

Aim of lesson

To learn about the armour of God and about the battle that Christians are engaged in.

Bible background

Ephesians 6:10-24.

Outline of lesson

I spy

You may like to introduce the lesson by reminding the class of the way the Lord Jesus used everyday objects and events around him to illustrate God's ways and purpose. Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus, uses a similar illustration. He was in prison (Ephesians 6:20), so his view was confined to a very few things. You could ask the class to guess what things he could see that he could use as an illustration when writing his letter.

Armour

Turn to the workbooks, and get the class to hunt through Ephesians 6:13-17 in order to label the six parts of the armour of the Roman soldier using the terms Paul uses to describe them, i.e. they should write 'truth' on the belt of the soldier, and so on.

For a soldier

Have the class list the six parts of the soldier's armour in the six boxes on the left. They should consider the value of each item for the soldier, and write their ideas in each box. The class will be able to appreciate the importance of a belt and the shame which could be caused from not having buckled it on securely. These thoughts will be helpful when considering why each is an apt picture of the corresponding Christian attribute.

For Paul and us

The boxes on the right should be used to note ideas on the importance of truth, righteousness, etc. It may be helpful to consider Paul's position awaiting trial. There was a great temptation not to tell the truth. He was on trial for his life, and it would look easier to not tell the truth about Christ and be set free. However, Paul knew he would be ashamed if he denied Christ. In considering how he should survive this ordeal of prison and trial he knew the first piece of armour he needed was truth.

The righteousness of his life would be a witness at his trial, and he must always be ready to use every opportunity to preach. He could easily have thought that he had no opportunity being in prison; but there were guards, other prisoners and visitors. The church at Rome grew with these people. Have the class consider how faith can protect from any attack. When God is with you, whatever others say and do, they cannot destroy you. Encourage the class to think about what salvation means. How did knowing that Christ had died to save him, help Paul to 'keep his head' and see things dearly?

The only weapon

Lastly, the Word of God is our only weapon. Discuss not only how Paul used it, but also encourage the class to think about using this armour now. Is their sword rusted in its sheath, or is it polished? Have the class consider how they can become proficient with the sword. Paul knew he needed this armour as he was facing his 'day of evil'. Is it possible to be so unaware of evil or any future 'day of evil' that the armour might be lying rusting in a corner?

A secret weapon

There is a 'secret weapon' in the middle of the worksheet. By taking alternate letters, the code reads GOOD COMMUNICATIONS WITH HEADQUARTERS. Discuss how important this is to a soldier and how important prayer is to the Christian (see Ephesians 6:18-20).

The second half of the worksheet is to examine what is meant by the devil's schemes in v11. Paul explains what he means in verse 12, and the worksheet is designed to help the class discover what Paul is saying.

Who is the enemy?

The first point is that unlike the Roman soldier, whose job was to attack people and literally cut flesh and blood, the Christian's armour is not designed for a physical battle. Our struggle is against two different forms of opposition.

- World rulers – called principalities, powers and rulers (AV) or rulers, authorities and powers (NIV). The references to Titus 3:1, Luke 12:11 and Luke 20:20 where the same words are used, make it quite clear that these are world rulers.
- Opposition from within the church – called spiritual wickedness in heavenly (high) places. The reference to Ephesians 2:6 shows that this same expression, 'heavenly places' is used of the present position of the members of the church. The high position of being part of God's family puts them in what Paul calls 'heavenly places'. The reference to Acts 20:29,30 shows that Paul had warned this church at Ephesus before that they would have opposition from without and from within.

Using the third pair of boxes on each of the two pictures of the 'enemies', help the class to consider what both forms of this opposition meant in Paul's day, i.e. the Roman and Jewish authorities who persecuted Christians, and people who had joined the church but were intent on making trouble, such as the Judaisers. Discuss how Paul handled these two forms of opposition.

Today's enemy

The last pair of boxes is to consider the opposition today from world rulers and from inside the church. The discussion on world rulers could include those of countries where there may be official opposition to Christianity or the State, or those countries where laws and standards are not those of Christ. The way to handle such opposition should take into account the reference to submission in Titus 3:1.

The subject of opposition from within the church can be used to point out that the church is not composed of perfect people, and that when someone is baptised and joins the church, they must follow Christ and his teaching, not the opinions of others. However, the teaching of submission to one another, Ephesians 5:21, is relevant in this situation as the Titus reference shows it to be in the other.

Digging deeper

Paul's letters to churches

This is a review of Paul's letters to the churches he visited. It suggests learning the names of the books in order.

Relevance to our lives

Ask the class which piece of armour they are going to polish this week.

Prayer

The class could write a prayer that Paul might have said while facing trial and death. They could use some of his ideas about the armour of God.

Other suggestions for activities

- The class could think of other situations where parallels could be drawn with Christian preparation and equipment. A cricketer or tennis player, for example.
- The class could write a letter that the Roman soldier to whom Paul was chained might have written home, describing his unusual prisoner.