

## EPHESIANS 6:10–18: A CALL TO PERSONAL PIETY OR ANOTHER WAY OF DESCRIBING UNION WITH CHRIST?

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The imperatives of Ephesians 6:10–18 are often interpreted simply as a call to personal piety for the development of an ethical character. However, while this is an important aspect of the message of this passage, it is critical to evaluate the larger message of this pericope that comes from its relationship to the rest of the letter. Recognition of the indicatives empowers individuals within the Church to strive to become who they already are in Christ by reminding them from whom they draw their strength and virtues. Recognition of the reason for the spiritual warfare against the individual as a part of the corporate body places individuals within the corporate setting of the Church, helping them to recognize that their personal piety is for the sake of the universal Church, not just for themselves. This wider vision of the passage offers an explanation for the difficulties faced in striving to “walk in a manner worthy of our calling” (Eph 4:1).<sup>1</sup> Thus, this paper will explore the function of this pericope in the letter and the use of key verbs in the passage in order to present a case for expanding the use of this passage from a simple call to personal piety to a call to put on Christ for the sake of the unity and maturity of the Church.

### I. THE FUNCTION OF THE PERICOPE IN THE LETTER

1. *The flow of thought of the letter.* The style and organization of the letter to the Ephesians have been widely debated among scholars. Most agree that the letter contains two primary sections, indicatives followed by imperatives. In the indicative section, 1:3 to the end of chapter 3, Paul begins by recounting some of the riches in Christ, then prays that believers will better understand their rich inheritance in Christ and the power of God toward them. He reminds them of their past deadness and slavery, contrasting their past with their present aliveness in Christ and then reveals the mystery of the gospel, which is the unity of believers in their inheritance through Christ. In the concluding prayer of this section, Paul reveals that the strengthening of believers through God’s power is in accordance with the riches of Christ’s glory for the purpose of Christ dwelling in the hearts of believers (3:14–19).

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotes are from the ESV unless otherwise noted.

Paul begins the imperative section with a call to unity in Christ and then gives imperatives concerning how individuals are to act toward the community and how to act as members of the community. This section concludes with a metaphorical explanation of how the preceding imperatives are to be accomplished,<sup>2</sup> and it is this final metaphor that is the focus of this paper.

2. *Views concerning the function of the pericope in the letter.* As stated earlier, whether the “whole armor of God” pericope is taken as the summary of the imperatives section only or as the summary of the whole letter appears to affect the interpretation of the pericope. Harold Hoehner states that there are “no obvious hints of links with the whole book nor is there any sort of recapitulation or an emotional call to action based on those facts, normally included in a *peroratio*.”<sup>3</sup> Hoehner and F. F. Bruce<sup>4</sup> consider this pericope to be the summary of only the imperative section. With this interpretation, the “whole armor of God” pericope is a continuation of the imperative section and exhorts believers to respond to God’s grace by acquiring these virtues in their own lives. This understanding of the function of the pericope can lead to interpreting the pericope as primarily a call to personal piety, that is, an appeal to acquire certain virtues. This understanding of the passage is found also in the works of Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin.<sup>5</sup>

Andrew Lincoln proposes a classical Greek form for the letter with the “whole armor of God” pericope functioning as a *peroratio* and thus summarizing the whole letter.<sup>6</sup> Peter O’Brien, who agrees that this passage is a summary of the entire letter, notes that the recognition of a specific form is

<sup>2</sup> Hans F. Bayer, “Acts and Paul” (class lecture, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO, April 14, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002) 817.

<sup>4</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984) 241.

