

**RHETORICAL AND PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF EPHESIANS 6:11-18:
EXAMINING THE MISUSE OF THE SPIRITUAL WARFARE METAPHOR IN
PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN AFRICA**

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented to any other college or university for academic credit.

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

The current hermeneutical approaches and applications applied to the text of Ephesians 6:11-18 have tried capturing the right understanding and use of the metaphor ‘Armour of God.’ However, this has not been enough. There is no uniform hermeneutical approach applied to the text that resonates with the issue of the ‘Armour of God’ as a resource for spiritual warfare in some Pentecostal churches. This research exegeted the text of the study using two methods namely rhetorical criticism, specifically the method of Pentadic criticism, and Pragmatic analysis, particularly the method of Speech Act Theory. Abuses by church leaders are evident in the manipulation of the congregants financially, spiritually, physically, sociologically, and psychologically as indicated in this study. The focus of this study is therefore, directed to the interpretation and application of the text of Ephesians 6:11-18, to better understand the metaphor of the ‘Armour of God’ as a resource for spiritual warfare, and also to correct the abuse of the spiritual warfare teachings by some leaders in some of the Pentecostal churches. This addresses the spiritual warfare teachings and the use of the resources available in the Armour of God and contribute to academia. The study highlights the rhetorical strategies employed by the Apostle Paul to convey the significance of spiritual preparedness and defence. Additionally, it investigates the practical implications of these teachings in the daily lives of believers. By integrating rhetorical analysis with pragmatic considerations, this research provides an understanding of how the Armour of God serves as a foundational tool for spiritual warfare, empowering believers to navigate their spiritual journeys with confidence and strength.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AoG : Armour of God

NIV : New International Bible Version. (All Biblical quotations are from
NIV)

SW : Spiritual Warfare

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Hermeneutics: the science and art of understanding, translating, and explaining the meaning of the Scripture text.

Pharisees: The Pharisees were the most known religious group during Jesus' time, though they were small in number, they were influential. They disagreed with Jesus because He was reluctant concerning the Law, accepting sinful people, connecting with the Gentiles, and accused of blasphemy (Elwell, Walter & Yarbrough, 2013).

Demons: are fallen angels, the army of Satan, and the personification of all evil (Grant, 2017).

Warfare: often refers to the concept of spiritual warfare, which embodies the struggle between good and evil, a theme prevalent in various religious texts. This struggle is depicted in Ephesians 6:12 (NIV). This highlights the belief that believers are engaged in a spiritual battle against malevolent forces, calling for vigilance and faith.

Priesthood: The priesthood refers to the office and duties of priests within religious traditions, typically involving the administration of sacred rites and spiritual guidance

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to conduct a rhetorical and pragmatic analysis of Ephesians 6:11-18, aiming to enhance its interpretation and practical application as a means of fortifying believers against SW within Pentecostal Churches. This chapter provides an overview of the study's background, identifies the problem statement, clarifies the objectives, poses research questions, defines the scope, and underscores the study's significance and justification.

Today, some church leaders extend their influence beyond spiritual guidance to advising congregants on various life matters, often misinterpreting biblical teachings on spiritual warfare. For example, Paul Mackenzie, a prominent televangelist, led his followers to abandon their worldly lives and gather at his farm in Shakahola, Kenya (Akello, 2023). This misuse of authority tragically resulted in casualties among his followers.

Background of the Study

Pentecostal churches represent a vibrant and transformative movement within African Christianity, characterised by an emphasis on experiential spirituality rather than formal liturgy. Their dynamic services often feature singing, shouting, speaking in tongues, and healing, reflecting a deeply rooted belief in the supernatural and a constant struggle against spiritual forces (Ayayo, 2023). Central to these practices is the concept of spiritual warfare, which underscores the ongoing battle between good and evil in the spiritual realm.

Ephesians 6:11-18, a passage from the Apostle Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, plays a pivotal role in shaping the discourse on spiritual warfare within Pentecostal churches. The pericope of Ephesians 6:11-18 commonly termed "the Armour of God" presents a metaphorical framework for believers engaging in spiritual warfare. Paul's vivid imagery of military equipment truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the word of God serves as a call to spiritual vigilance and strength (Moule, 2017). The apostle's exhortation to "put on the whole armour of God" remains central to the Pentecostal understanding of spiritual resilience.

This study acknowledges the interplay between scripture and cultural contexts. Interpretations of biblical texts, particularly Ephesians 6:11-18, are often shaped by the lived realities and spiritual aspirations of believers (Owens, 2016). In this context, the armour of God is not merely a theological construct but a practical guide for navigating life's spiritual challenges. Exploring how Pentecostal churches appropriate this passage offers valuable insights into scripture's role in empowering believers, fostering resilience, and strengthening communal solidarity in the face of spiritual adversity.

Spiritual warfare Fairchild (2020) notes, deeply rooted in biblical teachings, encompasses the ongoing battle against malevolent forces. The Bible portrays the devil, or Satan, as the principal adversary of God. This spiritual conflict traces back to Satan's rebellion, alongside his fallen angels, against God. As the ruler of this world, Satan commands an unseen army of demonic entities that oppose God, His church, and His followers.

Christians have historically recognized three primary moral adversaries—the world, the flesh, and the devil, collectively referred to as the "tripartite foe" (Powlison,

2019). Overarching these adversaries is the spectre of death itself. Scripture identifies Satan as the ruler of this world, governing these forces (Ephesians 6:10-12). While Jesus Christ disarmed these powers through His crucifixion, their influence remains a significant threat to both the church and individual believers. Nevertheless, believers are equipped with spiritual tools, as outlined in the Armour of God, to withstand and combat these challenges.

Despite the biblical foundation of spiritual warfare, some contemporary African pastors and teachers have misused or distorted its teachings. For instance, they may overemphasize spiritual matters at the expense of addressing practical challenges like poverty, disease, and political instability. As Kalu (2009) observes, Africa's pressing social and economic issues require practical solutions such as education, healthcare initiatives, and good governance. Overemphasizing spiritual warfare risks diverting attention from these critical needs, leaving congregants ill-prepared to address the tangible struggles of daily life.

While Ephesians 6:11-18 is a foundational text for understanding SW, some interpretations have veered toward extremes. Overemphasizing the "enemy" while neglecting themes such as love, forgiveness, and service creates an unbalanced view of scripture. This selective focus not only distorts the Bible's holistic message but also fosters fear and divisiveness among believers.

Certain pastors have abused spiritual warfare teachings to assert control over their congregants. By claiming exclusive insight into the demonic realm, they manipulate individuals, often for personal gain. This misuse of authority has led to emotional, financial, and psychological exploitation. For example, some leaders demand obedience

and payment for "deliverance" sessions, preying on the fears and vulnerabilities of their followers (Davis, 2016).

Mental Health Impacts

The overemphasis on demonic activity can have severe mental health consequences. Mujaji (2021) notes that a persistent fear of spiritual attacks may lead to anxiety, depression, or even psychosis. This fear isolates individuals and undermines healthy coping mechanisms, leaving them vulnerable to further exploitation.

Social and Interfaith Challenges

When SW teachings are used to demonize other groups, they can foster intolerance and hinder social progress. This creates barriers to peaceful coexistence and damages interfaith relations. Additionally, using religious authority to manipulate or intimidate congregants erodes trust and perpetuates harm within communities.

Manipulation by Leaders

Certain church leaders have used their spiritual authority to dominate and control members across various dimensions—financial, spiritual, social, and psychological (Vonderen, 2005). Through leveraging spiritual language and claiming a private connection with God, some pastors confuse their followers, causing them to equate the leader's pronouncements with God's will (Elah, 2017). This dynamic leads to misplaced trust and vulnerability to manipulation.

Bob (2004) highlights the danger of scriptural misinterpretation, emphasizing that false teachers often twist the meaning of scripture for personal gain. Biblical warnings, such as Peter's caution in two Peter 2:1 and Paul's admonition in Acts 20:30, call for vigilance against the distortion of the Gospel (Bible, 2010). Misinterpretations,

particularly around SW, can lead to unbalanced theology and misdirected ministry (Zuck, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

The concept of spiritual warfare has become an essential component of Pentecostal church theology and practice, particularly in African contexts, where believers are encouraged to engage in spiritual battle against perceived forces of evil. One of the foundational biblical texts often cited in these teachings is Ephesians 6:11-18, which describes the "Armour of God" as a divine provision for Christians to withstand spiritual opposition. Despite its widespread usage, there remains a gap in scholarly exploration regarding the rhetorical and pragmatic dimensions of this passage, especially in its application to spiritual warfare within African Pentecostal churches.

While Pentecostal leaders and preachers frequently emphasize the relevance of this scripture in their spiritual warfare teachings, there is limited scholarly investigation into how the rhetorical strategies employed by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:11-18 shape the understanding and practice of spiritual warfare in contemporary African contexts. Furthermore, the practical implications of this passage, how its themes of preparation, resistance, and empowerment are interpreted and enacted within African Pentecostal worship, remain insufficiently explored.

Thus, this study seeks to address the lack of critical engagement with the rhetorical and pragmatic dimensions of Ephesians 6:11-18 by conducting a rhetorical-pragmatic analysis of the text. It will investigate how this passage functions as a resource for spiritual warfare in African Pentecostal churches and explore how the principles of the "Armour of God" are applied, interpreted, and practiced in the daily lives of believers.

This research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between biblical exegesis, spiritual experience, and the cultural context of Pentecostalism in Africa, while also addressing the broader issue of how religious texts are used to shape and guide spiritual practices in specific cultural settings

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- i. To analyse the rhetorical strategies used in Ephesians 6:11-18. That is, examine the language, imagery, and metaphors employed by Apostle Paul in the passage, and identify how these rhetorical elements are designed to communicate the importance of spiritual preparedness.
- ii. To examine the pragmatic implications of Ephesians 6:11-18 as a remedial aimed at enhancing believers' consciousness of SW and the resources required in the Pentecostal believers' community.
- iii. To identify potential gaps or discrepancies between the interpretation of the study text and the lived experiences of believers regarding SW in Pentecostal church contexts.
- iv. To propose strategies for enhancing the teaching and preaching of the study text within Pentecostal churches, aiming to deepen believers' understanding and consciousness of SW and identify the tools required for spiritual warfare today.

Research Questions

To address the aforementioned problem, the following research questions guide the study.

- i. What rhetorical strategies are employed by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:11-18 to convey the concept of the AoG metaphor? How does the language and imagery of the AoG metaphor enhance its effectiveness in communicating the importance of SW?
- ii. How do believers in Pentecostal churches practically apply the concept of the AoG in their daily lives? What specific practices and behaviours are associated with ‘putting on’ the AoG among Pentecostal believers?
- iii. How effective is the AoG as a resource for spiritual resilience and empowerment in the lives of Pentecostal believers?
- iv. What recommendations could help for further theological and practical engagement with the concept of the AoG in Pentecostal churches?

Purpose of the Study

This study seeks to explore the application and significance of Ephesians 6:11-18 commonly referred to as the Armour of God. It aims to achieve this by analysing both the rhetorical and pragmatic dimensions of the passage.

First, the study examines the rhetorical strategies employed in the text, focusing on how the passage is structured and communicated. This includes analysing Paul’s use of metaphor, language, and persuasive techniques to convey the concept of SW.

Second, the study investigates the pragmatic application of Ephesians 6:11-18, exploring how Pentecostal believers incorporate its teachings into their spiritual lives. This involves examining how the AoG metaphor functions as a resource for SW, influencing religious practices, personal spirituality, and communal activities.

Additionally, the study provides insights and recommendations on how the teachings of Ephesians 6:11-18 utilized effectively to strengthen believers' SW practices. By doing so, it aims to empower individuals and communities in their spiritual battles while deepening their faith. Finally, this research contributes to the broader academic discourse on biblical interpretation and its application within Pentecostal churches.

Significance of the Research

This study offers deeper theological insights into how Pentecostal churches interpret and utilize the AoG metaphor. It contributes to biblical scholarship by examining the contextual dimensions of scriptural interpretation, thereby enhancing theological understanding.

By focusing on Pentecostal communities, the research highlights the role of contextual factors in shaping religious beliefs and practices. It underscores the need for theological frameworks that respond to the lived realities of diverse Christian communities.

Finally, the study opens new avenues for future research in biblical studies, theology, and religious studies. It contributes to the scholarly conversation on contextual theology and the lived experience of faith by promoting more investigation.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on a detailed examination of Ephesians 6:11-18, a passage that contains both rhetorical and pragmatic elements. To achieve a comprehensive and accurate exegesis, the research will employ rhetorical and pragmatic analysis, with a particular emphasis on speech act theory (Watson, 2019).

