

Course Title: THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER

Goal of This Lesson: This lesson is designed to provide a biblical path as you navigate through life as a Christian Minister.

Note: You can try to figure things out on your own, but you will find a wealth of knowledge and experience in the Word and Kingdom of God.

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Ephesians 6:14-20 NKJV) Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints-- and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Introduction

Paul's letter to the Ephesians stands today as an important documentation on spiritual warfare. All believers must receive its message: the church is at war! This warfare is not against human beings, but against "*principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*" (Eph. 6:12).

We do not wage this warfare by attacking the enemy but by resisting and standing against him (Eph. 6:13). And we do not wage this warfare by human ability, but by being "*strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*" (Eph. 6:10).

To overcome and reign victoriously in this spiritual war, believers must embrace truth and righteousness, must prepare themselves to speak the gospel of peace, and must shield themselves from the "*fiery darts of the wicked*" with steadfast faith. They must take upon themselves the "*helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Eph. 6:17). This spiritual sword refers not only to the written Scriptures, but also to the spoken Word of God.

The Greek word is *rhema*, which means "an utterance (individually, collectively or specifically); by implication, a matter or topic especially of narration, command or dispute (*Strong's Concordance*).

To take hold of the sword of the Spirit is more than possessing Bible knowledge; it also includes speaking the Word of God with anointing and understanding.

- Jesus modeled spiritual warfare for us when the adversary attacked Him in the wilderness.

How do we get the understanding from the Word of God? Acts Chapter 8 tells the story of Philip the evangelist as he came across a man from Ethiopia reading the Scriptures. Philip asked the man, *“Do you understand what you are reading?”* (Acts 8:30).

The man’s honest and humble answer was, *“How can I, except some man should guide me?”* And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him” (Acts 8:31).

The word *guide* means “to show the way, to teach, or to lead.” This Ethiopian modeled for us the proper attitude of heart that receives understanding from the Lord. He confessed his need for someone to help him understand the teachings of Scripture. Certainly, the Holy Spirit will lead and teach a person as he studies the Scriptures (John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 2:10), but we also need anointed individuals to teach us and guide us in our study of truth.

The Minister’s Dependence on God’s Provisions

“No man is an island to himself”, and this was even true of Paul, the mighty apostle. On the surface it may seem as though Paul operated as an independent man of God who was led by the Spirit into diverse cities and circumstances. But nothing could be farther from the truth. First, Paul usually traveled with other men as part of a team. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Paul did not see himself as a solo act. He knew very well that he was impotent and ineffective apart from both the Lord *and* His body, the church.

As a model of the spiritual warrior, Paul knew that his counsel to the Ephesians applied to himself as well. It was not enough that *they* put on *“the whole armor of God”*; he too needed to put on the armor. It would have been out of character for Paul to instruct others to do what he did not practice in his own life.

Paul understood his utter dependence on God for life and ministry. Without God he was insufficient. He wrote, *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit”* (II Cor. 3:5-6).

Paul’s sufficiency as a leader and minister came from what God provided, and this included the Christian armor for spiritual warfare and the assistance of fellow believers.

The Minister’s Dependence on the Prayers of the Body

Paul was dependent both on God and on the prayers of God's people for his sufficiency as a minister of the Spirit. After facing almost certain death in Asia, he wrote to the Corinthians of the mighty deliverance he received from God and added, *"Ye also helping together by prayer for us"* (II Cor. 1:11).

Do we really realize how important and how effectual the prayers of a righteous person can be? Paul understood and appreciated his dependence on the prayers of the saints. He did not want to face the challenges of proclaiming the gospel apart from the sure knowledge that others were upholding him in their prayers.

READING ASSIGNMENT: Please Read the Following Passage(s)

(Colossians 4:2-3 NKJV) Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains.

The Minister's Dependence on the Watchfulness of the Saints

When Jesus told His disciples to "watch and pray," He revealed the importance of combining our prayers with watchfulness. To watch means to be awake and alert. It means to be taking note of what is going on around us.

Paul recognized his dependence on the watchfulness of the saints. He knew that if God's people became slack and lethargic—if they became spiritually sleepy and ceased to be alert to spiritual dangers—it would negatively impact the diligence and fervency of their prayers.