<sup>5</sup> Aquinas interpreted the call to “put on the armor of God” as a command to receive the gifts and live virtuously. His emphasis is very strongly on the development of virtues, which he divides into moral and theological virtues (Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* [Aquinas Scripture Series; Albany, NY: Magi Books, 1966] 235, 240–43). John Calvin, in his commentary on Ephesians, interprets this passage as an exhortation “to summon up courage and vigour” and a call to apply the arms the Lord gives us. In his sermon series he attributes being “surprised by our enemies” or not being able to resist temptation as the result of hanging the armor of God on a hook instead of “receiv[ing] the means God offers us and [being] diligent in serving him.” However, Calvin does not see “be strengthened in the Lord” as an entirely human act, but as a call to recognize that equipping oneself for spiritual battle is synergistic—the Lord strengthens us and equips us but we “must take pains to prepare ourselves for [being equipped]” (John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries: The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965] 217 and John Calvin, “The Forty Fifth Sermon, which is the Third on the Sixth Chapter,” in *Sermons on the Epistle to the Ephesians* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1973] 652, 657–58).

<sup>6</sup> Lincoln notes that this *peroratio* takes on the form of a *paraenesis* from the “epideictic genre of literature,” that is, a military speech of a general before leading the troops into battle. In the *peroratio* not only is the conclusion stated but the emotions of the audience are aroused (Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians* [WBC; Dallas: Word, 1990] 433).

not required to come to this conclusion.<sup>7</sup> Kraig Keck agrees with O'Brien and Lincoln that this passage is a summary of the letter which pulls together recurring topics.<sup>8</sup> This interpretation invites us to consider some of the armor as divine attributes or gifts which God gives to believers and which have implications concerning how believers are to walk in accordance with these gifts. While the final human response to both interpretive assumptions is the same, the "summary of the letter" approach emphasizes the riches of Christ given to believers rather than emphasizing the responsibility of the believer.

However, as demonstrated by John Chrysostom, it is possible to view the pericope as the summary of the letter and to interpret the attributes as virtues to be acquired, not as attributes of Christ to be worked out in the lives of believers.<sup>9</sup> Thus, while understanding the use of the pericope within the letter is an important aspect of interpreting and applying the pericope, it is also important to evaluate how Paul discussed the attributes associated with each piece of armor within the context of the entire letter.

3. *Evaluating the pericope as a summary of the letter.* If the pericope is the summary of the entire letter, it would be reasonable to expect prominent topics of the letter to be evident in the pericope as well as logical connections between these topics to be provided. It would also be reasonable to expect the tension between God's sovereign provision for his people and their call to human responsibility developed in the letter also to be present. In the following sections I will argue that both of these expectations are met. Further, I will argue that the tension of the letter becomes even more pronounced in this pericope.

a. *Thematic connections in the "whole armor of God" pericope.* There are at least seven prominent topics in Ephesians. Four of these topics are clearly found in both sections: (1) the unity of believers in Christ (Eph 1:10; 2:14-22; 3:4-6, 13; 4:3-6, 13); (2) the source of opposition to Christian unity (Eph 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12); (3) God's power exercised on behalf of believers (Eph 1:19; 2:6; 3:7)<sup>10</sup> and the need of this power in the life of Christians (Eph

<sup>7</sup> Peter Thomas O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 81.

<sup>8</sup> Kraig L. Keck, "The Relevance of Ephesians 6:10-20 to the Ephesian Letter," *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* (Fall 1994) 32-42. Lincoln has noted that this pericope recapitulates the themes, concerns, and earlier terminology, specifically, the "believer's identity, their relationship to Christ and to the resources of power in him and in God, their need both to appropriate salvation from God and to live a righteous life in the world, [and] the cosmic opposition to God's purposes for human well-being" (*Ephesians* 433).

<sup>9</sup> While he took the pericope as a summary of the whole letter, he interpreted the command to put on the armor of God as "a token of a constant and unceasing attendance on sacred duties" (Saint Chrysostom, *Homily XXIV in Homilies on the Epistle to the Ephesians in Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* [NPNF 168]).

<sup>10</sup> Keck, "The Relevance of Ephesians 6:10-20 to the Ephesian Letter" 36. Note that this is half of the topic and is found only in the indicative section.