The rhetorical analysis will explore the language, imagery, and metaphors used by the Apostle Paul to convey the concept of the Armour of God. It will examine the theological and rhetorical strategies employed in the passage to communicate the significance of spiritual warfare and the believer's preparedness.

By integrating both approaches, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and contextually informed analysis of the AoG metaphor as a resource for spiritual warfare among Pentecostal believers. The findings will contribute to both academic scholarship and practical theology, offering valuable insights into the role of biblical metaphors in shaping faith and practice.

Methodology

This study examines Ephesians 6:11-18 using rhetorical and pragmatic analysis, specifically employing speech act theory, to uncover the linguistic aspects of the text. These methods provide answers to the research questions without necessitating fieldwork, as this study is documentary research. The study utilized physical and online institutional libraries, along with free online academic sources, to access relevant materials.

- (1) Rhetorical Analysis. This method examines how messages and claims function as rhetorical artefacts, speeches, or texts. It evaluates rhetorical behaviours to achieve an accurate understanding, interpretation, and application of the text (Stoner et al., 2015a; Zuck, 2002).
- (2) Pragmatic Analysis. This approach investigates the contextual factors influencing word choice and language use. It explores how we derive meaning from textual

assertions, allowing for a deeper comprehension of the text (Parker, 1997; Hamid, 2024).

Rhetorical criticism combines effectively with speech act theory, according to Kennedy (2014) since rhetoric originates in a speech act, not a text. Speech act theory, as demonstrated by Austin (1962) and further supported by Oryila (2021) and (Tate, 2012), examines the power of spoken words and their impact beyond mere statements.

By employing these methodologies, this study aims to interpret and apply the “spiritual warfare metaphor,” addressing contemporary misinterpretations of SW in Pentecostal churches. The application of rhetorical criticism in New Testament studies is a relatively recent yet growing approach. As Fulford (2013) and (Iverson, 2014) suggest, scholars have made significant progress in integrating rhetorical analysis as a New Testament interpretative tool, enhancing the study of biblical texts in new and meaningful ways.

Conclusion

In some Pentecostal churches today, leaders, resulting in manipulation and distorted applications of biblical texts, often misuse SW teachings. This misuse arises because the rhetorical and pragmatic analysis of the AoG metaphor not fully explored, nor its potential as a practical resource for believers in addressing spiritual challenges fully realized.

By outlining the study's scope and methodologies, this research aims to uncover the rhetorical strategies and theological insights embedded in the AoG metaphor, as conveyed by the Apostle Paul. This exploration focuses on how these metaphors,

language, and imagery contribute to understanding the importance of spiritual warfare and the need for spiritual preparedness.

In the following chapter, the study will explore the definitions of spiritual warfare and the AoG metaphor, considering both the perspective of the original audience and that of the contemporary Pentecostal church. The researcher will also offer a review of scholarly interpretations of Ephesians 6:11-18, to deepen the understanding of this key biblical passage.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter explores various understandings of SW as depicted in the Bible, with a focus on the Greco-Roman context and the Ephesians. Understanding these historical and cultural backgrounds is crucial, as it provides insight into how the original audience framed the concept of SW. At the same time, it allows for a deeper understanding of how Pentecostal churches today interpret and apply these biblical concepts in their unique cultural and spiritual context. Addressing these two distinct life circumstances- the ancient world of the Roman Empire and the contemporary experience of Pentecostal believers- helps bridge the gap between past and present, enabling a more effective interpretation of Ephesians 6:11-18.

By examining both the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds of the time, as well as the modern world that engages with the text, this chapter aims to provide a fuller understanding of spiritual warfare. As Holt-woehl (2009) notes, this exploration is essential for addressing the tension that arises in multicultural settings, where interpretation and application may vary across time and culture. This chapter also engages with the approaches that other scholars have taken in analysing Ephesians 6:11-18, discussing their conclusions and contributions to the broader discourse on spiritual warfare.

Meaning of Spiritual Warfare

The Greek term "πνευματικός πόλεμος" directly translates to "SW." The word "Πνευματικός" refers to anything "spiritual" or relating to "the spirit or soul" while "Πόλεμος" means "war" or "conflict." Thus, "πνευματικός πόλεμος" essentially refers to

a spiritual conflict, a battle that takes place within the spiritual realm, often depicted as a struggle between opposing forces such as good and evil, light and darkness, or positivity and negativity. This conflict can represent both inner struggles individuals face in their spiritual journeys, as well as outer conflicts that manifest in the world around them (Warren, 2012; Anderson, 2011).

Marshall (2020) highlights that in charismatic Christianity; prayer plays a central role in spiritual warfare, serving as a powerful tool for shaping the militant spiritual identity of believers. Through prayers and testimonies, spiritual warriors engage in a form of spiritual violence aimed at challenging the prevailing powers of darkness. This act of spiritual combat, Marshall notes functions as both a political and religious practice, as prayer becomes a means of confronting and disrupting evil forces in both the spiritual and worldly realms.

Furthermore, Gorman et al. (2016) suggest that the roots of spiritual warfare lie in Pentecostal theologies, particularly within the context of political cultures where believers see themselves as engaged in a cosmic battle. The fight is not only for spiritual victory but also for political and social influence, aimed at winning what they term "Caesar's realm." This underscores the dual nature of spiritual warfare: not just an inner, personal struggle, but also a collective, outward-facing effort to influence the broader world in alignment with divine purposes.

Biblical Examination of Spiritual Warfare

Spiritual Warfare has long been a central theme in Christian spirituality, with its roots in medieval religious practices where didactic teachings outlined the rules for spiritual combat, not only in life but also at the time of death.

At its core, SW refers to the Christian struggle against the forces of evil, believing in the active presence of evil spirits or demons that influence human affairs in various ways. Evangelical Christians, in particular, hold that Satan and his demons exert significant power over the world and its structures. There is a pervasive belief in an ongoing battle between the forces of good and evil, and Christians called to resist these evil forces through spiritual weapons such as prayer, fasting, and the study of Scripture. According to Wan (2010), demonization plays a crucial role in SW, and understanding this aspect can help Christians live more effective lives and ministries. For Enoch, the ultimate goal of the Christian life is to glorify God by living daily following His will and actively loving and serving others.

Carson (1999) presents a worldview of spiritual warfare that presupposes the existence of free will, both human and angelic, where beings can act independently, sometimes even going against God's will. This worldview acknowledges the inherent risk and contingency within creation, suggesting that such risks have led to cosmic-scale conflict, transforming the earth into a spiritual battleground.

As the church engages in God's Mission, Anderson (2019) raises the question of how Christians are to oppose evil in the world. Over time, SW has gained prominence, especially through missionary encounters with the spirit cosmologies of the Global South and the rise of Pentecostalism within world Christianity.

Warren (2012) and Anderson (2019) present an alternative theological perspective, one that views SW not in terms of a strategic enemy but as chaos that seeks to intrude upon and contaminate God's holy creation rather than a battle with demonic

forces, this view emphasizes God's divine role in purifying and maintaining sacred boundaries within His creation.

Ferguson (2022) asserts that Ephesians affirms the existence of unseen spiritual forces; it simultaneously protects believers from fear by emphasizing the Lordship of Christ over all creation. Supporting this view, Knut et al. (2020), Austin (2023), acknowledge the presence of spiritual forces, including the dangers of sorcery and spiritual insecurity, which often lead to violence among believers. However, they stress that Christ's dominion over the spiritual realm offers security and protection for Christians.

The book of Ephesians encapsulates God's plan of salvation through Christ and outlines His divine purpose for believers. As one of the central texts of the New Testament, it serves as a powerful message of truth, love, and unity, offering guidance in a world that often feels superficial and disconnected from divine purpose (O'Brien, 2019).

The Concept of Spiritual Warfare in the Jewish Context

The idea of "holy war" in Judaism was largely absent for over 2,000 years, only resurfacing with the rise of Zionism and the related tensions over military action in Israel (Goldfeder, 2014). One recurrent element is the conviction that God approved of or even ordered holy war in the Hebrew Bible. Firestone,(2012) defines 'holy war' as "organized mass violence directed against rival communities based on what is considered to be God's approval or authority." However, Goldfeder (2014) points out that Judaism has the least developed and politicized ideology of holy war. When the concept appears, it is practical to a limited geographical scope a reflection of its deliberate and purposeful

omission in broader Jewish thought. This absence is not an oversight but a deliberate contribution by rabbinic tradition.

Jewish Philosopher and ethicist Mittlema (2019) defends the notion of ‘holiness’ as a religious context, though acknowledging the challenges of presenting it in modern liberal democracies. He highlights the contradictions, noting that holiness has often been misused in violent and oppressive ways- illustrated by suicide bombings, torture, and other acts committed in the name of holiness or jihad. This underscores the complex and destructive connotations that a term usually associated with sanctity can take in certain violent contexts.

In the realm of spiritual abuse, Haredi (Ultraorthodox) Jewish women experience significant harm, including the belittling of their spiritual well-being, often within a domestic context. As observed by Nicole et al. (2009), spiritual abuse occurs when a person's spiritual life or obligations are undermined, such as by preventing spiritual practices, belittling spiritual beliefs, or causing a person to violate spiritual prohibitions. This issue is compounded by domestic violence, with many women turning to faith-based communities for support, where they may encounter further emotional and spiritual harm Goodley et al. (2008); Hester et al. (2011).

The Concept of Spiritual Warfare in Greco-Roman Context

Although SW was not a dominant theme in Greco-Roman religion, its influence can still be traced, particularly in the early Christian appropriation of the Roman military metaphor. Early Christianity, emerging within the Roman Empire, drew heavily on imagery related to Roman soldiers and armour to describe spiritual struggles. The

passage in Ephesians 6:10-20 is a prime example, where the Apostle Paul uses the concept of putting on spiritual armour to combat evil forces.

In the Greco-Roman worldview, divine beings, such as gods and spirits, influenced the world, bringing either fortune or misfortune. They acknowledged spiritual forces, though the focus was not on a battle between good and evil. (Roma, 2021) notes that certain mystery cults within the Greco-Roman world incorporated elements of spiritual purification and the idea of overcoming demonic influences. These cults offered rituals and initiations believed to cleanse individuals and protect them from malevolent spirits. However, the Greco-Roman world did not have a fully developed concept of spiritual warfare akin to later religious traditions. Instead, the focus was on appeasing the divine through rituals and offerings, not on battling evil.

Regarding gods and morality, Newby (2016) explains that Roman gods were seen as powerful but not inherently good or evil. The Romans focused on maintaining a good relationship with the gods through proper rituals to avoid divine wrath. Roman moral philosophy centred on virtues like courage, piety, and justice, rather than a cosmic struggle between good and evil. Bremmer et al, (2015) observed that while vices seemed like weaknesses that could lead to problems, they could not equate with demonic possession.

However, as Christianity spread, certain Roman philosophical ideas began to incorporate a concept of good versus evil, though this was not a dominant perspective in traditional Roman religion. The Roman love of combat was deeply rooted in their ritual customs, character, and views on law and violence, as well as their belief in natural law(Yu, 2010).

According to Fowl (2009), the desire for fame and heroism drove Roman soldiers to feats of bravery, including individual duelling. This tradition persisted in the Roman Republic until 45 BC, providing insight into Roman perspectives on warfare.

African Conception of Spiritual Warfare

Traditional African Concept of Evil Spirits and Witchcraft

In traditional African worldviews, they believed that unseen forces profoundly influence daily life. These forces can bring about blessings, such as a bountiful harvest or protection from theft, but they can also cause misfortune, sickness, and death. Many African cultures hold a belief in a supreme creator, ancestral spirits, household deities, and patron gods specific to rural communities. Budha (2022) notes that before the spread of Christianity, there existed a religious vacuum in African practices that allowed space for diverse spiritual beliefs and practices.

A significant aspect of this worldview includes the belief in malevolent spirits, witchcraft, voodoo practitioners, and other forms of evil. Misfortune, such as accidents, diseases, or even infertility, linked to spiritual causes. The concept of evil spirits or witches is common, and many non-Christians may wear amulets or talismans representing various deities or spirits. In some cultures, a powerful evil entity, often personified as Sasabonsam among the Akan of Ghana, Shetani in Swahili, or Eshu in Yoruba culture, identified them as the source of malevolent acts. Eshu is considered to be the enemy of Jesus Christ, working either directly or through other spirits (Agyapong, 2021).

While the traditional African understanding of evil spirits shares some similarities with the Biblical concept of Satan, there are also significant differences. Christianity regards Satan as a fallen angel who leads other angels astray and opposes God's will.

