

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## EPHESIANS LESSON 4 (Chapter )

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Kevin Pendergrass.

Welcome to The Gospel of Christ. This is the last lesson in our study of the Book of Ephesians. I would like to ask you a question. How would you describe the Christian life? If someone were to ask you, "What is the description of the Christian life?," how would you answer that person? One description that some preachers and Christians have tried to avoid has to do with describing the Christian life as a war or a fight. In 2 Timothy 2:3 Paul admonished and encouraged Timothy to endure hardship as a soldier. In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 Paul said that he personally had "fought the good fight." In the Bible, at times the Christian life is referred to as a war, fight, or battle. Sometimes when people become Christians, they do so thinking that their lives will be easy, that they never will have to worry about anything, that they never will have a trial or tribulation come their way, and that everything will simply be fine the rest of their lives—without any kinds of worries at all. But they definitely did not get such an idea from the Bible. Matthew 7:13-14 and other passages clearly teach(es) that the Christian life can be tough, that it is something we must endure, and that it is something during which we will have to go through trials and tribulations because it can be difficult to be a faithful Christian. This is why so few people will enter the kingdom of Heaven, and why so many will not be in Heaven for eternity. The Bible describes the Christian life as a fight or war.

But who is our enemy in this fight? In any battle, there must be an opponent. There has to be an enemy. In our fight, Satan is our enemy. Peter warned us of this fact in 1 Peter 5:8-9 when he said,

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world."

Satan is our enemy, and is our opponent in this spiritual warfare. We must always be ready to fight the good fight of faith, just as Paul told Timothy that he had fought.

But to do this, we must have the proper armor to be prepared for battle—the armor of God. Think about a war. How many soldiers would go out to battle without their armor? **None!** We have to make sure, when we enter into our spiritual battle, that we have the armor of God. In Ephesians 6:10-11 Paul says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." It is interesting that Paul urges us to put on the **whole** armor of God. It is not enough to say, "I am wearing a few pieces of armor." Rather, we must make certain that we are wearing every piece of spiritual armor if we are going to win this battle. Paul continues by saying, "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" (vs. 12). Paul is not describing the average physical battle. He is describing a spiritual battle—which is a much more important battle than those fought in the physical realm. Paul then says, "Therefore take up the whole

armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (vs. 13). He then talks about the armor that we must wear when he says, “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth” (vs. 14). What is the first piece of armor we must possess? We must gird our waists with truth.

What is truth? Does truth exist? This is the question that Pilate asked in John 18:38 when he inquired, “What is truth?” There are some people today who say that there is no such thing as truth. It is a contradiction when someone says, “I absolutely believe that there are no absolutes.” When someone says that there are “absolutely no absolutes,” he has contradicted his own statement by offering an absolute. Truth **does** exist. But what is truth? Where is truth to be found? John 17:17 answers those questions when it says that God’s Word is truth. When we go to the Bible as the Word of God, we realize that it is where truth is found. In Psalm 68:11 we read, “The Lord gave the word. Great was the company of those who proclaimed it.” The Lord gave us His Word, which is truth. Some people think that they are here to save truth. They believe that their motive in life is to save the truth. Actually, the truth is here to save us. In John 8:32 Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free.” Notice that Jesus did not say, “You shall know your emotions, and your emotions shall set you free.” Jesus did not say, “You shall know your intent, and your intent shall set you free.” Rather, it is truth—and only truth—that will set us free. In Proverbs 23:23 we read, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.” We can sell many things in this life, but truth should not be one of them. Proverbs 3:3 says, “Let not mercy and truth forsake you.” If we no longer possess truth, then, in essence, we have nothing. We are instructed regarding mercy and truth, “Bind them around your neck, and write them on the tablet of your heart.” We must be sure that, first and foremost, we have truth. I do not believe that it is coincidental that truth is the first thing mentioned here. We must gird ourselves with truth. There are a lot of people in the world who are good, moral people. You, in fact, may be one of them. You do not cheat on your spouse. You are a great parent. You are a good person. But you have yet to do the things stated in the Bible. Thus, you have yet to obey the truth. If you have not done that, then you cannot be set free. That is why truth is so important for us to possess.