3:16, 18–19; 6:10);<sup>11</sup> and (4) the mystery which is now revealed (Eph 1:8; 3:3–6; 6:19). In contrast, two topics are found in only one section: God's will or purpose (Eph 1:5, 9; 3:9–11) is found in only the indicative section, and the exhortation to walk worthy of one's calling (Eph 4:1; 5:2, 8, 15) is found in only the imperative section. Thus, four of the topics are present in both sections of the letter, indicating that these repeated themes unify the letter. By exploring the description of each attribute mentioned in the armor as Paul presents them in the letter, it will be demonstrated how the seventh topic, the riches of Christ for believers (Eph 1:3, 7–9, 11, 14, 18; 2:7; 3:8, 16), is also found in both sections. As each piece of armor is explored, the tension between divine provision and human responsibility will also be discussed.

Going through the armor in order, the first piece of armor is the belt of truth. Truth first appears in the indicative section (1:13); the word of truth is the gospel of salvation. In the imperatives, Paul exhorts the people to speak the truth to each other in love, so that they may all mature in the faith (4:15). A pattern of truthfulness is part of normal community life after putting off the old self and putting on the new self (4:25) and is necessary for unity. However, in 5:8–9, we find that living lives characterized by truth is not something that one does in one's own strength, but that this is a fruit of light and an outward sign that one is walking as a child of light. Thus, the desire and ability to live a life characterized by truth are gifts from God which each believer is expected to act upon and incorporate into his or her life. Paul discusses truth first as a divine gift and then as a human responsibility.

The second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness does not appear in the indicative section; it is an intrinsic characteristic of the new self created by God in his image (4:22–24). It is a fruit of the light (5:9). Therefore, the source of this righteousness is God, not human effort. Further, O'Brien states that "[i]f the expression is to be understood in the light of its Old Testament context where righteousness is parallel to salvation, then to speak of donning God's own righteousness is in effect to urge the reader to once more put on 'the new man' of 4:24," which he notes is equivalent to saying "put on Christ."<sup>12</sup> Thus righteousness is a gift from God and not self-generated, but at the same time it is a virtue that believers are to reflect in their lives. The pattern continues: righteousness is a divine attribute, given as a gift, with the implied call to living out the implications of this gift.

The third piece of armor is the shodding of the feet with the preparedness of the gospel of peace. Greetings of peace from God and Christ (1:2) are in the introduction of the letter, and in 2:14 we find that Christ himself is our peace. In the imperative section, Paul urges believers to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3), which requires human endeavor. Again we see the pattern of divine attribute given as a gift followed by a call to human responsibility.

<sup>11</sup> This topic is presented differently in the two sections of the letter. In the indicative section it is the power of God exercised on behalf of believers, and in the imperative section it is the call for believers to recognize their dependence upon Christ for strength.

<sup>12</sup> O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* 475 n. 147.

The fourth piece of armor is the shield of faith. It is apparent from 2:8-9 that Paul is not speaking of faith that is generated by human effort, but faith that is a gift from God. In the imperative section, the goal of ministry among the saints is unity of the faith within the Church (4:11-14). In order to mature in God's gift and assist others in their spiritual growth, each believer needs to make this gift of faith his or her own. But, while growth is necessary, faith itself is not self-generated. The pattern continues: faith is first described as a gift, then a responsibility.

The fifth piece of armor is the helmet of salvation. In 2:5, 8-9, we find that salvation comes by hearing and believing in Christ. This is not something attained through human effort but received through the gift of faith. In the imperative section, Christ is described as the author of salvation (5:23). Salvation is a divine gift with implied human responsibility to hear and believe.<sup>13</sup>

The sixth piece of armor, the sword of the Spirit, which is God's word, is introduced in the indicative section as the word of truth which was heard and believed (1:13). In the imperative section believers are to encourage one another in the Spirit (5:18-19) through the use of Scripture. Thus the divine gift of the gospel, the word heard and believed, continues to change lives as believers use Scripture to build up one another in unity.