In contrast, in many African traditions, practices of witchcraft related to an evil spirit often causing harm by leaving their body during sleep to join other witches in their activities and then returning to their body before waking. Sbar (2010) notes that 'witches' may or may not be aware of the powers they possess, and they are sometimes able to recognize others who share similar abilities. Fear and suspicion were deeply rooted within communities in the African culture with a witchcraft belief that often shaped people's worldviews.

Marshall (2020) asserts that an intense focus on spiritual rupture, as a response to trauma and societal changes, has influenced how contemporary Africans perceive SW. In this context, both African and non-African missionaries have contributed to shaping the understanding of SW, fostering mutual understanding and protection within the global Pentecostal movement.

The Concept of Spiritual Warfare in the Ephesians Context

Spiritual Forces and the Cultural Background of Ephesus

The belief in spiritual forces, including demons, spirits, ancestors, and gods, holds a significant place in both ancient and modern worldviews. These forces are often seen as having the power to affect the living, causing harm or distress (Elwell, Walter & Yarbrough, 2013). While this belief in unseen powers remains relevant today, it was also very much present in ancient times. Satan, in particular, is not simply a mental construct but a real spiritual adversary. Understanding the context of the ancient city of Ephesus-

where the apostle Paul wrote his epistle- helps shed light on why Paul addresses spiritual warfare so explicitly. Research into the cultural background of Ephesus suggests that the occult, the belief in and worship of unseen powers other than the God of the Bible played a significant role in the lives of its inhabitants. This context provides crucial insights into Paul's reasoning and the themes he explores in the Epistle to the Ephesians (Elwell et al., 2013).

The City of Ephesus

Ephesus, located on the coast of the Aegean Sea at the mouth of the Cayster River, was a bustling port city and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The city's influence was not just political and commercial; it was also a centre for the worship of the pagan goddess Artemis and was renowned for its occult practices. Ephesus housed a grand temple dedicated to Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and was a hub for various forms of magic and Spiritism. Furthermore, Ephesus was a significant site for the imperial cult, where the worship of the Roman Emperor and his family took place. As a result, idolatry, emperor worship, and the dark arts dominated the city's religious life, (Acts 19; Acts 20:16-38).

The Epistle to Ephesians

The Epistle to the Ephesians presents a profound perspective on Christ as the source of spiritual blessings. It emphasizes that all spiritual blessings flow through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3), illustrating how God's favour, forgiveness, and gifts are accessible through faith in Him. Moreover, Christ is portrayed as central to God's cosmic plan, uniting all things in heaven and on earth under His authority (Ephesians 1:10).

Redemption and forgiveness of sins are highlighted as achieved through Christ's sacrifice (Ephesians 1:7), emphasizing His role in reconciling humanity with God. The epistle celebrates the unity in Christ, removing distinctions between Jews and Gentiles, and establishing them as one body, the church (Ephesians 2:11-22). Christ is exalted as the head of the church, symbolizing His leadership and authority (Ephesians 1:22-23).

Ephesians uniquely frames the Christian life as a spiritual battleground, depicted vividly in the metaphor of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-20). Here, believers are encouraged to equip themselves with the "Armour of God" to stand against spiritual forces, recognizing that the true struggle is spiritual, not physical (Ephesians 6:12).

Gombis (2004) highlights that Ephesians 2 presents a narrative of divine warfare, emphasizing God's triumphs in Christ that confirm His exalted status as Lord over all creation. The epistle unfolds three central themes: first, Christ has reconciled all of creation to Himself and God; second, He has united people from all nations into one body, the Church; and third, a call for Christians to live as new creations.

Regarding the enemy, Ephesians clarifies that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of evil. These forces, described as "rulers," "authorities," "cosmic powers over this present darkness," and "evil spirits in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12), signify that the battle is not physical but spiritual. Budha (2021) notes that this spiritual battleground primarily targets our hearts, minds, and souls. To withstand these forces, Paul outlines the "full Armour of God" (Ephesians 6:13-17), which includes vital spiritual tools such as the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

After describing the armour, Gombis (2005) emphasizes the importance of prayer, urging believers to pray "in the Spirit on all occasions" (Ephesians 6:18). By putting on the armour and remaining firm, Christians collectively stand against the forces that oppose God's work in the world.

Turning to the authorship of Ephesians, Grizzle (2013) notes the traditional belief, upheld by the church for nearly eighteen centuries, that Paul wrote the epistle while imprisoned in Rome. Early inquiries about its intended audience were initiated by church fathers, and stylistic differences from Paul's other letters were recognized in the 16th century. However, it was not until critical analysis emerged in the late 18th and 19th centuries that doubts about its Pauline authorship began to surface.

Abundant early external evidence supports the notion that Paul authored Ephesians, with traces possibly dating back to 95 CE. The letter was included in the earliest collection of Pauline epistles, and both Latin and Syriac versions attribute it to Paul. It consistently appears among the Pauline letters in Greek manuscripts, including the Chester Beatty papyrus (P46). Marcion's instrumentum labels it as Pauline, though addressed to the Laodiceans, further linking it to Paul. Church fathers like Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Tertullian affirm its Pauline origin, adding weight to the authenticity of the letter (Grizzle, 2013b).

Despite the historical evidence, recent scholarship suggests that 70-80% of current critical research rejects Pauline authorship (Brown, 2016). However, there is still significant debate among scholars. Those supporting Pauline authorship point to the internal references in the epistle (1:1, 3:1, 4:1) as evidence of Paul's claim. Additionally, the context of Ephesians (6:21-22) aligns with that of Philemon (1:10, 23-24) and

Colossians (4:7-9), sharing a common bearer, chronology, and provenance (Grizzle, 2013b).

One critical perspective on Pauline authorship argues that while the epistle identifies Paul as its author, the lack of specific details about his hardships, imprisonment, or personal connection to the recipients raises questions (Lincoln, 2017a). Grizzle (2013b), suggests that the impersonal tone might stem from its intended purpose as a circular letter aimed at Gentile congregations in south-western Asia. Unlike a pastoral letter addressing specific doctrinal issues, Ephesians is a profound theological composition centred on "Christ in His Church," blending liturgical, rhetorical, and catechetical elements.

Supporters of Pauline authorship maintain that the epistle's theology, structure, literary style, and language align with Paul's known writings. (Carson, 1981).argues that the extensive historical support for its Pauline origin makes opposing theories difficult to sustain.

Definition of the Phrase “The Full Armour of God”

Paul introduces the concept of spiritual warfare in Ephesians, urging believers to be strong in the Lord and to "put on the full Armour of God" to stand firm against the devil's schemes. He clarifies that the battle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil.

The phrase *τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ* (the full Armour of God) refers to a collection of spiritual tools and virtues described by Paul in Ephesians 6:11-18. These tools metaphorically compare to the pieces of armour worn by Roman soldiers, symbolizing

the comprehensive protection and readiness believers need to endure spiritual challenges and attacks (O'Brien, 1999a).

In this passage, Paul outlines the various components of the Armour of God: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

In the context of Pentecostal churches, the full AoG often interpreted and applied in ways that resonate with their cultural and spiritual experiences. It provides a framework for understanding and engaging in spiritual warfare, emphasizing the need for divine support and personal spiritual discipline to navigate the challenges of faith. Ultimately, the metaphor of the full AoG encapsulates the Christian call to spiritual vigilance, reliance on God's strength, and active participation in the journey of faith.

Scholarly Viewpoint on Ephesians 6:11-18

The Epistle to the Ephesians is analysed from both historical and narrative perspectives. Historical scholars have examined it through the lenses of the historical Jesus, the early church, and the evangelist community. In contrast, narrative critics approach Ephesians as a story, analysing its setting, characters, and events (Dorberneck et al., 2010; Warren, 2007). Earlier scholars have employed traditional methodologies like redaction criticism; however, recent scholarship has shifted focus to the rhetorical impact of the text, rather than just its compositional aspects. This study reviews three works that apply different methodologies to Ephesians 6:11-18, highlighting their limitations, particularly when applied to the African context.

A Historical Literary Approach:

Ephesians: Exegetical guide to the Greek New Testament (by Benjamin L. Merkle) The historical-literary approach emphasizes key elements necessary for effective interpretation, including historical, generic, cultural, ideological, grammatical, and geographical considerations. This method explores the characteristics of the community addressed in the passage, explaining their history, beliefs, and practices to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the text. By analysing ancient events, political contexts, geographical locations, and cultural values, this approach uncovers the underlying foundations of the text, helping readers fully grasp its meaning (Gorman, 2010; Tate, 2012).

Merkle applies a historical-literary approach in his examination of the Epistle to the Ephesians, particularly focusing on Ephesians 6:11-18. He thoroughly analyses the text's literary elements, identifying and studying keywords while integrating historical insights to enhance understanding. Exploring key terms related to strength, equipping, conflict, and the imagery of armour and weaponry is central to the passage. For instance, terms like *ενδυναμουσθε* (be strong), *κρατει* (stand firm), and *ισχυος* (might) underscore the theme of strength and preparation for spiritual battle (6:10).

Merkle identifies several key verbs: *ενδυναμούσθε* (be strong), *ενδύσασθε* (put on), *ἀναλάβετε* (take up), and *στήτε* (stand), as the primary imperatives driving the passage. These imperatives form the backbone of the passage's structure. The initial command, *ενδυναμούσθε*, sets the tone for the paragraph, urging believers to rely on God's power. Following this, the commands *ενδύσασθε* (put on) and *ἀναλάβετε* (take up) explained with purpose clauses, emphasizing the necessity of being equipped for spiritual

warfare. The final imperative, *στήτε* (stand), calls for firm resolve, supported by participles describing the various pieces of armour.

The passage - divided into three sections Merkle notes:

Six verse 10, a general directive to be strengthened by God's power;

Six verse 11-13, a call to equip oneself with the full Armour of God, with rationales provided for its necessity

Six verses 14-18 is an exhortation to stand firm, with details on the six pieces of armour/weapons and the importance of perseverance in prayer.

In conclusion, Merkle argues that this passage not only serves as a fitting conclusion to the exhortatory content of Ephesians 4:1-6:20, but it also marks a significant climax to the entire epistle. Scholars such as (O'Brien, 1999b) and (Thielman, 2010b) share this viewpoint. Drawing on imagery from Isaiah, Paul portrays God and His Messiah as divine warriors, donning armour in preparation for battle to protect and vindicate His people (Isaiah 11:4-5; 52:7; and 59:17).

A Historical-Critical-Linguistic Approach:

Ephesians: The New Testament Library (By Stephen Fowl)

In his analysis of Ephesians, (Fowl, 2012a) notes that many scholars consider Ephesians 6:10-20 to be the culmination of the paraenetic section that begins in 4:1. Some scholars use the rhetorical term *peroratio* to describe this final section, viewing it as a summary that emphasizes the key themes of the letter, urging readers to act on the writer's instructions (Lincoln, 2017b). While many scholars agree with this interpretation, not everyone classifies it as a peroration. For instance, while Lincoln

(2017b) concurs, Ernest (1998) takes a different approach, suggesting that this passage encapsulates not just the paraenetic section but the entire letter.

Understanding this passage concerning the preceding material is crucial. Like much of the content from 4:1-6:9, Ephesians 6:10-20 addresses moral conduct and character, topics Paul has been emphasizing throughout the epistle. It continues the discourse on living following Christ's calling but with a noticeable shift in tone and emphasis.

The earlier sections of the letter, particularly from 4:1 onwards, use the metaphor of "walking" to describe the Christian life. Paul presents the believer's journey as a collective movement from the past to the present, progressing toward a divine destination. This journey is not without its challenges, especially since it traverses territories shaped by pagan cultures. Therefore, the Ephesian need wisdom from the Holy Spirit to navigate these cultural influences and maintain a course that fosters their spiritual growth.

In contrast, the predominant theme of Ephesians 6:10-20 is the call to "stand firm" against diabolical adversaries. This idea of standing firm is a recurring theme in Paul's letters. For example, in one Thessalonians 3:8, Paul urges believers to "stand firm in the Lord," and in two Thessalonians 2:15, he advises them to "hold fast to the traditions they were taught." The motifs of defence and resistance dominate this passage, highlighting the need for courage and unwavering resolve. While 4:1-6:9 emphasizes walking with Christ, 6:10-20 urges believers to stand firm against spiritual forces that seek to oppose God's work.

Fowl (2012a) suggests that the concepts of "walking" and "standing firm" are not contradictory but complementary. They represent different approaches to different aspects of the Christian life. However, contemporary readers face challenges in understanding how Paul envisioned the Ephesians practicing the act of "standing firm," as the text provides few details about the original context.