Look at Paul’s mindset regarding truth. In Philippians 1:15-18 we learn of some who were not preaching the truth out of the correct motive. So Paul says,

“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: the former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”

Paul’s mentality was that even if someone was preaching the truth with the wrong attitude and out of the wrong motives, he found happiness in that. He was able to have joy by knowing that the truth was being preached. Was Paul happy that people were not sincerely preaching the truth? We he happy, knowing that such a person was wrong because he did not have the right attitude? Of course not. Paul knew that such a person would be lost if he did not change. But Paul’s attitude was that at least the truth was being preached. This is far from what many people say today. Some suggest, “If you are not going to preach the truth with the correct attitude, then do not preach it at all.” But Paul would not have said that. His attitude was that anytime the truth was preached, he was happy. He wanted people to preach the truth with the correct motives and intentions, but if they did not, at least the truth was being taught. As long as the truth is being preached, we, too, should glory. We might know people who are not teaching the truth for the right reason. And we should rebuke or correct them in order to help them do better. But even if they do not change their

attitudes, we can at least glory in the fact that the truth of the Word of God is being preached, and that someone might find and obey it. We need to always follow God's way. From Proverbs 3:5-6 we learn that we must trust God, and not lean on our own understanding. Too many people want to lean on their own understanding and say, "I do not see a problem with this" or "I think this is OK." But the question always should be: "What does God have to say? What does the Bible have to say?" It is only in the Bible that truth can be found, and it is only by reading God's Word that we can know what to do to go to Heaven.

What is the next type of armor that we are to wear? In Ephesians 6:15 Paul said, "Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness." We must wear righteousness. That is to say, we must act in accord with God's law and will. In Acts 17 Paul was in Athens where there many false gods and idols that were worshiped by the people there. In verse 22 Paul said, "I perceive that in all things you are very religious." The people were **religious**, but they were not **righteous**. When we look around us in the world today, we see a lot of people who are religious. They "think" that they are doing the right things. They "believe" that they are obeying the truth. They likely are even sincere, just as the people in Acts 17 were. However, even though they may be religious, they are lost all the same. Why? It is because they have yet to put on righteousness. They are not following the Word and will of God. In Acts 10:35 we see a report concerning the Gentiles: "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him." We have to "work righteousness." We have to "be righteous." It is not enough just to "be religious." It is not enough merely to "think" or "feel" that we are doing the right thing. We must **know** that we are doing the right thing by "working righteousness" and by keeping God's commandments (Jn. 14:15). In Acts 13:10 we learn that if we are not working righteousness, then we are enemies of God. If we try to stop righteousness, or try to stop the truth from being preached, then we are enemies of righteousness. Instead of being enemies, we need to put on the breastplate of righteousness so that we can possess that important piece of the armor of God. In Romans 1:16-17 Paul wrote,

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

From verse 17 we learn that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel. In Romans 6:13 Paul said to the Christians in Rome, "Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." Either we are righteous, or we are not. Romans 6:16 goes on to talk about how we are either a slave of God and righteousness, or we are a slave of sin. People do not like to have it one way or the other. They want some sort of middle ground or gray area to exist. Their attitude is, "I don't necessarily want to say that I'm a slave of God and righteousness, but then I don't want to be a slave of sin either. I'm kind of right there in the middle." Such people try to create a middle ground—when the Bible does not allow for such. The Bible says that we are either a slave of God and righteousness, or we are a slave to sin. Those are our only two options. If we say, "I'm not a slave of God or righteousness," then we are a slave of sin, whether or not we want to admit that. We are righteous only when we obey God. When we go out to fight the good fight of faith (Jude 3), we must always be willing to do God's will. We must be willing to be righteous. We cannot simply look at our intent or our emotions, but must look to the Word of God in order to be certain that we are **righteous** people, not just **religious** people.