The tension between divine provision and human responsibility to appropriate what God has so graciously provided, i.e. between indicatives and imperatives, can be summarized in the following table:

<i>Armor</i>	<i>Indicative: Divine Provision</i>	<i>Imperative: Human Responsibility</i>
6:14: belt of truth	1:13: the gospel of salvation comes through hearing the word of truth	4:15, 25: speak the truth in love to neighbors in order to mature in Christ
	5:8-9: all that is true is found the fruit of light	
6:14: breastplate of righteousness	4:24: the new self is created in true righteousness	4:24: put on the new self
	5:8-9: all that is right is found in the fruit of light	

<sup>13</sup> The *responsibility* to hear and believe is not the same as the *ability* to hear and believe. The ability to hear and believe is only through the gift of faith.

6:15: shodding the feet with the gospel of peace	1:2: peace comes from God and Christ	
	2:14–18: Christ is our peace with the Father and each other; he came preaching peace	
		4:3: maintain unity through peace
6:16: shield of faith		1:13: believe in Christ for salvation
	2:8–9: faith is a gift from God	
	4:11–14: gifts are given to build up the Church in the unity of the faith	
6:17: helmet of salvation		1:13: believe in Christ for salvation
	2:5, 8–9: salvation is by grace	
	5:23: Christ is the author of salvation	
6:17: sword of the Spirit, the Word of God	1:13: the Word brings salvation	1:13: hear and believe the Word for salvation
		5:18–19: build one another up through the use of Scripture

With the exception of the term “righteousness,” every other attribute of the armor is mentioned in both the indicative and the imperative sections of the letter and then repeated in the “whole armor of God” pericope. The fifth topic, the riches of Christ for believers mentioned in the indicative section, can be seen to be threaded throughout the letter if one assumes that the attributes of the armor, which have been shown to be divine attributes or gifts, are examples of those riches.

b. *Logical connections between the sections of the letter found in the pericope.* The next step in evaluating whether or not the “whole armor of God” pericope is a summary of the entire letter is to determine whether or not this pericope supplies logical connections between the sections of the letter through the use of these repeated topics. These logical connections include combining or further developing the themes presented in the letter in such

a way that not only does the pericope demonstrate the unity of the letter but it also adds further insight to the purpose of these themes in the letter.

The development of the theme of God's power for believers, which was introduced in the indicative section, is completed in the "whole armor of God" pericope. At the end of the indicative section, Paul prays that, according to the riches of God's glory, the Holy Spirit will strengthen believers in order that Christ may live within them. The purpose of this request is so that they will know the riches of Christ's love (3:16–19). This prayer for strengthening of believers is echoed in 6:10 when Paul exhorts believers to be made "strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might." Paul exhorts believers to live in the reality of what he has prayed for them, linking the exhortation to human responsibility with the previously discussed divine provision. The reason for needing to be strengthened is made clear in the "whole armor of God" pericope when opposition to the unity of the Church by the principalities and rulers is brought together with the exhortation to be strengthened in the Lord. This opposition explains the difficulties in obtaining the primary call in this letter, namely, to live according to the now-revealed mystery of God's will—unity in Christ. This strengthening is in accordance with the riches of Christ, through his armor.

Paul's reference to the enemies against whom believers are commanded to stand underscores the need for reliance upon God's sovereign provision through Christ's riches. These enemies are the same dark forces (2:2) that had once enslaved them. These are not enemies one can withstand in one's own strength. Only by God's resurrecting power are believers made alive in Christ (2:1–5) and freed from slavery to these dark forces. Again, the juxtaposition of God's might and sovereignty (these enemies have already been defeated!) and the human responsibility to respond to God's grace is clear.

Thus the five topics that are found in both sections of the letter are present in the "whole armor of God" pericope, with logical connections developed between these topics throughout the letter.