Despite this, connections between Ephesians 6:10-20 and earlier parts of the letter are evident. In 6:12, Paul identifies spiritual forces opposed to believers, located in "the heavenlies"—the same realm where God has blessed believers with every spiritual blessing (2:5-6). In 6:10, Paul encourages the Ephesians to be empowered by God's great strength, a theme he has already touched on in his prayers for them in 1:9-23 and 3:16-21.

Most significantly, in 3:7-13, Paul addresses the church's role in revealing God's plan of salvation to spiritual powers that oppose God's purposes. This passage provides context for understanding the spiritual battle depicted in 6:10-20. Given that this is the only other section in the letter where Paul discusses the church's engagement with spiritual forces, it is logical to interpret 6:10-20 in light of 3:7-13.

Lastly, an important point to consider is that the directive to "put on the Armour of God" does not mean personal instruction for individual believers. Instead, it is a call to the entire Christian community. The AoG is not just a personal defence but also a communal practice, deeply connected to the unity of the church and its collective witness against spiritual powers. In this sense, Ephesians 6:10-20 continues the focus on the communal life of the church, a theme that Paul introduced in 4:1.

A Literary Approach:

New Testament Commentary: Living Insights on Galatians and Ephesians (By Charles Swindoll)

Swindoll (2015) highlights a profound moment in Paul's narrative on Christian existence, particularly in Ephesians 6:10-18. Here, Paul presents the ongoing spiritual battle between the forces of darkness and the kingdom of light, culminating in a powerful call to action. Swindoll refers to this passage as "Clashing and conquering: The warrior's strategy," underscoring its central theme of Spiritual Warfare (SW). As Paul concludes his letter to the Ephesians, he urges them to stand firm against the devil's schemes, emphasizing the importance of prayer, petitions, and spiritual readiness (6:10-20).

Swindoll reminds readers that embarking on the Christian journey does not place us in a cheerful playground, but rather on a challenging battlefield. Although we may not witness physical warfare, the daily struggles of life unfold on a spiritual front. He notes that regardless of a believer's experience or spiritual maturity, Satan and his agents have one singular mission: to destroy. Their goal is not merely to weaken believers but to obliterate them, dragging as many as possible into their defeat. Paul's message is clear: despite the relentless enemy, we can find refuge in Christ's strength and fortify our faith to stand firm until the end.

However, as Swindoll highlights, believers cannot face this battle alone. Our strength comes from Christ, not from our abilities. Without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we are powerless against the forces of darkness. Satan, though powerful, is not equal to God. He is a created being, subject to God's control, and can only operate within the bounds that God allows (Ezekiel 28:12-16; Job 1:6-12). Swindoll illustrates this point

using Martin Luther's hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*, emphasizing that only with Christ—our unchanging, victorious Saviour—can we hope to triumph in the spiritual battle.

The spiritual armour Paul speaks of in Ephesians is a metaphorical representation of God's strength and protection. Swindoll notes that while Paul was imprisoned, and guarded by a Roman soldier (Acts 28:16 and 20), he observed the significance of a soldier's armour and used it as an analogy for believers. Paul instructs the Ephesians to “put on the full armour of God” (6:11) to stand firm against the devil's schemes. This armour is not of human origin; it belongs to God and believers must wear it to defend against spiritual adversaries.

Paul's depiction of the battle is sobering: we are not merely contending with physical forces but with spiritual entities that our senses could not detect their existence and influence. These forces require spiritual discernment and reliance on God's revelations to navigate the unseen battle (6:12). The enemy operates within a structured hierarchy of demonic rulers, and their evil is unmatched in its depravity. The world is rife with evidence of this malevolent influence: violence, crime, moral decay, and societal unrest.

Paul aims to equip believers with the Armour of God, ensuring they stand strong even in the face of spiritual opposition. The armour, as described in Ephesians 6:14-17, consists of specific components, each serving a vital role in protecting and empowering the believer. Swindoll explores these elements in depth, connecting them to biblical truths and illustrating their importance for spiritual readiness.

The belt of truth (6:14) holds all the other pieces of armour together. In the context of a Roman soldier's uniform, the belt provided freedom of movement, support, and protection. For believers, truth both doctrinal and personal serves as the foundation for spiritual resilience. Truth from the Word of God, coupled with integrity in living, enables believers to withstand the lies and accusations of the enemy.

The breastplate of righteousness (6:14) symbolizes the righteousness that comes from God, not through human effort but through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22). This righteousness protects our spiritual life and identity, ensuring we stand blameless before God despite our imperfections.

The boots of peace (6:15) represent the firm foundation of reconciliation with God through Christ, enabling believers to stand firm in peace and confidently share the gospel. Paul draws on imagery from Isaiah (Isaiah 52:7), portraying the feet of those who proclaim the good news as beautiful. Swindoll emphasizes that the believer's peace is rooted in their secure position in Christ, which enables them to stand firm against the enemy's accusations.

The shield of faith (6:16) is a defensive weapon that protects against the "flaming arrows" of the enemy. Swindoll compares it to the Roman scutum, a large, reinforced shield designed to extinguish fiery projectiles. Faith enables believers to view their circumstances from God's perspective, trust in His promises, and resist the attacks of doubt, temptation, and fear.

The helmet of salvation (6:17) symbolizes the assurance of salvation, protecting the believer's mind from fear and doubt. Swindoll notes that salvation is the foundation

of the Christian's identity, and constantly reminding ourselves of our salvation helps, we stand firm in spiritual battles.

Finally, the sword of the Spirit (6:17) is the Word of God, the only offensive weapon in the believer's armour. Swindoll stresses that the Word of God, when wielded effectively, becomes a powerful tool for overcoming the enemy's lies and deception. Just as Jesus used Scripture to resist Satan's temptations in the wilderness (Matthew 4:4), believers must rely on God's Word to confront and defeat the forces of darkness.

Swindoll concludes by reminding believers that the ultimate source of strength in Spiritual Warfare is God Himself. While the AoG is essential, it is through prayer—persistent, dependent prayer- that we engage in battle. Paul's exhortation to pray "in the Spirit on all occasions" (6:18) emphasizes the importance of staying connected to God and relying on His power.

In summary, Swindoll's exploration of Ephesians 6:10-18 calls believers to recognize the reality of spiritual warfare and equip themselves with God's Armour. Each piece—truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God—serves a crucial role in defending against the enemy's schemes and advancing God's kingdom. The Christian life is not passive but active, requiring vigilance, prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit to stand firm and resist the forces of darkness.

Conclusion

The three scholars take distinct approaches to examining the concepts of Spiritual Warfare (SW) and instruction within the text. Swindoll, in his conclusion, explores the SW described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:11-18, emphasizing the reality of spiritual battles and the necessity for believers to equip themselves with God's Armour.

This armour, comprising truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God, serves not only as a defence against enemy attacks but also as a means of active engagement in spiritual combat. Swindoll highlights the interconnectedness of each piece of armour, advocating for a holistic approach to spiritual readiness. He particularly underscores the offensive aspect of the Christian's armour, focusing on the sword of the Spirit- the Word of God- and encourages believers to immerse themselves in Scripture for spiritual transformation and resistance against the enemy's strategies.

While it is natural to interpret the AoG as an individual call to preparation, the text suggests a broader communal directive. Rather than a personal instruction, Paul's exhortation serves as a call to the entire Christian community to embrace spiritual armour collectively, symbolizing unity and resistance against spiritual forces. This communal perspective aligns with the broader theme of shared Christian life introduced earlier in Ephesians. Additionally, Benjamin asserts that the final paragraph of Ephesians not only concludes the exhortation spanning Ephesians 4:1–6:20 but also marks a climactic moment in the entire epistle. By drawing imagery from Isaiah, Paul presents God and His Messiah as divine warriors, preparing to battle for the defence and vindication of His people.

This study employs both rhetorical and pragmatic analysis to uncover deeper insights into Paul's intended message. By examining the structure of statements, the delivery of spoken words, and the impact of language, this approach clarifies Paul's message to his audience and explores the interconnectedness between Ephesians 6:11-18 and the broader themes of the epistle. Furthermore, these analyses highlight the text's relevance for contemporary African Christian communities, offering conclusions that

extend beyond the insights of previously reviewed approaches. Ultimately, this study fosters a deeper understanding and application of Paul's message within the modern African context.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter explores the research methodology employed in this study, focusing on rhetorical and pragmatic approaches. It compares these methods against the conclusions drawn by three scholars in the preceding chapter. Additionally, it provides a historical overview of both approaches, and their application in text analysis, and discusses the advantages of employing them together.

Rhetoric

In this study, rhetoric is defined as the intentional use of verbal and nonverbal symbols to influence social attitudes, values, beliefs, and actions (Stoner Mark, 2015b). It encompasses rhetorical artefacts, discourse, texts, and acts aimed at the public audience (Stoner Mark, 2015a).

Scholars offer varied definitions of rhetoric. Sonja (2018) emphasizes rhetoric as the human use of symbols for communication, dividing it into creators (people), medium (symbols), and purpose (communication). Aligning with Foss's view on rhetoric, as essential in human symbolic communication.

According to (Billings et al., 2001), cited by Nordquist (2024), rhetoric involves argumentative composition, bridging perspectives on rhetoric as both composition and persuasive speech. Elma, (2000), sees rhetoric as a form of persuasion focusing on textual strategies to influence readers. Similarly, Kuypers (2009) describes rhetoric as a technique in communication to achieve specific goals.

Rhetor

The term "rhetor" encompasses various roles such as speakers, writers, musicians, and content creators (Sonja, 2018). These individuals contribute to rhetorical devices across literary works.

Paul serves as the rhetor in Ephesians 6:11-18, employing authority, persuasive appeal, logical instruction, and spiritual encouragement to prepare the Ephesian Christians for spiritual challenges (Mitton, 2002).

Materials for Rhetoric

Whately (2017) outlines crucial elements of rhetoric in his work 'Elements of Rhetoric', emphasizing their importance in textual criticism. These elements include metaphor, structure, repetition, appeal to ethos, pathos, logos, vivid imagery, and cultural context, as exemplified in Paul's rhetoric in Ephesians 6:11-18 (Arnold, 2010d).

Author

An author, whether an individual or a group, creates texts for an audience, employing rhetoric as a tool (Gagich et al, 2018; Zickel et al., 2017). The scholarly consensus identifies Paul as the author of Ephesians, reflecting his distinctive style and theological emphasis (Mitton, 2002).

Audience

The audience refers to readers or listeners of a text, crucial in rhetorical discourse since ancient times (Enos, 2010). The audience of Ephesians 6:11-18 comprises Christians in Ephesus, facing cultural and spiritual pressures (Heine, 2002).

Purpose

Authors write with narrative, descriptive, persuasive, or expository purposes (Gagich et al., 2018). Ephesians 6:11-18 serves to prepare, encourage, and instruct believers in spiritual warfare through vivid metaphorical imagery (Arnold, 2010a).

Voice

Voice in writing denotes the unique style and tone an author employs to engage readers (James, 2014). Paul's use of imperative voice in Ephesians 6:11-18 underscores urgency and authority, urging believers to spiritual readiness and vigilance (Grizzle, 2013a).

Medium

The medium refers to the method used to distribute a message. In rhetorical studies, it encompasses both the type of text and the means of its delivery. According to Nordquist (2020), messages can be conveyed through various mediums:

Text-based communication, Visual media, Audio media. And Multimedia platforms

The medium of Ephesians 6:11-18 is a written epistle, a format that allows for detailed instruction, encouragement, and doctrinal teaching. This method ensured Paul's exhortations regarding the "Armour of God" reached a broad audience within the early Christian community, enabling believers to read, hear, and internalize his message (Fowl, 2012c).

Context

The circumstances surrounding the initial writing and delivery of a piece referred to as its context. It includes historical, cultural, and situational factors such as time, location, intent, audience, and content (Gagich et al., (2018).

Ephesians 6:11-18 is a call to spiritual vigilance and preparedness. Using the metaphor of armour, Paul instructs believers on the essential virtues needed to stand against spiritual opposition. The passage emphasizes truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and persistent prayer as key elements in overcoming spiritual challenges and remaining steadfast in faith(Fowl, 2012b).

Content

Content refers to the subject matter of a rhetor's message-the ideas, themes, and arguments presented in a written or spoken work. Effective content selection involves tailoring the subject and level of specificity to the purpose and audience.