But what other types of armor are we to put on? According to Ephesians 6:15 we are to "shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We must always be ready to take the truth to others. We must always be evangelistic minded. We need to be prepared

to tell others what the Bible has to say, particularly regarding salvation. In 1 Peter 3:15 we are told, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." We must always be ready to take the Gospel to people, and to give a defense for what we believe. Someone might say, "Where in the Bible does it say that baptism is for the forgiveness of sins?" We should be able to turn to Acts 2:38 or Acts 22:16 or 1 Peter 3:21. When people ask, "Where in the Bible does it say, 'I can...' or 'I can't...'," we must know what the Bible says. We must be people who are able to go to the Bible and be ready to take the Gospel of peace to people so that they can have true peace by obeying the Gospel. I've heard people say regarding 1 Peter 3:15, "This verse doesn't pertain to me because I'm not good at retaining knowledge. I can read something five or six times, and I still don't know what it says. Thus, this verse does not pertain to me." The person who says that is generally the same person who can give you all of the statistics pertaining to his favorite football team. He can tell you who won and who lost. He can tell you about his favorite players. He can tell you a lot of things. Why? Is it because when this person comes to the Bible that he has a mind block and cannot remember the Bible? No. It's because 1 Peter 3:15 says that we must "sanctify" God's Word. We must set it apart. Too many Christians have not "set apart" the truth in their hearts. They do not have the Word of God in them, in the sense that they have not studied the Bible. They do not know what to tell someone else because they have not prepared. Other things (like football statistics) they can discuss easily because they've studied them and know them. We have to spend time with the Gospel before we can take the Gospel of peace to other people. The "core Gospel" of which we read in the Bible has to do with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). But the Gospel is not limited to simply those things. In 1 Timothy 1:10 there are many different sins discussed. But the text also refers to "any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." The Gospel is "the good news." It is the good news found within the Word of God that tells us what we must do to be saved. And every Christian should know that because it is the best news that anyone could ever have. In Romans 10:14-17 we read,

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

We must make sure that we are taking the Gospel to people. First and foremost, of course, we must obey it. It is called "the Gospel of peace" because it has a spiritual origin. Sometimes, however, the Gospel of peace can cause great division. It is peaceful only to those who accept and obey it. It is called the Gospel of peace because it is only through the Gospel that we can have peace. Yet for those who do not obey it, it will be a very sad thing. In Matthew 10:34-39 Jesus said,

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

Jesus did not want people to think that He came to bring peace by merely accepting everyone as they were. The truth will divide people. There will be some families in which the husband obeys the truth, but the wife does not. There may be occasions when the children

obey the truth, but the parents do not (or vice versa). So, yes, it is the Gospel of peace—from the standpoint that we can obtain peace only by going to the Word of God. But at times the Gospel will cause division for those who are unwilling to accept it, obey it, and do exactly what it says.

But before we can put on the Gospel of peace, we first must obey the Gospel. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 we are told that there are two groups of people who will be lost forever in Hell—those who do not know God, and those who do not obey the Gospel. Romans 6:3-4 teaches us that we obey the Gospel when we are baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins, and then raised to walk “in newness of life.” Then, and only then, have we obeyed the Gospel in regard to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Prior to having done that, we are lost in our sins. Thus, before we can begin taking the Gospel to people, we must ask ourselves if we have been baptized—not as some sort of “outward sign of an inward faith,” but knowing that prior to baptism we were lost, and that by being baptized we were having our sins washed away so that when we came up out of the water we were saved to walk in newness of life. If we did not know that, then we were not truly baptized for the forgiveness of sins. And we were not baptized with the one baptism. Thus, we still would need to obey the Gospel because we would not have done that. Therefore, before we take the Gospel to peace, let us make sure that we have obeyed the Gospel.

The next item that we see is the shield of faith. The Bible says that faith is “the victory that overcomes the world.” You may have sung those words in a song before. It is speaking of “the one faith” (Eph. 4:5). In 1 John 5:4 John wrote, “Whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” How have we overcome the world? It is by the faith of the Gospel, and by obeying that faith. True faith always will conquer fear. If we have a true faith in God, then we will always be taken care of. Matthew 6:33 teaches this. Jesus said that we would always have our needs taken care of. This does not mean that we will necessarily have our “wants” taken care of. There are many people who say, “God must not love me because He is not taking care of my needs.” But if they have done what they are supposed to, then God will take care of them. He will give them food and clothing. That might not mean that you will get a steak dinner every night, or that you will have the best brands or styles of clothing. But God will take care of you. We must have “the shield of faith” (Eph. 6:16). In Luke 17:6 we are told, “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” This is the kind of faith that we are to have. In Hebrews 11:6 we are told that without faith it is impossible to please God. If we do not have faith, we cannot be pleasing to God. In Hebrews 4:2 we are told, “Indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.” We can hear the Word of God and know what the Bible says, but until we obey it and have a God-pleasing faith, then we will not be able to overcome the world. We must have the shield of faith with us everywhere we go. We walk by faith. In 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 the Bible says, “We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” This is the type of faith that we must have.