*c. Further development of the tension between God's sovereign provision and the call to human responsibility.* Another aspect of the letter that one would expect to find continued in a summary is the tension between God's sovereign provision and the call to human responsibility. Both the attributes which the believer is called to put on and the verb choices develop tension in this pericope. The pericope under investigation begins with a present passive imperative of ἐνδυναμῶ, which O'Brien recommends be translated as "be strengthened" or "be made strong."<sup>14</sup> According to Daniel Wallace, most passive imperatives are either causative/permissive or "performative statements given as imperatives for rhetorical effect," with this latter interpretation "reserved for passives that cannot be fulfilled by the recipient of the imperative."<sup>15</sup> As noted by scholars from both interpretive views, the source

<sup>14</sup> O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* 460.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 440–43.

of strength being discussed is from outside the one receiving the command.<sup>16</sup> The use of ἐνδυναμῶ in the Pauline corpus supports this conclusion. In the passive tense we find Abraham growing stronger in faith "as he gave glory to God" (Rom 4:20), and Timothy is instructed to "be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 2:1). In the active voice, we find that it is Christ who strengthens Paul (Phil 4:13; 1 Tim 1:12; 2 Tim 4:17). Recognizing the source of the strength reduces the choice of interpretation of the imperative to the performative aspect. Therefore, the pericope begins, as does the letter, with a view of God's sovereignty and power and the riches of Christ for the believer.

The next verse is also an imperative, this time in the aorist middle. Based upon the juxtaposing of this imperative with the previous imperative and the switch from present tense to aorist in the next six verbs in the pericope, this verse is typically interpreted as the beginning of the explanation of the previous command:<sup>17</sup> what follows is how one is to continually be strengthened in the Lord. The use of the aorist imperative does not give temporal clues as to whether this is something that has already been accomplished or whether it is something that still must be done, only that the action as a whole is being considered.<sup>18</sup>

The nuance of ἐνδύω in the middle voice is "to put any kind of thing on oneself, clothe oneself in, put on, wear."<sup>19</sup> Its use in the first century BC through the first century AD is either literal, that is, to put on a garment,<sup>20</sup> or metaphorical, that is, "of the taking on of characteristics, virtues, intentions, etc."<sup>21</sup> These two uses are attested in other Greek texts prior to and contemporaneous with the NT texts<sup>22</sup> and continue into the fourth century.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>16</sup> So also Hoehner, *Ephesians* 82; Lincoln, *Ephesians* 441; O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* 460; and Rudolf Schanckenburg, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991) 271.

<sup>17</sup> Paul's use of this verb is only in the aorist, so the tense of this verb is not sufficient on its own to make this claim. However, O'Brien notes that it is the following six aorists in the pericope upon which this statement is based (O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* 462).

<sup>18</sup> The aorist imperative "command[s] the action as a whole, without focusing on duration, repetition, etc. [It is] a summary command" (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 591–92).

<sup>19</sup> BDAG 333.

<sup>20</sup> A few examples from many: Gen 41:42; Lev 16:23; Job 8:22; 29:14; Isa 52:1; Ps 132:16; Ezek 7:27; Zeph 1:8; Matt 6:25; Mark 6:9; and Acts 12:21.

<sup>21</sup> A few examples from many: Ps 103(104):1; Eph 4:24; Col 3:10.

<sup>22</sup> Literal—"put on clothes": Herodotus (*Historicus* 2.81; 3.98; 7.218), Sophocles (*Tragicus* 759), and Ilias (*Homerus* 2.578) from the 5th century BC; enter, "press into": Plato (*Respublica* 620c and *Phaedo* 89d) and Aristophanes Comicus (*Vespae* 1020) from the 5th–4th century BC. Metaphorical—"assum[ing] the person of"—specifically in the aorist—to "put on another"—Aristophanes Comicus (*Ecclesiastusae* 288), and Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* 8.1.12) from the 5th–4th century BC; Aristophanes Philosophus (*Historia Animalium* 609<sup>b</sup>21) from the 3d to 2d century BC (LSJ 562); Ehippus (after 325 BC) wrote that "Alex. the Great liked to put on the ἱερὰς ἐσθῆτας of the gods, and so became Ammon, Artemis, Hermes, Heracles," from the 1st century BC/AD Dionysius Halicarnassensis and Philo (*De Conusione Linguarum* 31) (BDAG 334).

