

The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians
Ephesians 6:10 - 20
Quotes from the Fathers
June 4, 2008

Ephesians 6:10

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

To be strong in the Lord is to be strengthened in word and wisdom and the contemplation of truth. All these qualities are encompassed in the titles applying to Christ. The greatest of these is the strength of his might, which is stronger than all human virtues combined. Moral corruption lacks power in his presence. This one virtue, being strong in the Lord, is inconceivably powerful. Those who are wise in these matters call it the strength of his might. It has some analogy with bodily strength but far exceeds it. This strength is beautiful as a strong body is beautiful. (Epistle to the Ephesians)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

This is the rhetoric Paul always employs when he is about to conclude his discourse. Did he not already indicate at the very beginning that every person's house is a bit like a military camp? Now you see he has drawn up every regiment ready for battle. He is ready to arm them and lead them into the struggle. (Homily on Ephesians 22.6.10)

Ephesians 6:11

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

The enemy does not make war on us straightforwardly or openly but by his wiles? What are the devil's wiles? They consist in trying to capture us by some shortcut and always by deceit. . . . The devil never openly lays temptation before us. He does not mention idolatry out loud. But by his stratagems he presents idolatrous choices to us, by persuasive words and by employing clever euphemisms. (Homily on Ephesians 22.6.11)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

From what we read of the Lord our Savior throughout the Scriptures, it is manifestly clear that the whole armor of Christ is the Savior himself. It is he whom we are asked to put on. It is one and the same thing to say “Put on the whole armor of God” and “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Our belt is truth and our breastplate is righteousness. The Savior is also called both truth and righteousness. So no one can doubt that he himself is that very belt and breastplate. On this principle he is also to be understood as the preparation of the Gospel of peace. He himself is the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation. He is the sword of the Spirit, because he is the Word

of God, living and efficacious, the utterance of which is stronger than any helmet and sharp on both sides. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.11)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

In ordinary battles the generals do not arm women or children or the aged. But our general, Christ the Lord, distributes this royal armory to all alike. He then teaches them the stratagems of the devil. This is what he means by the devil's wiles. (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.11)

Ephesians 6:12a

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

The battle is not against flesh and blood or ordinary temptations. The scene is the war of flesh against spirit. We are being incited to become entrapped in the works of the flesh. . . . But this is not merely a physical temptation. It is not merely the inward struggle against flesh and blood as such. Rather Satan has cleverly transformed himself into an angel of light. He is striving to persuade us to regard him as a messenger of goodness. This is how he throws his full might into the struggle. He employs deceptive signs and lying omens. He sets before us every possible ruse of evil. Then, when he has so ensnared us that we trust him, he says to us, "Thus says the Lord." This is not flesh and blood deceiving us. It is not a typical human temptation. It is the work of principalities and powers, the ruler of darkness and spiritual wickedness. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.11)

Ephesians 6:12b

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

We have elsewhere read the expression "world rulers" nowhere in the Old or the New Testament -- only here. Paul the apostle employs this name because it was necessary for him, in addressing the Ephesians, to apply new terms to new and invisible subjects. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.11)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

Paul calls them world rulers not because they have received authority to rule from God but because they have made captive loose-living people as their willing slaves. The holy apostle has imitated the best sort of general. Wishing to drive out the unfit from his army, the astute general describes to them the exceptional courage of the enemy. (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.12)

Ephesians 6:12c

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

From what ancient Scripture is Paul drawing when he speaks of the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places? My conjecture is that it comes out of the narratives written in Israel about wars and particular combats, like those of David and Goliath, and about the battles of the

children of Israel against their enemies. . . . In each of these narratives there is some implication of the vanquishing and overcoming of demonic spiritual powers. (Epistle to the Ephesians)

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

Some spiritual creatures have sinned in heaven. It is against these that we now struggle, against the spirits of iniquity in high places. They first sinned in heaven. Now they are doing it again on earth. (Palestinian Catena on Psalm 118.119)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

Hosts of wickedness in heavenly places? This does not mean that demons dwell in heaven but that the air above has received this name, as birds who fly through the air are called “fowls of heaven” (Daniel 4:12). . . . It is indeed impious to suppose that the spirits of wickedness in the heavens occupy the same heaven of which God says, “It is my throne” (Isaiah 66:1). (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.11)

Ephesians 6:13

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

The evil day may arguably signify the present time.... But the better interpretation is that to stand in the evil day is a reference to the final consummation and judgment. Then the devil, our enemy and our adversary, will struggle to keep us in his clutches. Who will be freed from him? One who understands what is said of the poor and needy; “the Lord will deliver him in the evil day” (Psalm 41:1). . . . Still another interpretation, however, expounds this more simply: The Ephesians are now being encouraged to prepare for future temptations and persecutions, Paul the apostle in his prophetic spirit saw them as coming at a later time. They are being counseled to do anything they can that might enable them to stand in the faith of the Gospel and not to lapse under persecution. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.13)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