Paul needed their prayers for his effectiveness. In his letter Paul challenged the Ephesians, *"Awake thou that sleepest"* (Eph. 5:14).

The Minister's Dependence on the Spirit

It is a mistake for any minister of the gospel to think that by his own study and preparation he can stand and effectively declare the gospel.

The Christian leader must prepare himself diligently, praying as though it all depends on God. But he also needs the prayers and assistance of others in the body of Christ. Paul asked the Ephesian believers to pray for him, *"that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel"* (Eph. 6:19).

The Minister's Responsibility

Every person who answers the call of ministering the Word of God must consider and remain aware of the heaviness of his task.

When we stop and think of the long list of Christian martyrs throughout the ages, we realize that the cost of taking up the cause of Christ could be that of giving up our own life. We would all do well to follow Jesus' counsel to first sit down and count the cost. (Luke 14:28).

Paul Was an Ambassador

An ambassador represents the interests of one nation to another. Paul represented the interests of the Kingdom of God to the people of his world. His purpose had nothing to do with his own interests, only the interests of Jesus.

Paul did not speak his own message for his own sake, but the message of the gospel for Jesus' sake. His first priority was not his own well-being and his own physical comfort, but the Kingdom and Glory of God.

As he told the Christians at Corinth, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:20).

Paul Was in Bonds

Paul was a unique kind of ambassador, calling himself "*an ambassador in bonds*" (Eph. 6:20). In his letter to the Philippians he referred to his imprisonment as "*my bonds in Christ*" (Phil. 1:13).

Today, many people want the glory without the reproach. They want the Spirit without the sufferings, the power without the pain; Paul and the other apostles knew that there is no such thing.

As the leaders and teachers of the early church, they bore the brunt of the adversary's brutal attacks. Yet they rejoiced to *be "counted worthy to suffer shame for his name"* (Acts 5:41).

To Paul, his imprisonment was the price he had to pay to render his reasonable service for Jesus Christ. It made his labors as an ambassador more admirable and glorious. As long as the believers were praying and he had any opportunity at all, he would preach, he would minister, and he would pour himself out.

Paul's Concern for Being Able to Speak as He Ought

What good is a spokesman who will not speak? What good is a preacher who will not preach? If faith comes by hearing, how shall others hear if no one opens his mouth?

Paul's purpose as an ambassador was to make known the gospel of Jesus Christ. To fail, regardless of circumstances, was to deny his whole reason for being and to hand the devil victory in a war never fought. To speak the gospel was not something Paul *could* do if he desired; it was something he *must* do. For him, it was not an option.

The Minister's Friends and Blessings

Aloneness, brings the fruit of loneliness, discouragement, depression, confusion, and moral corruption. It is definitely not good for any person to be alone. But in spite of his imprisonment, Paul never felt alone. He had poured himself into many individuals, and there were multitudes whom his ministry had blessed and who greatly appreciated his sincere service.

Paul probably encouraged himself by recollecting his departure from Ephesus. The Bible says, *"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more"* (Acts 20:36-38). Paul had many friends who loved him dearly and deeply.

The Members of the Church

Having caring friends is important for any Christian, especially those who labor in the Word of God. Anyone who preaches the Word of God without compromise will face rejection and even persecution.

The believers in Jesus Christ should not see themselves as inferior Christians who are only in the Kingdom of God to receive at the hand of their spiritual leaders. They are there to give, to support, and to care for those who feed them with knowledge and understanding of God's Word.

The Fellow Minister

The most compassionate people toward the suffering servants of God should be other servants who suffer. Tychicus, whom Paul called *"a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord"* (Eph. 6:21), had endured much hardship along with Paul.

His understanding of Paul's life and ministry and their many shared experiences put him in a unique position of empathy. He was able to give a report to the people of Ephesus, not in word only, but also in spirit.

He could convey with great passion both the conditions that Paul was enduring and the burdens and sorrows of Paul's heart.

The Comfort for Troubled Hearts

God's people ought to be troubled when they hear of one of their leaders undergoing tribulation for the Name of Jesus. We should never receive such news lightly, but with sober-minded concern.