<sup>23</sup> Literal: 2d century: Origenes; 3d century: Athanasius Alexandrinus, Didymus Alexandrinus, and 4th century: Chrysostom (PGL 469). Metaphorical: 2d century: Irenaeus, Melito of Sardis, Artemidorus (BDAG 334), and Clemens Alexandrinus; 3d century: Cyrillus Hierosolymitanus, Athanasius Alexandrinus, Arius, Eusebius Caesariensis; and 4th century: Chrysostom (PGL 469).



Since what is to be "put on" affects the understanding of the use of ἐνδύω,<sup>24</sup> the use of the genitive τοῦ θεοῦ ("of God") must be evaluated. The obvious choices are either the genitive of source, which would be rendered as "the armor which is from God" or the genitive of possession, which would be rendered "the armor which is God's" or both. Due to allusions to OT passages where God, the "Divine Warrior,"<sup>25</sup> wears the same or similar armor, Lincoln states that "it is hard to avoid the impression that more [than the genitive of source] is intended and that the armor given by God to believers is in some sense his own."<sup>26</sup> But, even while metaphorical in use, the command to "put on" has an aspect of human responsibility. In this single command we find both God's divine attributes and the call to human responsibility displayed side by side.

## II. "PUTTING ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD" EQUIVALENT TO "PUTTING ON CHRIST"

The flow of thought, the repeated topics of the letter, and logical connections between the two sections of the letter have been offered as justification for interpreting the "whole armor of God" pericope as a summary of Ephesians. In addition, the tension between divine gift and human responsibility, evident throughout the pericope, provides further justification for receiving this pericope as a summary of both the indicative and the imperative sections. However, the presentation so far is not sufficient to substantiate that "putting on the full armor of God" is equivalent to "putting on Christ." A review of Paul's use of ἐνδύω will provide additional support for this proposed interpretation of the phrase.

The apostle's writings demonstrate that his Christocentric use of ἐνδύω as a shorthand notation for what we call "union with Christ" originated prior to the Ephesian letter. In Gal 3:26-28, being identified as "sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28 NASB) is synonymous with being baptized into Christ, which Paul further explains as having put on Christ. In 1 Thess 5:8, putting on spiritual armor (faith and love as a breastplate, "the hope of salvation" as a helmet) enables Christians to "live soberly" as the day of Christ's return approaches, a parallel use to that found in the "whole armor of God" pericope. The discussion with the Corinthian church

<sup>24</sup> Paulsen notes three uses: "association with (1) baptism and christology, (2) parenthesis, and (3) eschatology . . . [all of which] are connected in that all emphasize the newness of the reality mediated by Christ." The concern of Eph 6:11 is, according to Paulsen, to "realiz[e] . . . the event that occurs in baptism, which is interpreted according to the dialectic between indicative and imperative" (H. Paulsen, "ἐνδύω," *EDNT* 1.451-52). Weigelt divides the figurative use into three different categories based upon syntax: (1) "with the accusative of the thing put on" (Rom 13:12; 1 Cor 15:53; Eph 6:11; 1 Thess 5:8); (2) "with the accusative of person: put on Christ" (Rom 13:14; Eph 4:24; Gal 3:27; Col 3:10); and (3) in the absolute (2 Cor 5:3) (Weigelt, "δύω," *NIDNTT* 1.316). BDAG lists Eph 6:11 as an example of literal sense usage (BDAG 333).

<sup>25</sup> "Armor," *DBI* 45.