We are waging war against the fiercest of enemies. He is skilled in every deceit. We must therefore keep on the lookout, with all circumspection and care, that wherever they test our resistance they will find us protected and ready.... Against earthly foes the body must be strengthened with food and the mind aroused by drink to become bold enough to fight back. So against the spiritual weapons of iniquity we must fight spiritually. But our weapons must be sobriety and abstinence, that, having been imbued with the Holy Spirit, we may vanquish the unclean, warring spirits. (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.17.1-2)

Ephesians 6:14a

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

The first art in tactics is to know how to stand firmly. From this firmness all else follows. ... He is not speaking here of a literal girdle. He is setting in contrast, by this metaphor, the soldier who is slack and dissipated in his appetites, who lets his thoughts creep on the ground.... He speaks here of the loins. Just like the keel of a ship the loins are the central balancing support of our whole body. They are a kind of foundation. All is built up from them.... The girdle is used in combat to bind and hold together this foundation of ours. That is why we are also girdled when we run. It secures the strength within us. (Homily on Ephesians 23.6.14)

Ephesians 6:14b

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Faith lives in righteousness. Faith remains the fountain of all the virtues, as Paul has often stated. Righteousness is not as strong as faith because “righteousness lives by faith” (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17). But the effect of righteousness is accomplished by faith. So in this battle we must strive toward righteousness. Faith is proven to be true faith when we live righteously. Then faith is seen to be useful to us, as the righteousness that accompanies faith is useful. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.13-14)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

One who has put on a sturdy breastplate is difficult to wound. Especially well-protected are those essential parts of the body upon which life depends. So put on the breastplate. Strap it together by iron rings and insert the hooks in their place. One protected by such a breastplate of righteousness will not be like a vulnerable stag that receives the arrow in his liver. He will not lapse into rage or lust. Rather he will be protected, having a clean heart, having God as the fashioner of his breastplate, since he fashions the whole armor for every one of the saints. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.14)

Ephesians 6:15

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

The Gospel is to be carried abroad. It is to be preached among the nations. Wherever, then, it is preached, it must be heard. But so that all may hear, one must use one's feet to travel. And so do we travel with haste and urgency. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.15)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

It is asked whether he says the Gospel of peace to distinguish it from another gospel. Or is it rather the distinguishing property of the Gospel that it may be called the Gospel of peace? If anyone therefore has peace, he is shod with the Gospel of Christ. With this footwear he is prepared to walk. Being prepared, however, he does well not to imagine himself already perfect. Rather he merely is prepared to press on and by pressing on hopes to arrive at the goal. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.15)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

This war against the demonic puts an end to the previous war against God. As we are making war with the devil, we are making peace with God. Have no fear, beloved, the victory is already won. This is the Good News. (Homily on Ephesians 24.6.14-17)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

Your footwear is not put on in order that you may walk about foolishly but to accomplish the course of the Gospel. In this way you will receive the prophetic blessing: “How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings Good News” (Isaiah 52:7). (Epistle to the Ephesians 6:15)

Ephesians 6:16

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

He returns to that capital virtue, the shield of faith. It contains all the other virtues and brings them all to fulfillment. Unless we are armed with this shield we will not have the strength to battle courageously and resist all these deadly powers. But with the protection of faith we repel all these blows and whatever attacks come from the whole host of powers. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.16)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

In place of a shield you are to have faith. For this shield is the insignia of God's governance. This shield opens up to you the prizes of war, the eulogies of the victors, the crowns of heroes. All this quenches the fiery darts of the evil one. (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.16)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

By his darts Paul means both temptations and perverse desires. He calls them fiery because that is the nature of the appetite. Faith is capable of commanding hosts of demons. How much more is faith capable of ordering the passions of the soul? (Homily on Ephesians 24.6.14-17)

Ephesians 6:17a

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

It is Christ indeed who is the author of salvation. He is our head. He descended to us and redeemed us by his own mystery. It is he indeed who guards the heads of the faithful. Therefore he is the helmet of salvation. He is the Word by which the adverse powers are overcome and taken captive.... Christ, who is the Word of God, was sent to overcome all corruption and

wickedness and even death itself. It is in this sense that Paul refers to the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.17)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