Yet, there is never reason for believers to despair. As Paul's companion in suffering, Tychicus could impart a sense of his fellow minister's sufferings and griefs and also his hopes and joys. He could help the Ephesians to see that in spite of his present circumstances, Paul was not giving up and he was still focused on his mission: to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He was continuing to fight the good fight of faith. He was standing against the powers of the adversary. He was still warring against and resisting the adversary, and he was triumphing in spiritual victory.

The Blessings of Peace and Grace

In the end, Paul concluded his letter to the Ephesians by issuing a blessing of peace upon the brethren followed by a blessing of grace.

These two gifts from heaven are essential in our war against the devil. If he can steal either one from us, he can defeat us. *"May the grace and peace of God be upon you" are powerful words!*

When spoken in love they bring strength to the heart and power to the spirit of an individual. Paul admonished the Ephesians to endeavor to keep *"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* (Eph. 4:3). Peace builds and maintains unity in the body of Christ because it melts away anxieties and personal insecurities.

It enables God's people to live and work together in harmony without envy. He also instructed them to *"let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"* (Eph. 4:29).

Grace is more than just God's favor toward His people; it is His power working in them. We are what we are by the grace of God. Apart from His grace we have no spiritual power.

Two great keys to winning the spiritual warfare are unity and spiritual power. Paul knew that neither was obtainable apart from God. The church will never win the war by human effort, but by total dependence on the One who already is victorious. His grace and His peace are irreplaceable.

The people of God need to realize that they are in a war. Because of this, they must accept their responsibility to support with their prayers, their friendships, and their resources those *who "labour in the Word and doctrine"* (I Tim. 5:17). The Scriptures declare that those who serve well are worthy of *"double honor."* The fervent effectual prayers of God's righteous people avail much.

This is important, not only for the sake of those who are on the front lines of spiritual warfare, but also for our own sake. We need preachers and teachers who can declare the Word in Spirit-anointed utterances that we may be sufficiently equipped to stand against the adversary and to gain spiritual victory.

To be a successful spiritual warrior, a person must have understanding of the Word of God, but we all need a caring and capable teacher to guide us and help us. Therefore, God's people should faithfully support their teachers and spiritual leaders with fervent prayer.

Congratulations on completing this lesson. While some lessons may seem harder than others, you must always study to show yourself approved unto God, and reveal to others, what God has given you.

**Assignment
WORKSHEET****Student Name:** _____
Print Full First Name Middle Initial Print Full Last Name**Church Name:** _____ **Pastor:** _____**Date:** _____***Take your time to review each question before you provide your answers.***

1. According to the lesson, what does Paul's letter to the Ephesians stand as?

2. According to the lesson, Jesus modeled spiritual warfare for us when the adversary did what to him?

3. According to the lesson, Paul understood something. What was that?

4. According to the lesson, Jesus told His disciples to watch and pray. What did he reveal?

5. According to the lesson, what is the role of an Ambassador?

6. According to the lesson, having friends is important for any Christian, and especially for whom?

7. According to the lesson, God's people ought to be r u l e d when they hear of one of their leaders undergoing tri a l at for the Name of Jesus.
8. According to the lesson, the church will never win the war by human effort, but by total on the one who already is victorious. Please select the best answer below:

A. care	C. defendants
B. hope	D. dependence
9. According to the lesson, to take hold of the sword of the Spirit is more than possessing knowledge. Fill in the missing word.
10. According to the lesson, Paul was independent of both God and of the prayers of God's people.

Please select the best answer: ☐ True ☐ False

11. According to the lesson, it's a mistake for any minister of the gospel to think that by their own _____, they can stand and effectively declare the gospel?
- A. prayer and consecration C. life and dedication
B. study and preparation D. prayer and supplication
12. According to the lesson, we all need a caring and capable teacher to guide us and help us. Therefore, God's people should faithfully support their teachers and spiritual leaders with fervent prayer.

Please select the best answer: ☐ True ☐ False

**Assignment
WORKSHEET**

ANSWER SHEET

1. An important documentation on spiritual warfare
2. Attacked him in the wilderness
3. His utter dependence on God for life and ministry
4. The importance of combining our prayers with watchfulness
5. The interests of one nation to another.
6. Those who labor in the Word of God
7. Troubled, tribulation
8. D) dependence
9. bible
10. False
11. study and preparation
12. True