<sup>26</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians* 442, 437. See also J. Armitage Robinson, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians* (London: Macmillan, 1903; reprint 1922) 212-13; and R. R. Williams, "The Pauline Catechesis," in *Studies in Ephesians* (ed. F. L. Cross; London: A. R. Mowbray and Company, 1956) 95.

refers to post-consummation changes in the body (1 Cor 15:53–54; 2 Cor 5:3)<sup>27</sup> and thus the uses of ἐνδύω in the letters to the Corinthians are not metaphorical uses. To the church(es) of Rome, the discussion returns to the tension of the current temporal state. Paul likens putting on Christ (Rom 13:14) with putting on the armor of light (Rom 13:12),<sup>28</sup> which supplies a link between “putting on Christ” and putting on spiritual armor. In Col 3:10 and 12, “putting on the new self” empowers one to live in community in a manner pleasing to God. In his letter to the Romans, Paul has already stated that being baptized into Christ’s death and resurrection results in new life (Rom 6:4). Ephesians 4:24 not only parallels Col 3:10 (the new self is being renewed in the image of God) but also adds additional details: the new self is “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (ESV). In Eph 6:11, the exhortation to put on God’s armor is an explanation of how to be continually strengthened in the Lord in order to stand against spiritual enemies. In Eph 6:14, the believers are exhorted to put on the breastplate of righteousness. This righteousness is a characteristic of the new self, and, since this new self is due to the new life in Christ, this new self can only be put on by having been baptized into Christ, that is, to have put on Christ.

In summary, the following has been demonstrated: based upon the way Paul introduces each attribute of the armor in Ephesians, each piece of armor is a divine gift; he equates “putting on Christ” with “putting on spiritual armor” in Romans; and, in Galatians, he considers “being baptized in Christ” as equivalent to “having put on Christ.” Thus, it is not unreasonable to equate “put on the full armor of God” to “put on Christ,” that is, to be identified as a son of God through faith in Christ, which is the conclusion of Origen, Jerome, and O’Brien.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> In 1 Cor 15:51–54 Paul explains that when the last trumpet sounds and the dead are raised, mortal and perishable bodies will be replaced with immortal and imperishable bodies. 2 Cor 5:1–4 is in the same context of being clothed with heavenly dwellings.

<sup>28</sup> Noting the parallel construction of the aorist middle imperative second person plural in Rom 13:14 with the aorist middle subjunctive first person plural used as a volitive in 13:12. This is assuming that the aorist subjunctive is used as a hortatory, making it roughly equivalent to a first person imperative—the volitive (Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* 464–65).

<sup>29</sup> Origen stated that “from what follows [Eph 6:11] and from the things recorded of the Saviour, it is possible to say that Christ is the ‘whole armour of God’ so that ‘putting on the whole armour of God’ is the same as ‘putting on the Lord Jesus Christ’” (Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002] 252). Jerome states that to put on the full armor of God is no different than saying “put on Christ.” In his commentary on Eph 6:10 he notes that the Lord’s ἰσχυρός (strength, power or might, BDAG 484), which believers are to be strengthened in, was translated into Latin with the equivalent of “virtue” since the Greek words ἰσχυρός and ἀρετή (“excellence of character, exceptional civic virtue,” BDAG 130) were “designate[d] . . . indifferently as ‘virtue’” in the Latin scriptures. For Jerome, in the command “[b]e strengthened in the Lord and in the power of his virtue,” the whole is to be imagined in Christ so that those who have believed are strengthened in all the virtues which are understood of him” (Heine, *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians* 251–52). Peter O’Brien notes that to put on God’s own righteousness “. . . is, in effect, to put on Christ.” He connects this idea with the imperative of Eph 5:1, “be imitators of God,” and concludes, with Klyne Snodgrass, that putting on the armor of God is another way of talking about

An additional check of this interpretation comes from a comparison of the prayer at the end of chapter 3 with the call to put on God's armor. In chapter 3 Paul prays for believers to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit so that Christ might live in their hearts through faith. To pray that they might have Christ living in their hearts is basically equivalent to praying, "may they be in union with Christ" or "may they have Christ put on them." This would then present a second parallel between this prayer and the "full armor of God" pericope: the need for being strengthening and the need for "putting on Christ."

