happening now, and only the strong survive. The importance of being strong is stressed right throughout Scripture. (See Joshua 1:6,7,9 and 2 Timothy 2:1 as examples.)

The strengthening comes through “the power of His might,” the same phrase used in Ephesians 1:19-20 and translated there as “mighty power” and said to have raised Christ from the dead.

Why is it necessary to wear the armour of God?

Verse 11: Every believer needs to put on the armour of God to stand against the devil. Several things can be noted in this verse. First, believers are not naturally armed. Each one must make a conscious decision to “put on” the armour. Second, it is referred to as “the armour of God.” This means that it is not human in origin, but available from God only to disciples of Christ.

Third, it is not enough to have on part of the armour; it must all be worn to be effective. Fourth, it is only possible to stand against the enemy if fully armed. “Stand” is a word that means to stand your ground rather than fleeing.

Fifth, the “armour” refers to the full equipment of the Roman soldier. Finally, the word for “wiles” already used in 4:14, means “trickery, stratagems, craftiness.” Its verb means “to pursue a plan,” so we should always be fully armed because the devil is working to a plan.

Who is the battle against?

Verse 12: Our battle is a spiritual one and therefore not against human beings. That is not to say that people aren't involved as willing or unwitting agents of the enemy, as Satan so often works through people (see John 13:2; Luke 22:3). However, the battle takes place in the spiritual realm.

The word “wrestle” highlights the very personal nature of the fight; we are in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. We do not have enough information to conclude that there is some kind of hierarchy of demonic powers outlined in this verse. It is more likely that the list of demonic entities is intended to emphasise the enemy’s power, and therefore the importance of the believer’s being fully armed.

The believer, of course, is fighting from a position of victory. See Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 2:15; 1 Corinthians 15:57.) One thing that can be gleaned from this verse is that the enemy’s power is limited to “this age” and is further limited to the arena of darkness. Walk in the light and he will be unable to work in you or through you.

Further Questions For Discussion:

How should Christian employers treat their employees?

Why do Christians need to be strong, and how can they access God’s strength?

Why is it important to wear the armour of God?

What plan is the devil working to?

How does Satan manage to work through people?

When the enemy uses people to attack us, how can we ensure that we behave in a way that reflects the truth that people aren’t the enemy?

What does it mean to fight from a position of victory?