In Ephesians 6:11-18, Paul exhorts believers to prepare for spiritual warfare by donning the full Armour of God. Each element-truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the Word of God-symbolizes essential aspects of spiritual defence. Paul stresses the necessity of prayer and vigilance, urging believers to stand firm against spiritual adversity and support one another in their faith journey(Fowl, 2012a).

Critical Rhetoric

Critical rhetoric involves analysing and evaluating persuasive efforts in communication. (Kuypers, 2009) defines rhetorical critique as the close examination of persuasive messages, while Sonja (2018) describes it as a systematic study of symbolic

rhetorical acts and artefacts to enhance understanding of rhetorical processes. Sonja breaks this concept into three key components:

Methodical examination, Focus on acts and artefacts, and Rhetorical process.

Thiselton (2009), referencing Wilder (1964), describes rhetorical criticism as a trans-historical approach that prioritizes literary analysis over historical and religious perspectives (Thiselton, 2009; Wilder, 1964). Kennedy (1999) further emphasizes that rhetorical critique centres on persuasion and its effectiveness.

The critical rhetoric of Ephesians 6:11-18 highlights Paul's strategic use of metaphor, and imperative voice, and appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos. Through vivid imagery, authoritative commands, emotional engagement, logical structure, and practical application, Paul equips the Ephesian believers to stand firm against spiritual challenges and remain unwavering in their faith (Fulford, 2007).

The Historical Background of Rhetorical Criticism

Rhetorical criticism, increasingly valued as an approach to interpreting the Pauline letters and the biblical canon, is highlighted by Elma (2000). Joo-Kyung (2009) underscores the importance of considering the first-century rhetorical environment in analysing texts like the Epistle of Ephesians, situated amidst the transition from oral to manuscript culture explored by Dunn (2008) and Iverson (2014). Joo-Kyung contends that Ephesians originates from both oral and manuscript traditions, blurring the distinction between spoken and written forms.”(Joo-Kyung, 2009).

In contrast to earlier methods like narrative and historical criticism, which have long dominated biblical interpretation, rhetorical criticism now emphasizes understanding historical literature through its rhetorical conventions. It examines how texts would

influence their audience's comprehension, echoing Greek rhetoricians' recognition of judicial, deliberative, and epideictic rhetoric(O'Gorman, 2005).

Pentadic Criticism

Pentadic criticism is rooted in dramatism, a concept developed by(Burke, 1969). In *Rhetoric of Motives* (1969), Burke refined this approach, explaining how rhetoric functions as a form of human action rather than mere motion. The central premise of dramatism is that human communication operates like a play, with language shaping action and meaning (Sonja, 2018).

To analyse an artefact using pentadic criticism, one must first apply the initial three processes and, if needed, extend the analysis through the fourth process for further research.

The Five Elements of the Pentad. Burke's pentad consists of five key elements that help reveal the rhetor's purpose:

Agent – The person or group acting.

Scene – The setting, situation, or context in which the action takes place.

Act – The action performed.

Agency – The means or tools used to carry out the act.

Purpose – The reason or goal behind the act (Sonja et al., 2014).

Determining the key term : To uncover the rhetor's intent, critics use term ratios to identify the dominant or most central element in the pentad. This dominant term provides crucial insight into the rhetor's underlying purpose in crafting the message(Weiser, 2008).

Applied Analysis: Pragmatics in Rhetoric

Pragmatic analysis is closely related to practical analysis, focusing on how language functions in social interactions and how word choices influence communication (Crystal, 1997). Turner et al. (2018) agree with Crystal's definition, emphasizing that pragmatics is the context-driven use of language. Similarly, (Austin (1962) and Gonzalez- Loret (2019) define pragmatics as the study of language in action and (Gonzalez- Loret, 2019). Thomas (1998) further highlights its role in understanding meaning within specific contexts, prioritizing use over grammar or truth.

(Bach (2008) and Korta et al. (2014) explain that pragmatics involves extra-linguistic information- the additional context that allows listeners to interpret a speaker's message accurately. Two subfields divide Pragmatics divided into two subfields: Traditional Pragmatics: Classical Pragmatics. Classical pragmatics consists of two key approaches:

Nearside pragmatics - is concerned with the elements that influence what is stated directly. Far-Side Pragmatics examines what happens after something is said, including its effects and interpretations (Korta et al., 2014).

Far-side Pragmatics and Speech Acts

Philosopher J.L. Austin (1962) explored how words perform actions beyond their literal meaning. He introduced the concept of speech acts, demonstrating that language can be used to promise, persuade, debate, or command, depending on social and institutional contexts (Austin, 1975a). Austin distinguished between two types of speech acts: Constatives – Statements that describe facts or truth Performatives – Verbal actions that achieve something when spoken (e.g., making a promise or issuing an order). He also

categorized speech acts into five types: Representatives – Statements that convey information. Directives – Commands or requests, Comissives – Promises or commitments, Expressives – Expressions of emotions or attitudes and Declaratives – Utterances that bring about a change (e.g., legal rulings or marriage vows).

Proximal Pragmatics

Proximal pragmatics, also known as nearside pragmatics, focuses on the structure and interpretation of sentences, particularly those containing indexicals- words whose meaning depends on context (e.g., "I," "here," "now"). Key proponents of this approach include Robert Stalnaker and Joan Kaplan, among others (Stalnaker, 2019; Kaplan et al., 1990). Their framework introduces a two-layered approach to understanding meaning:

Propositional content :The fundamental meaning of a sentence.

Context, character, and substance : The external factors that influence interpretation (Korta et al., 2014).

By analysing both layers, proximal pragmatics seeks to uncover how meaning is constructed and conveyed within a given context.

Present-day Pragmatics

Contemporary pragmatics builds upon Grice's three foundational principles, particularly the distinction between: What is explicitly said)The literal meaning of an utterance). What is implicated (The additional, implied meaning based on context and intention). This approach integrates cognitive, cooperative, and rationality principles, focusing on how speakers intend their messages to be understood by listeners (Korta et al., 2014).

Speech Act Theory

Since the 20th century, speech act theory has influenced multiple disciplines, including philosophy, linguistics, law, psychology, and literary theory (Odhiambo, 2016). Unlike traditional semantics, which analyses what words mean, speech act theory examines what language does- how utterances serve as actions rather than mere statements.

According to Tate (2012), words are not just tools for communication but also instruments for achieving goals. This theory applies to everyday interactions such as making requests, issuing warnings, offering apologies, or making promises (Odhiambo, 2016).

Austin (1962) argues that every utterance is an action, meaning that speaking is equivalent to performing an act(Austin, 1975a). This notion is further supported by Etsuko Oishi (2006), who asserts that all speech is inherently action-oriented (Oishi, 2006).

Types of Speech Acts. Austin categorizes speech acts into three levels:

Locutionary Acts

A locutionary act is the basic act of uttering meaningful words(Austin, 1975a). Kissine (2008) describes it as simply producing a comprehensible statement.

Illocutionary Acts

An illocutionary act occurs when a speaker acts through speech, such as making a promise, issuing a command, or giving a verdict. According to Alston (2001), this is when an utterance carries a strong communicative force.

Austin (1975) expands on this by classifying illocutionary acts into five categories:

Representatives: Statements that convey belief or truth, such as asserting, affirming, or concluding.

Directives: Commands or requests where the speaker exerts influence over the listener, using verbs like "ask," "plead," or "order."

Commissives: Promises or commitments that bind the speaker to future action, including "pledge," "vow," or "guarantee."

Expressives: Statements that convey emotions or attitudes, such as "apologize," "congratulate," "deplore," or "regret."

Declaratives: Utterances that change reality by their very statement, such as legal rulings, marriage vows, or policy announcements (Oishi, 2006; Searle, 1975).

Perlocutionary Acts

A perlocutionary act refers to the effect an utterance has on the listener- whether it persuades, inspires, confuses, or provokes a reaction. Unlike illocutionary acts, which focus on the speaker's intention, perlocutionary acts are listener-dependent.

Conclusion

Proximal pragmatics provides a deeper understanding of how context and speaker intent shape meaning. By examining both the structural and performative aspects of language, this approach highlights the dynamic nature of communication- how words not only convey ideas but also perform actions and influence interactions.

Speech acts, particularly illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, demonstrate that language is more than just words- it's a powerful tool for shaping perceptions, emotions, and responses in social interactions.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

Introduction

In this section, we delve deeper into the text of the study, Ephesians 6:11-18, by applying rhetorical criticism and pragmatic analysis. The examination of language in this involves the application of exegetical and syntactical analysis. The primary objective of this chapter is to demonstrate fresh interpretations through rhetorical and pragmatic analysis, offering insights beyond those discussed in the methodologies outlined in the third chapter of this study. Three main parts structure the chapter: rhetorical criticism utilizing metaphorical criticism, pragmatic analysis employing speech act theory, and a concluding reflection on the presented material. The researcher translates the Greek text translation in this chapter.

Text of study in Greek: Ephesians 6:11-18

11. Ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ
πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι
πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου·
12. ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη
πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα,
ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς,
πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας,
πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου,
πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας
ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.
13. Διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ,

ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι

ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ

καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στῆναι.

14. στῆτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ

καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης

15. καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης,

16. ἐν πᾶσιν

ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως,

ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ

[τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι·

17. καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε

καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος,

ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ.

18. διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως

προσευχόμενοι

ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ

ἐν πνεύματι,

καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες

ἐν πάσῃ προσκατερήσει καὶ δεήσει

περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων

Own Translation of the text

11. Put on all of God's Armour so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil.

12. For we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and evil spirits in the heavenly places.

13. Therefore, put on every piece of God's Armour so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle, you will still be standing firm.

14. Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body Armour of God's righteousness.

15. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.

16. In addition to all these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

17. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

18. Pray in the Spirit, at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

Argumentative: Pentadic critique

Pentadic criticism is a method developed by Kenneth Burke (1969), and involves analysing communication in terms of five key features namely; act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose. Applying this approach to the text of the study (chapter six of Ephesians

verses 11-18) which discusses the protective covering of Deity, will provide a deeper understanding of the text's rhetorical elements (Burke, 1969).

The analysis of the study text using this method in three steps discussed below.

Labelling the five elements in the study.

Act: Exhortation

“Put on the whole Armour of God.” This is the primary action in the text. It involves a call to spiritual preparedness and the use of symbolic Armour to resist spiritual forces.

Scene: Spiritual Realm

The scene in the text of the study is the spiritual realm, emphasizing the cosmic battle. The context includes the challenges faced by believers in living a Christian life.

Agent: Believers

In this text, the agents are believers- urged to put on the Armour of God.

Agent: God (θεοῦ)

Implied as an agent, providing the armour and the strength to resist spiritual adversaries.

Agency: God's Armour (θεοῦ πανοπλίαν)

This is the means or instruments used to accomplish the action. The agency in the text of the study is the “Armour of God”, which includes elements like the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God). Each piece symbolizes a different aspect of spiritual preparation.

Armour (θεοῦ πανοπλίαν) is the agency named by the rhetor of the pericope. The agency is the means through which the act is completed. Through the armour, God provides a resource for believers to guard themselves and stand firm against the attacks of the evil one. The agency lies in the believers' active participation in putting on this spiritual armour, signifying their dependence on God's strength, guidance, and protection in facing spiritual challenges.

Purpose: Stand (στήναι)

The purpose is the agent's intention to complete the act in the pericope. This is the reason for the action. As such, the purpose has to do with why the agent provides the whole armour to believers. In this case, the purpose is to show that for believers to stand firm against the schemes of the evil one, they must put on the whole Armour of God. The spiritual warfare highlights the reality of spiritual battle signifying that the challenges believers encounter are not merely physical or earthly, but extend into the spiritual realm.

Thus, in the text of the study, the purpose is to encourage believers to stand firm against spiritual opposition, emphasizing the importance of spiritual readiness and reliance on God's strength.

Finding the Main or Dominating Phrase

Applying a ratio system to the pericope's constituents is necessary to determine the dominant or central word. The dominating term is determined from these ratio groupings. Act, agent, agency, purpose, and scene - the five terms mentioned above; the dominant term is the most significant of them. This phrase serves as the foundation for all other terms and elements in the pentad, and or how everything is dependent.

Scene Ratio

Scene – act: the scene emphasizing the spiritual realm, and cosmic battle, significantly affects the act of putting on the whole Armour of God.

Scene – Agent

The scene ratio in the text influences the agents (believers) by shaping their identity, emphasizing their responsibility, making them aware of adversaries, and adding a moral dimension to their actions.