Therefore, putting on God's armor is an aspect of putting on Christ, that is, being united with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit, recognizing the riches that he has lavished upon us and responding appropriately by standing firm as a united Church against those dark forces that strive against God's will. The carefully constructed tension between God's sovereign arming of his people with his armor and the command to put on that same armor throughout this pericope beckons the reader to respond ethically to the imperatives after first recognizing and appropriating the indicatives. The indicatives of this passage appear in the development of the attributes of the armor as either divine attributes or gifts in the early portion of the epistle. The passive use of the key verbs ἐνδυναμῶ and ἐνδύω highlights the dependency of believers upon God while the imperative use of these verbs calls believers to respond actively to these commands.

### III. CONCLUSION

The case for interpreting the imperative "put on the full armor of God" as another way of describing union with Christ has been developed by considering the flow of thought, the use of prominent topics of the letter, the syntax of the imperatives in the "whole armor of God" pericope, the metaphorical use of ἐνδύω in the Pauline corpus, and the source of each piece of armor. The purpose for this call to "put on Christ" reveals that this imperative is more than simply a call to personal piety; it is also a call to accept another view of the world. By receiving the "whole armor of God" pericope as a summary of the entire letter, the connection between spiritual warfare and Christian unity becomes clear. This logical connection calls us to recognize that disunity within the Church is a result of both external forces acting against the Church and attacks on individuals within the Church, weakening individuals in order to weaken the whole. Thus Paul exhorts each believer to put on Christ for the sake of the unity and maturity of the Church.

The emphasis for teaching this passage depends upon the needs of those hearing the call to battle. As Stott has said, "some Christians are so

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being "identif[ed] with God and his purposes" (O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* 460-63; Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians* [NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996] 339).

self-confident that they think that they can manage by themselves without the Lord's strength and armour. Others are so self-distrustful that they think that they have nothing to contribute to their victory in spiritual warfare. Both are mistaken."<sup>30</sup> What is the corrective? The preaching and teaching of this passage with the appropriate emphasis for the people hearing the message is needed in order to correct mistaken worldviews. Because of the tension between sovereign provision and human responsibility in this passage, as noted by Stott, it is best to remember that the armor is neither exclusively virtues nor divine attributes, but both.<sup>31</sup> An example of applying this passage according to the world view correction required by the individual is demonstrated in the letters of Jerome. To Rufinus the Monk, Jerome equated the protective qualities of the shield of faith to the defense of the Christian by Christ; that is, Christ is our shield. In his letter to Furia, Jerome advised that "rigid fast and vigil," that is, prayer and fasting, quenches the fiery darts of the enemy.<sup>32</sup> Based upon Jerome's interpretation of this passage as a union with Christ passage, it is assumed that he was applying the indicative balm of God's sovereign provision or the imperative call to responsibility as required by the person to whom he was ministering.

In summary, the goal of the principalities and rulers is to cause disunity within the whole Church, one individual or one congregation at a time. It is through union with Christ, which includes taking up his armor, that we have the strength to withstand the attacks of his enemies. While spiritual warfare is a terrifying prospect, we are to gratefully put on the Lord's armor that he has given to his people through their union with him, having full confidence in our Lord's victory.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Stott, *The Message of the Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979) 266.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 278.

<sup>32</sup> Jerome, *Letter III to Rufinus the Monk* and *Letter to Furia*, in *The Principal Works of St. Jerome* (NPNF 6, 105).

<sup>33</sup> I am very grateful to C. John Collins for suggesting this topic and to Hans Bayer for his helpful comments on an earlier manuscript. The comments of Louis R. Best, Dave Thomas, Douglas J. Reinhard, Rebecca Rine, and Mary Beth McGreevy are also much appreciated.