Because of this helmet of salvation all the senses in our head remain intact. It especially protects the eyes. Solomon in Ecclesiastes (2:14) notes that “the eyes of the wise are in the head.” Paul understood the importance of headship. He knew why “the eyes are located in the head.” If Christ is the head of a person of faith and “the eyes of the wise are in the head,” it follows that all our senses, mind, thought, speech and counsel (if, that is, we are wise) are in Christ. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.17)

Ephesians 6:17b

St. John Cassian (370 – 435):

This is the sword that for our health spills the noxious blood that animates the matter of our sins, cutting out and excising whatever it finds in our soul that is carnal or earthly and, once it has made us dead to vices, causing us to live to God and flourish in spiritual virtues. (Conferences 20.8.11)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

By the sword of the Spirit he means the activity of the Spirit. This is the Word of God. This means that just as God fashioned all by the Word, so the most Holy Spirit effects all that has to do with our salvation. With this sword the spiritual person rebukes the devil, and the devil flees (see James 4:7). (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.17)

Ephesians 6:18a

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

This means that we should not say or utter particular words or recite them in our prayers as though they were premeditated or written down. We are to pray in the spirit and at all times. Let your deep affections enter into your praying. The inner spirit, that is, the inner man, is making his prayer with intense desire. He is praying all the time, so that even when he is not praying aloud he is still praying in the spirit. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.18)

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

When he says through every prayer and petition, I think he has this distinction in mind: It is a prayer when we speak the praises of God and recount his great works and when we give thanks

and worship him. It is a petition when we pray to God either to pardon our sins or to offer his grace to us. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.18)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

Insofar as our conduct is right we are rightly prepared for the Holy Spirit to abide in us. Hence we are more ready to obtain what we request. This therefore is what it means to pray in the Spirit at all times. We are directing our prayer to God with a clean conscience and sincere faith. One who prays with a polluted mind prays only in the flesh, not in the spirit. (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.20.1)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

See how clever this blessed author is. He has armed them with the utmost protection. So now what remains? Only to call on the king and urge him to extend his hand. (Homily on Ephesians 24.6.18-20)

Ephesians 6:18b

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Some might think that the phrase at all times means only the daytime. But, so that he could amplify the force of at all times, what does he say? With all perseverance. This calls us to a certain persistent disposition of the mind. We do not pray as if we were asleep. This is what some sound like, who pray by reciting or reading familiar phrases or uttering them routinely from memory.

The saints themselves, with the bishops and apostles and elders, are called to pray on behalf of the faithful and the catechumens and all the other members of the body. It is typical of Paul to make mention of the whole people of God in prayer. He also calls upon the whole people of God to pray on behalf of their leaders, bishops and saints, and then he adds; Pray for me too. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.18-19)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

Those who have wars continually pressing on them do not even sleep. Therefore the holy apostle tells them under conditions of battle to keep awake and pray constantly, not giving in to the pains of the body but to bear them with the utmost fortitude. (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.18)

Ephesians 6:19a

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Isn't this wonderful? From those whom he himself has just now admonished, those whom he has instructed, to whom he has preached the Gospel, he now asks for help. He is asking them for their prayers. He goes on to explain what he is asking them to pray for; that utterance may be

given to me. His prayer is definite and specific, that a particular profit may accrue. (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.18-19)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

He exhorts them to pray for him in two ways; first that his thoughts may be filled by the Spirit for the full declaration of the mystery, and second that he may be given a faculty of bold utterance in proclaiming it. (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.20.2)

Ephesians 6:19b

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

Boldness of speech is a possibility only and always for those who have a heart that does not condemn them (see I John 3:21-22). . . and therefore the one who boldly makes known the mysteries is rare, because those who have boldness before God are rare. (Epistle to the Ephesians)

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

This is to be understood as if he said, “Let the treasures be opened. Let the promises hidden from ages be revealed. Let the Spirit enter to bring forth those things that have been concealed.” That this is indeed the meaning of this passage . . . is clarified by what follows: in confidence, he says, to make known the mystery of the Gospel. (Epistle to the Ephesians 3.6.20)

Ephesians 6:20a

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

This prayer God hears gladly. The apostle is being despised. God's own mission is under challenge. So God will certainly not withhold his gifts from one who is upholding God's own cause. Custom and law forbid the infliction of harm on human ambassadors. So would it not be presumptuous and rash to bring on the ambassadors of God not only harm but death? (Epistle to the Ephesians 6.20.3)

Ephesians 6:20b

Caius Marius Victorinus (AD 300 – aft. 362):

Boldly means; “so that I may not fail to accomplish it fully and that my chains may not so work on my mind as to prevent my accomplishing it, the task of expounding the mystery, as I ought.” (Epistle to the Ephesians 2.6.20)