We also must have “the helmet of salvation” (Eph. 6:17). It is only when we come in contact with the blood of Jesus that we have salvation. Revelation 1:5 tells us that it is during water baptism that we come in contact with Christ’s blood. Then we must continue to contend for the faith. In 2 Thessalonians 3:3 we read, “The Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.” If we have salvation because we have come in contact (during baptism) with the precious blood of Jesus, have been added to the church

of Christ, and are living faithfully, then God will establish our hearts and guard us. But we must continue to walk faithfully. We must wear the helmet of salvation everywhere we go.

We also must have the sword of the Spirit. Ephesians 6:17 tells us, "Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." This sword is the Word of God—the Bible. We need to make sure that everywhere we go, we have our Bibles with us. We must carry our Bibles. There might come a time when someone asks us a question and wants to study with us. It is good to always have a Bible in our house, in our car, or even in our pockets. We must always have our swords with us so that we are ready to go at all times. Hebrews 4:12 goes into more detail about the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. "The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God is designed to prick people's hearts. In 2 Timothy 4:1ff. Paul warned Timothy that there would be people who would want to tickle people's ears by preaching with a feather. It is time once again for us to start preaching with the sword so that we will no longer tickle people's ears, but instead will prick people's hearts. In Acts 2:37 we are told that the Jews on that occasion were pricked in their hearts, and asked, "What must we do?" The answer was, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (vs. 38). If you have yet to allow the Word of God to prick your heart in a positive way, and if you have yet to obey the truth, then we pray today that you will obey the Gospel of Christ.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST* is brought to you by loving, caring members of the church of Christ. The McLish Avenue church of Christ in Ardmore, Oklahoma, oversees this evangelistic effort. For a free CD or DVD of today's broadcast, please write to:

***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***  
**607 McLish Ave.**  
**Ardmore, OK 73401**

You may call **580-223-3289**. Please visit us on the web at [www.thegospelofchrist.com](http://www.thegospelofchrist.com). We encourage you to attend the church of Christ, where "the Bible is loved and the Gospel is preached."

## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR EPHESIANS LESSON 4 (CHAPTER 6)

1. What did the apostle Paul tell Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3?
2. What did Paul tell Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:7?
3. In Ephesians 6:11, what did Paul urge Christians to do?
4. What piece of information is contained in 1 Peter 5:8 that helps explain why Paul said what he did in Ephesians 6:11-17?
5. What question did Pilate ask in John 18:38 that is still relevant to us today?
6. According to John 17:17, what is truth?
7. According to John 8:32, what function does truth have in our lives?
8. What does Proverbs 23:23 admonish us **to** do—and **not** do?
9. Who, according to Acts 10:35, is pleasing to God?
10. What did Jesus say in John 14:15?
11. What did Jesus say in John 15:14?
12. According to Romans 1:16-17, what is the Gospel?
13. What does 1 Peter 3:15 admonish every Christian to do?
14. What is the overall message behind Jesus' comments in Matthew 10:34-39?
15. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 we learn of two different groups of people who will be lost. Who composes the first group?
16. In 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 we learn of two different groups of people who will be lost. Who composes the second group?
17. According to 1 John 5:4, what is the victory "that overcomes the world"?
18. What important spiritual message was behind Christ's statements in Luke 17:6, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it will obey you"?
19. What is the true meaning of Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 5:7?
20. Who, according to 2 Thessalonians 3:3, will "guard us from the evil one"?
21. What, according to Ephesians 6:17, is "the sword of the Spirit"?
22. According to Revelation 1:5, what did Jesus do for us?