The scene ratio in the text does not influence the agent (God)

Scene – Agency

The scene is set in the spiritual realm with a cosmic battle between good and evil, thus the scene can have a significant impact on the agency referring to the means or instruments through which the central action ‘putting on the whole Armour of God’ is accomplished.

Scene – Purpose

The scene has a profound impact on the purpose of the communication. Thus, the scene ratio shapes the purpose of the passage by emphasizing preparedness, resistance against spiritual adversaries, and maintaining a firm stand.

Act Ratio

Act – Scene

The act of putting on the whole AoG in the study text influences the scene by spiritualizing it, introducing the concept of a cosmic battle, transforming the ordinary into the sacred, shaping believers’ perceptions, and establishing a connection to the spiritual realm.

Act – Agent

The act of putting on the whole AoG in the study text influences the agents by shaping their identity, instilling a sense of agency and responsibility, transforming their role into an active participant, and signifying participation in spiritual warfare.

Act – Agency

The act ratio in the study text influences agency by giving it a spiritual nature, introducing symbolic elements, incorporating defensive and offensive components, emphasizing intentionality, and highlighting dependency on divine empowerment.

Act – Purpose

The act ratio in the study text influences the purpose by emphasizing spiritual preparedness, resistance against spiritual adversaries, active participation in the spiritual struggle, and alignment with God's will.

Agent Ratio

Agent – Scene

The agent ratio in the study text influences the scene by spiritualizing it, introducing the concept of a cosmic battle, shifting from a passive to an active setting. The presence of believers as agents shapes the scene into a spiritually charged and dynamic context.

Agent – Act

The agent ratio in the study text influences the act by emphasizing active engagement, personal commitment, intentional spiritual preparation, symbolic representation, and active resistance against spiritual adversaries.

Agent – Agency

The agent ratio in the study text influences agency by emphasizing personal agency, volitional engagement, spiritual empowerment, and active participation in the spiritual battle. Believers as agents play a pivotal role in shaping the nature and dynamics of the agency involved in, putting the Armour of God.

Agent – Purpose

The agent ratio in the study text influences the purpose by personalizing spiritual readiness, emphasizing active engagement in spiritual warfare, promoting intentional alignment with God's will, and fostering the formation of spiritual virtues. The purpose is to equip believers for an active and spiritually resilient life amid spiritual challenges.

Agency Ratio

Agency - Scene

The agency ratio in the study text influences the scene by spiritualizing it, introducing the concept of a cosmic battle, transforming the purpose of the scene, and incorporating symbolic representation. The agency of putting on, the whole AoG shapes the nature and depth of the scene in a spiritually significant way.

Agency – Act

The agency ratio, which involves the means or instruments through which the action is accomplished, significantly influences the act. This is through emphasizing its spiritual nature, introducing symbolic elements, promoting active engagement, and establishing a linkage between the physical and spiritual realms.

Agency – Agent

The agency ratio in the study text influences the concept of the agent by emphasizing individualized agency, active participation, intentional and volitional engagement, and spiritual empowerment.

Agency – Purpose

The agency ratio in the study text influences the purpose by emphasizing personal spiritual preparedness, active engagement in spiritual warfare, and potential collective purpose in spiritual unity. The purpose is to equip and empower believers for active and spiritually resilient lives.

Purpose Ratio

Purpose – Scene

The purpose ratio in the study text influences the scene by transforming its purpose, introducing spiritual significance, aligning with divine purpose, and potentially emphasizing communal purpose. The purpose of putting on the whole AoG elevates the scene into a spiritually charged and purposeful context.

Purpose – Act

The purpose ratio in the study text influences the central action by emphasizing spiritual preparedness, active engagement in spiritual warfare, formation of spiritual virtues, and alignment with divine will. The act of putting on the whole AoG is purposefully, driven by these spiritual motives.

Purpose – Agent

The purpose ratio in the study text influences the concept of the agent by emphasizing individualized spiritual intent, active participation in spiritual readiness, and

intentional alignment with divine purpose. The agents as believers act with purpose and intentionality in their spiritual engagement.

Purpose – Agency

The purpose ratio in the study text influences agency by emphasizing individualized spiritual intent, active participation in spiritual readiness, and intentional alignment with divine purpose.

Conclusion

The action of ‘putting on the whole Armour of God’ emerges as the dominant term in the Act ratio. This action is not merely a physical or routine act but holds significant spiritual and symbolic meaning.

The individual believers, who are agents actively engaging in the act of putting on the armour, emerge as the dominant term in the Agent Ratio. The emphasis is on individualized agency, intentional participation, and personal commitment.

The means or instruments through which the central action is accomplished represented by the ‘whole Armour of God’ is the dominant term in the Agency Ratio. This includes the spiritual tools and symbolic elements used by believers in their preparation.

The motive or reason behind the central action, characterized by spiritual preparedness, active engagement in spiritual warfare, and intentional alignment with divine purposes, is the dominant term in the Purpose Ratio. The purpose of aligning with God’s will and fostering spiritual virtues plays a central role.

Therefore, the dominant terms converge on the transformative and intentional nature of the central action. The act of putting on the whole Armour of God. This action involves individual believers (agents) actively engaging with spiritual tools and elements

(agency) with the purpose of spiritual preparedness, alignment with divine will, and active participation in the cosmic battle (purpose). The passage underscores the significance of intentional, spiritual engagement for believers in facing spiritual challenges.

Identifying the Motive from the Dominant Term

The motive of the rhetor identified based on the dominant terms. In the study text, the dominant term is the central action of ‘putting on the whole Armour of God.’ The motive behind this dominant term is to achieve spiritual preparedness and readiness for the ongoing spiritual battle. The believers are motivated to engage actively in this process to stand firm against the schemes of the devil, emphasizing the need for spiritual protection, empowerment, and alignment with divine purposes. The motive is to equip and empower believers for victory in the spiritual warfare they are facing.

Pragmatic Analysis: Speech Act Theory

The utterances in the study text will be explained further using Searle’s development of Austin’s ideas.

Locutionary

This is the act of just saying statements in the conventional sense of stating something (Austin, 1975a).

Perlocutionary

Weeks (2012) points out that this is an act of saying something, not of saying anything. These are the utterances' impact on the listener Bach (2008) observes.

Illocutionary

Described as an act carried out when speaking. This involves 5 types according to scholars Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1975) theories. These are vindictive, exercitives,

commissives, Behabitives, and expositives (Austin, 1975; Searle, 1975). Applied to the study text to observe the rhetor's word choice in the following ways.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verse 11

ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στήναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου·

In the locutionary Act (Utterance), this is a command or imperative sentence: “Put on the whole Armour of God.” (ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ).

In the illocutionary, Act (intended Action); this is the intended action behind the utterance. In this case, it is a directive or command indicating an imperative for the readers to take action.

Perlocutionary Act (Expected effect on the Hearer/Reader) the expected effect is that the readers will understand the imperative to equip themselves with the whole Armour of God. The perlocutionary act also implies a call to action, urging the readers to prepare themselves spiritually.

The Functions of the Speech Act in this Verse are:

1. Directive – being the primary function, instructing the readers to “put on the whole” Armour of God.
2. Expressive – In this verse, there is an element of expression in the sense that the speaker (Paul) is expressing a desire for the readers to engage in this spiritual preparation.
3. Constative – that is while the focus is more on action, there is also a constative element as it conveys a statement about what the readers should do for spiritual protection.

In this verse, the illocutionary force felt in the communicative force behind the utterance. In this case, it is commanding or urging the readers to take a specific action.

In other words, verse 11 of Ephesians 6, from a speech act perspective, is a directive speech act with the illocutionary force of commanding or urging the readers to put on the full Armour of God, and its perlocutionary effect expected to motivate the readers to undertake this spiritual preparation.

Ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ (“clothe yourself with the whole Armour of God”- even though there is no conjunction in this phrase, probably, ἐνδύσασθε (clothe yourselves), which is a verb in aorist-imperative middle voice second person plural of ἐνδύω is closely connected to ἐνδυναμοῦσθε (be strong), as found in verse 10 of chapter 6. Thus, explain how the earlier instruction is to be carried out (Merkle, 2016a). In line with Earnest’s (1998a) findings, the aorist form is not indicative of a singular, conclusive action. Hoehner (2002a) aligns with this perspective, emphasizing a sense of urgency. Both scholars observe that the selection of the aorist form driven by its compatibility with the inherent meaning of the verb.

πανοπλίαν (whole armour), refers to the complete set of armour worn by a Roman foot soldier in battle, even if not every individual piece is explicitly mentioned. The focus is on the comprehensive protection provided by the armour. In Romans 13:12, and 2 Corinthians 6:7, Paul similarly employs imagery related to war and combat.

The expression “τοῦ θεοῦ” is probably a genitive of source, indicating the complete armour supplied by God, as suggested by Ernest (1998a), and Hoehner (2002b). However, considering Paul’s reliance on Isaiah 11:5 and 52:19, where God and His Messiah portrayed as divine warriors, alternatively interpreted as a possessive genitive, signifying

the full armour that belongs to God. This perspective is supported by Thieman (2010b); O'Brien (1999a); and Lincoln (1981).

πρὸς τὸ δύνασθαι ὑμᾶς στῆναι πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου·

The preposition πρὸς (towards) added to an infinitive δύνασθαι (to be able or to have the power) communicates purpose (Wallace, 1996b). Δύνασθαι is a verb in the present, middle voice infinitive of δυναμαί. ὑμᾶς – is the pronoun “you” in the accusative case, indicating the direct object of the infinitive “δύνασθαι...” Στῆναι is an infinitive verb from ἵστημι (to stand), indicating the action to be performed. It is in the aorist tense, suggesting a simple action.

Πρὸς τὰς μεθοδείας – again, we have the preposition πρὸς (towards), followed by the accusative article τὰς and the noun μεθοδείας (methods or schemes). This phrase describes what the action of standing is directed against (Merke, 2016b).

Finally, we have the genitive article τοῦ and the noun διαβόλου (devil or adversary). This phrase indicates whose methods or schemes the action directed against. The genitive construction here denotes possession or association. The structure of this part of the sentence emphasizes the purpose of being empowered. That is to stand firm against the cunning strategies employed by the devil.

Verse 12

ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς,

πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκούτου τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

The illocutionary act is primarily an assertive or declarative speech act. Paul is making a statement about the nature of the struggle faced by the readers.

Examining the perlocutionary act in this verse, the expected effect is that the readers will gain an understanding or insight into the nature of the struggle described. It may also elicit a certain mind-set or perspective regarding the spiritual battle.

The speech act functions are:

1. Assertive/ declarative function – the primary function is assertive, as the speaker (Paul) is providing information about the nature of the struggle faced by the readers.
2. Expressive function – there is an expressive element as well conveying the speakers’ understanding of the spiritual realities being discussed.
3. Constative function – it functions constatively by making statements about the nature of the struggle.

In this verse, there is illocutionary force, which is assertive, stating a fact about the nature of the struggle faced by the readers.

Summarizing verse 12, from a speech act perspective, is an assertive or declarative speech act, with the illocutionary force of providing information about the nature of the spiritual struggle faced by the readers. The perlocutionary effect expected to deepen the readers’ understanding and perspective on the spiritual dimensions of their challenges.

ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμῖν ἡ πάλη ἡ πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα,

ὅτι is a conjunction that introduces a dependent clause, often translated as ‘because’ or ‘for.’ The conjunction introduces a causal clause, which describes the spiritual nature of the enemy as the reason it is necessary to put on the divinely supplied armour

οὐκ ἔστιν is a negated verb phrase, where οὐκ is the negation and ἔστιν is the present indicative form of εἶμι (to be). Translated, it means ‘there is not’ or ‘it is not.’

The pronoun ἡμῖν signifies “us” in the dative case, serving as the indirect object and specifying the recipients of the subsequent clause. Metzger (2006) observes that Paul aligns himself with his readers, emphasizing their involvement in the spiritual conflict.

The noun ἡ πάλη refers to wrestling or struggle in the nominative case, serving as the subject of the clause. Paul envisions a fierce battle not merely an athletic completion. Despite the intensity Merkle (2016) suggests that the term may be used to emphasize the proximity of the battle, signifying a close-quarter, hand-to-hand combat rather than a distant proxy struggle.

Πρὸς αἷμα καὶ σάρκα – this prepositional phrase, with πρὸς meaning ‘against’ or ‘towards’, specifies the nature of the struggle. It is not against blood and flesh but against... The preposition πρὸς consistently conveys a sense of opposition in each of its five occurrences in this verse. Merkle (2016) further observes that in most English translations, except NRSV the order of αἷμα καὶ σάρκα (flesh and blood) reversed to (blood and flesh). He identifies this as an idiom for referring to human beings, particularly humanity in its vulnerability, weakness, and mortality, as seen in passages like Matthew 16:17, and 1 Corinthians 15:50.

ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς, πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας, πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου, πρὸς τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις.

Ἀλλὰ is a conjunction meaning ‘but.’ Πρὸς τὰς ἀρχάς is a prepositional phrase beginning with πρὸς (against or toward) followed by the accusative article τὰς, and the noun ἀρχάς (rulers or principalities). It specifies the first aspect of the struggle: against rulers. The adversative conjunction ἀλλὰ marks a contrast between the physical realm and the supernatural realm. The repeated use of the preposition "πρὸς" without conjunctions

serves to highlight the significance of the Satanic forces that believers contend with (Robertson, 2022).

Larkin (2009) observes that the four designations τὰς ἀρχάς. τὰς ἐξουσίας... τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας, and τὰ πνευματικά - sometimes considered as distinct rankings of evil spirits, collectively encompassing all the demonic forces. However, maintaining such a perspective is challenging, as the connection between these powers and the devil is not explicitly outlined (O'Brien, 1999b). Additionally, there are various combinations of terms in the lists as seen in (Colossians 1:16).

Πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας- this preposition in a similar way to the first, indicates the second aspect of the struggle: against authorities. The preposition πρὸς again signifies opposition or direction.

Πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου – is a more complex prepositional phrase. It starts with πρὸς and includes the accusative article τοὺς, and the noun κοσμοκράτορας (world rulers), in addition to a genitive construction τοῦ σκότους τούτου (of this darkness). This phrase specifies the third aspect of the struggle: against the world rulers of this darkness.

Πρὸς τὰ πνευματικά τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις – this is another prepositional phrase with πρὸς, this time indicating the fourth aspect of the struggle: against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. The phrase includes the accusative article τὰ and the noun πνευματικά (spiritual) along with the genitive construction τῆς πονηρίας (of evil), and ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (in the heavenly places) (Arnold, 2010f).

This verse describes the multifaceted nature of the spiritual struggle, specifying that it is not merely against human adversaries but involves opposition to rulers, authorities, world rulers of darkness, and spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms (Larkin, 2009).

Verse 13

διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα δυνηθῆτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στῆναι.

The illocutionary act is primarily a directive or imperative speech act. Paul is instructing or urging the readers to put on the whole AoG for a specific purpose – to be able to stand firm in the face of evil.

The expected effect is that the readers will understand the imperative to put on the full AoG and will be motivated to take action in preparation for the spiritual challenges described.

Speech act functions in this verse are:

1. A directive function is the primary function, instructing the readers to put on the full Armour of God.
2. There is an expressive element, conveying a sense of urgency or importance in being spiritually prepared.
3. Constative function – while the focus is on action, there is also a constative element, stating what the readers should do for spiritual readiness.

In other words, verse 13 of Ephesians 6, from a speech act perspective, is a directive speech act with the illocutionary force of urging or instructing the readers to “put on the whole armour of God.”

Διὰ τοῦτο ἀναλάβετε τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ,

Διὰ τοῦτο is a prepositional phrase where διὰ carries the meaning of ‘through’ or ‘because of,’ and τοῦτο is a demonstrative pronoun signifying ‘this.’ Collectively, it conveys the notion of ‘because of this’ or ‘for this reason.’ This phrase διὰ τοῦτο is inferential with 6:11b-12 serving as the antecedent of τοῦτο. The identification of believers’ supernatural adversaries once again forms the basis for the directive to adopt the armour provided by God (Merkle, 2016b).

Ἀναλάβετε is an aorist imperative verb derived from ἀναλαμβάνω meaning ‘to take up’ or ‘receive.’ This verb ἀναλάβετε is utilized elsewhere in ancient literature in the context of taking up arms or weapons as exemplified in Jeremiah 46:3 (Danker, 2000).

Τὴν πανοπλίαν represents the accusative singular form of the noun πανοπλία signifying ‘full armour’ or ‘complete armour.’ In this context, the accusative case designates it as the object of the verb ἀναλάβετε, further specified by the definite article τὴν.

Τοῦ θεοῦ constitutes a genitive construction, featuring the genitive article τοῦ and the genitive noun θεοῦ meaning ‘God.’ The genitive case, implying possession or association, and translated as ‘of God’ or ‘from God.’

The phrase translated as ‘Because of this, take up the full armour of God.’ The imperative form emphasizes the urgency and importance of putting on the complete spiritual armour provided by God (Danker, 2000).

ἵνα δυνηθῇτε ἀντιστῆναι ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ

The conjunction ἵνα introduces a purpose clause, often translated as ‘so that’ or ‘so that,’ indicating the intended outcome of the following actions (Nida, 1989).

The verb δυνηθῇτε is in the aorist subjunctive passive form of δύναμαι meaning ‘to be able’ or ‘to have power.’ The subjunctive mood suggests a potential action or purpose, translating to ‘you may be able’ or ‘you might have the strength.’

The infinitive verb ἀντιστῆναι derived from ἀντίστημι signifying ‘to resist’ or ‘to stand against.’ It serves as the purpose of the action expressed by the main verb δυνηθῇτε, meaning ‘to resist’ or ‘to stand against.’

The prepositional phrase ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ employs ἐν to mean ‘in’, and τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ refers to ‘the evil day.’ The article τῇ used with both nouns, specifying a particular day – namely, ‘the evil day.’

The phrase translated as ‘so that you may be able to resist on the evil day.’ The purpose is to empower individuals to stand against challenges specifically on a day characterized by evil or adversity. However, scholars including, Merkle (2016) propose various interpretations of this phrase:

1. A singular day of intense persecution and tribulation just before Christ’s return, although, Paul seems to refer to the present and not just the future.
2. The present age between the two comings of Christ, with the acknowledgment that this age will climax in a final eschatological conflict (Ernest, 1985b; Thielman, 2010a).
3. Critical moments in believers’ lives when demonic attacks are at their peak, considering that we live in ‘evil days’ (Arnold, 2010e; O’Brien, 1999; Hoehner, 2002c). Arnold (2010) suggests that an ‘evil day’ experience occurs intermittently in the lives of God’s

people when the powers of darkness execute their strategies (μεθοδεΐαι) to cause believers to fall” (Arnold, 2010e).

Καὶ ἅπαντα κατεργασάμενοι στῆναι

Καὶ is a coordination conjunction meaning ‘and’, indicating a continuation or addition to the preceding context.

ἅπαντα is a pronoun in the accusative case, derived from the adjective ἅπας, meaning ‘all’ or ‘everything.’ In this context, it serves as the direct object of the verb that follows. Merkle (2016) observes that the intensive form of πᾶς (ἅπαντα) fronted and along with the other uses of πᾶς in this passage highlights the importance of being fully equipped to deal with any circumstance at any time.

Κατεργασάμενοι is a participle, specifically the aorist middle (deponent) participle of κατεργάζομαι, meaning ‘to accomplish’ or ‘to bring about.’ The middle voice suggests that the subjects act for themselves. Translated as ‘having accomplished’ or ‘having brought about.’

Στῆναι is an infinitive verb from ἵστημι, meaning ‘to stand’ or ‘to stand firm.’ In this context, it functions as the purpose or result of the preceding action. Translated as ‘to stand’ or ‘to stand firm.’

The phrase can be translated as ‘and having accomplished everything, to stand’ or ‘having brought about all things, to stand.’ The participle κατεργασάμενοι indicates a preceding action, and the infinitive στῆναι conveys the purpose or result, emphasizing the idea of standing firm or standing resolute after completing all tasks or preparations (Merkle, 2016b).

Verse 14

Στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα
τῆς δικαιοσύνης

Using a locutionary act, the utterance is an imperative sentence.

The illocutionary act is a directive or imperative speech act. The speaker (Paul) is instructing the audience to stand firm while specifying the action taken – putting on the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness.

The expected effect is that the readers will understand the imperative to stand firm and will be motivated to take specific actions to equip themselves with the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness (the truth of the Cross-, and the righteousness of Christ).

Speech act functions in this verse are:

1. A directive function is the primary function, instructing the readers to stand firm and specifying how by putting on specific elements of the armour of God.
2. There is an expressive element, conveying a sense of urgency or importance in being equipped with the belt of truth, and the breastplate of righteousness.
3. While the focus is on action, there is also a constative element, stating what the readers should do to stand firm.

In summary, this verse is a directive speech act with the illocutionary force of urging or instructing the readers to stand firm and put on the belt of truth and breastplate of righteousness. The perlocutionary effect is expected to motivate the readers to take these specific actions for spiritual readiness.

στήτε οὖν περιζωσάμενοι τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν ἐν ἀληθείᾳ

Στήτε is an aorist active imperative verb from ἵστημι, meaning ‘to stand’ or to ‘stand firm.’ The imperative mood communicates a command or exhortation. The aorist

tense emphasizes urgency or decisiveness, and this imperative is the primary admonition in the entire paragraph (Merkle, 2016b). This verb is used purposefully in previous clauses (6:11, and 13).

Οὖν is a coordinating conjunction, often translated as ‘therefore’ or ‘so’, establishing a logical connection with the preceding context. It draws an inference from the previous verses, indicating that, given the church’s powerful supernatural opponents and the resources provided by God, believers should stand firm (Merkle, 2016b).

περιζώσάμενοι is an aorist middle participle of περιζώννυμι, meaning ‘to gird’ or ‘to clothe oneself,’ is in the middle voice signifying that the subjects act for themselves. It can be translated as ‘having girded,’ ‘having clothed yourselves,’ or according to Danker (2000) ‘to get ready’ or ‘to prepare oneself’ (O'Brien, 1999b).

Τὴν ὀσφὺν ὑμῶν is an accusative direct object phrase, where τὴν ὀσφὺν means ‘the waist’ or ‘the loins,’ and ὑμῶν is the genitive plural form of ‘you,’ indicating possession. It translates as ‘your waist’ or ‘your loins.’

Ἐν ἀληθείᾳ is a prepositional phrase where ἐν means ‘in,’ and ἀληθείᾳ means ‘truth’ or ‘verity.’ It specifies the manner or quality of the action. It translates as ‘in truth’ or ‘with truth.’ The phrase communicates means – by truth Hoehner (2002d), and according to Lincoln (2017) truth could either refer to the subjective idea of integrity, while Thielman, (2010c) suggests that the truth could be the objective truth of the gospel. This study maintains the subjective idea.

The phrase translated as ‘therefore, stand, having girded your waist with truth.’ The imperative στήτε commands believers to stand firm, and the participle περιζώσάμενοι describes a prior action of girding or clothing oneself, specifically with truth. The

prepositional phrase ἐν ἀληθείᾳ further emphasizes the quality or manner in which this action is to be undertaken – standing firm in truthfulness.

καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης

Καὶ - this is a coordinating conjunction meaning ‘and,’ indicating a continuation or addition to the preceding context.

Ἐνδυσάμενοι- this is an aorist middle participle of ἐνδύω, meaning ‘to put on’ or ‘to clothe oneself.’ The middle voice suggests that the subjects act for themselves. It is communicating means – stand by putting on (Arnold, 2010d). Translated as ‘having put on’ or ‘having clothed yourselves.’

Τὸν θώρακα – this is the accusative singular form of the noun θώραξ, meaning ‘breastplate’ or ‘body armour.’ It functions as the direct object of the verb ἐνδυσάμενοι and specifies what is “being put on or worn.”

Τῆς δικαιοσύνης – a genitive construction where τῆς is the genitive article and δικαιοσύνης is the genitive singular form of the noun δικαιοσύνη, meaning ‘righteousness’ or ‘justice.’ It indicates the quality or nature of the breastplate “being put on.” It can be translated as ‘of righteousness’ or ‘of justice’ (Merkle, 2016b).

The phrase can be translated as ‘and having clothed yourselves with the breastplate of righteousness.’ The participle ἐνδυσάμενοι indicates the prior action of putting on or clothing oneself, specifically with the breastplate, and the genitive phrase τῆς δικαιοσύνης specifies the kind of breastplate, emphasizing the importance of righteousness in spiritual warfare.

Verse 15

Καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης,

Locutionary act – the utterance is a continuation of the imperative sentence.

The illocutionary act is a directive or imperative speech act. Paul is instructing the readers to possess the preparedness that comes from the gospel of peace fitted on their feet.

Perlocutionary act – the expected effect is that the readers will understand the imperative to possess the preparedness that comes from the gospel of peace fitted on their feet and will be motivated to cultivate a state of preparedness based on the message of peace.

Speech act functions in this verse are:

1. The primary function is directive, instructing the readers to possess the preparedness that comes from the gospel of peace fitted on their feet.
2. There is an expressive element, conveying a sense of the source of readiness being the gospel of peace.
3. Constative function – while the focus is on action, there is also a constative element, stating what the readers should do to be prepared.

In summarizing verse 15, from a speech act perspective is a directive speech act with the illocutionary force of urging or instructing the readers to have their feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. The perlocutionary effect is expected to motivate the readers to take this specific action for spiritual preparedness.

καὶ ὑποδησάμενοι τοὺς πόδας

Καὶ - this is a coordination conjunction meaning ‘and’ indicating a continuation or addition to the preceding context.

ὑποδησάμενοι – this is an aorist middle participle of ὑποδύω, meaning ‘to put on’ or ‘to clothe oneself.’ The middle voice suggests that the subjects act for themselves. It is

communicating means – stand by putting on (Thielman, 2010b). Translated as ‘having put on’ or ‘having clothed yourselves.’

Τοὺς πόδας – this is the accusative plural form of the noun πόυς, meaning ‘foot’ or ‘footwear.’ It functions as the direct object of the verb ὑποδησάμενοι and specifies what is “being put on” or worn. Paul appears to be relying on Isaiah for his imagery (Isaiah 52:7).

The phrase can be translated as ‘and having clothed yourselves with footwear’ or more specifically, ‘and having put on shoes’ or ‘and having shod your feet.’ The participle ὑποδησάμενοι indicates a prior action of putting on or clothing oneself, specifically with footwear, emphasizing the importance of preparation in the spiritual context.

Ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης,

Ἐν – this is a preposition meaning ‘in’ or ‘with,’ indicating the means or manner of the action that follows.

Ἐτοιμασία - this is a dative singular noun derived from ἐτοιμασία, meaning ‘readinesses or ‘preparedness.’ In this context, it functions as a dative of manner, specifying how the action is performed (Lincoln, 2017b). It can be translated as ‘in readiness’ or ‘with preparedness.’

Τοῦ εὐαγγελίου – this is the genitive singular form of the noun εὐαγγέλιον, meaning ‘gospel’ or ‘good news.’ It serves as a genitive of content, indicating the content or nature of the readiness. However, Hoehner (2002e) suggests that this phrase can be taken as a genitive of source – preparation that comes from the gospel. Lincoln (2010a) observes that, taken as an objective genitive – readiness to proclaim the good news. This study goes with Clinton's idea. Translated as ‘of the gospel’ or ‘of the good news.’

Τῆς εἰρήνης – this is the genitive singular form of the noun εἰρήνη, meaning ‘peace.’ It serves as another genitive of content, specifying the content or nature of the readiness. It can be translated as ‘of peace’ (Lincoln, 2010b).

The phrase translated as ‘in readiness for the gospel of peace.’ The preposition ἐν indicates the manner or means, and the nouns ἐτοιμασία, "τοῦ εὐαγγελίου “and” τῆς εἰρήνης together convey the idea of being prepared or equipped with the content of the gospel, particularly emphasizing the message of peace.

Verse 16

Ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως, ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ

[τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι·

The illocutionary act is a directive or imperative speech act. Paul is instructing the readers to take up the protection of faith to quench the burning missiles of the evil one.

Perlocutionary Act (Expected Effect on the Hearer/ Reader). The expected effect is that the readers will understand the imperative to take up the shield of faith and will be motivated to act accordingly, relying on their faith to protect against the attacks of the evil one.

Speech act functions in this verse include:

1. Directive function – the primary function is directive, instructing the readers to take up the shield of faith.
2. Expressive function – there is an expressive element, conveying the significance of faith as a protective shield against the evil one.

3. Constative function – while the focus is on action, there is also a constative element, stating what the readers should do to protect themselves.

The illocutionary force is directive, urging the readers to take specific actions – taking up the shield of faith.

Summarizing this verse, from a speech act perspective, is a directive speech act with the illocutionary force of urging or instructing the readers to take up the guard of faith for protection against the burning arrows of the wicked one. The perlocutionary effect expected to motivate the readers to take these specific actions for spiritual preparedness.

ἐν πᾶσιν ἀναλαβόντες τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως,

Ἐν – this is a preposition meaning ‘in’ or ‘with,’ indicating the means or manner of the action that follows.

Πᾶσιν – this is a dative plural form of the adjective πᾶς, meaning ‘all’ or ‘every.’ In this context, it functions as a dative of manner, specifying how the action is performed. It can be translated as ‘in all things’ or ‘with all.’

ἀναλαβόντες – this is an aorist active participle of ἀναλαμβάνω, meaning ‘to take up’ or ‘to receive.’ The participle indicates a prior action that is contemporaneous with the main verb. Translated as ‘having taken up’ or ‘having received.’

Unlike the previous items that were mentioned (6:14-15), the fourth item of armour is not introduced with καὶ. The preposition ἐν πᾶσιν amends ἀναλαβόντες and delivers the impression of – apart from all these, or in addition to all these as observed by (Hoehner, 2002e), and (O’Brien, 1999b).

Τὸν θυρεὸν – this is the accusative singular form of the noun θυρεός, meaning ‘shield.’ It functions as the direct object of the verb ἀναλαμβάνετε and specifies what is “being taken up” or “received.” Translated as ‘the shield.’

Τῆς πίστεως – this is the genitive singular form of the noun πίστις, meaning ‘faith’ or ‘belief.’ It serves as a genitive of content, indicating the content or nature of the shield. Translated as ‘of faith.’ However, Merkle (2016) observes that this phrase could be a genitive of apposition – the shield which is faith, while O'Brien (1999) suggests that this term might allude to the accepted objective aspect. However, it is better understood as a personal act of faith (subjective act) and reliance in God, since faith takes hold of God's resources amid the onslaughts of evil and produces the firm resolve which douses anything the enemy throws at the believer (Merkle, 2016b).

The phrase translated as ‘with all, having taken up the shield of faith.’ The preposition ἐν indicates the manner or means, the adjective πᾶσιν emphasizes completeness or totality, the participle ἀναλαμβάνετε conveys the prior action of taking up, and the nouns "τὸν θυρεὸν" and "τῆς πίστεως" together describe the shield being taken up, particularly highlighting the content of faith.

Ἐν ᾧ δυνήσεσθε πάντα τὰ βέλη τοῦ πονηροῦ [τὰ] πεπυρωμένα σβέσαι.

Ἐν ᾧ - this is a prepositional phrase - ἐν means ‘in’ and ᾧ is a relative pronoun. Together, translated as ‘in which’ or ‘by which.’ The prepositional phrase communicates means – by which, and refers back to τὸν θυρεὸν. That is, by this shield (faith) believers are to quench the burning missiles (attacks) of the wicked one.

Δυνήσεσθε – this is a verb in the future tense, second person plural form of δύναμαι, which means ‘to be able’ or ‘to have power.’ The translation would be ‘you will be able.’

This future tense verb does not indicate that this spiritual warfare will take place sometime in the future but indicates the assured result of what will happen when believers take up the shield (Merkle, 2016a).

Πάντα – this is an adjective meaning ‘all’ or ‘everything.’

τὰ βέλη - τὰ is the definite article and βέλη is the noun meaning ‘arrows.’

Τοῦ πονηροῦ - τοῦ is the genitive case of the definite article and πονηροῦ is the genitive singular of the adjective πονηρός, meaning ‘evil’ or ‘wicked.’ This can be a possessive genitive (the evil one’s arrows), or a genitive of source (arrows from the evil one) (Hoehner, 2002f).

[Τὰ] πεπυρωμένα - [τὰ] is the definite article, and πεπυρωμένα is the neuter plural participle of the verb πυρόω, meaning ‘to burn’ or ‘to set on fire.’ This is an attributive participle modifying τὰ βέλη(burning or flaming arrows). That is the arrows are flaming – indicating the hostile and destructive nature of Satan’s attacks.

Σβέσαι – this is an aorist active infinitive of the verb σβέννυμι meaning ‘to extinguish’ or ‘to quench.’ This is a complementary infinitive with δυνήσεσθε (Merkle, 2016a).

The phrase can be translated as ‘in which you will be able to extinguish all the arrows of the evil (that are) set on fire.’ The phrase conveys the idea that in a certain context or with a certain capability, one can extinguish or quench all the fiery missiles of the wicked.

Verse 17

καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος, ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ.

Locutionary act – the utterance is an imperative sentence – “Take the helmet...”
(δέξασθε τὴν περικεφαλαίαν...).

The illocutionary act is a directive or imperative speech act. The speaker (Paul) is instructing the readers to take the headdress of redemption and the sword of the Pneuma, which is the word of the Deity.

Perlocutionary act – The expected effect is that readers will understand the imperative to take the mentioned spiritual weapons and will be motivated to act accordingly for their spiritual protection and readiness.

The speech act functions in this verse are:

1. Directive function – the primary function is directive instructing the readers to take the headdress of salvation and the sword of the Pneuma.
2. Expressive function – there is an expressive element, conveying the significance of salvation as a protective helmet and the word of God as a powerful sword.
3. Constative function – while the focus is on the action, there is also a constative element, stating what the readers should do to equip themselves spiritually.

The illocutionary force is directive, urging the readers to take specific actions – taking the headdress of redemption and the sword of the Pneuma.

In summary, this prose from a speech act perspective, is a directive speech act with the illocutionary force of urging or instructing the readers to take the mentioned spiritual weapons, specifically the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit. The perlocutionary effect - expected to motivate the readers to take these specific actions for their spiritual protection and preparedness.

καὶ τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου δέξασθε

καὶ - this is a coordinating conjunction meaning ‘and’ indicating a continuation or addition to the preceding context.

τὴν περικεφαλαίαν – this is the accusative singular form of the noun περικεφαλαία, meaning ‘helmet’ or headpiece.’ It functions as the direct object of the verb δέξασθε and specifies what is to be ‘received’ or ‘taken.’ Paul’s language here echoes Isaiah 59, where Yahweh not only ‘put on righteousness as a breastplate, but also a helmet of salvation (Merkle, 2016a).

τοῦ σωτηρίου – this is the genitive singular form of the noun σωτήριον, meaning ‘salvation’ or deliverance.’ It serves as a genitive of content, indicating the content or nature of the helmet. It can be translated as ‘of salvation’ or deliverance’ O’Brien (1999c; 2003e; Thomas, 2003) notes that this is a genitive of apposition – the helmet, which is salvation. Therefore, Paul confirms the allusion to Isaiah 59:17, thus, salvation means to realize and appropriate one’s new identity in Christ, which gives believers power for deliverance from the supernatural enemies based on their union with the resurrected and exalted Lord (Arnold, 2010c).

δέξασθε – this is the aorist middle imperative form of the verb δέχομαι, meaning ‘to receive’ or ‘to accept.’ The imperative mood conveys a command or exhortation, and the middle voice suggests that the subjects act for themselves. Translated as ‘receive’ or ‘accept.’

The phrase can be translated as ‘and receive the helmet of salvation.’ The conjunction καὶ indicates a continuation, the noun τὴν περικεφαλαίαν specifies the helmet, the genitive τοῦ σωτηρίου describes the content of the helmet, and the imperative δέξασθε

commands the action of receiving or accepting. This imagery emphasizes the importance of spiritual protection and salvation in the believer's life.

καὶ τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος

καὶ - this is a coordinating conjunction meaning 'and', indicating a continuation or addition to the preceding context.

τὴν μάχαιραν – this is the accusative singular form of the noun μάχαιρα, meaning 'sword.' It functions as the direct object of the verb implied by the context, which is typically δέξασθε (receive) from the previous phrase. It specifies what is to be received or taken (Merkle, 2016a).

τοῦ πνεύματος – this is the genitive singular form of the noun πνεύμα, meaning 'spirit' or 'wind.' It serves as a genitive of possession, indicating that the sword belongs to the spirit. Translated as 'of the Spirit.' It can also be a subjective genitive identifying the sword as provided by the Spirit. That is the Spirit is the giver of the sword.

The phrase can be translated as 'and the sword of the Spirit.' The conjunction καὶ indicates a continuation, the noun τὴν μάχαιραν specifies the sword, and the genitive τοῦ πνεύματος denotes that the sword belongs to the Spirit. The imagery emphasizes the spiritual weapon of the Word of God represented by the blade of the Pneuma.

ὃ ἐστὶν ῥῆμα θεοῦ

ὃ - This is a relative pronoun, meaning 'which' or 'that.' It introduces a relative clause and refers to the preceding noun, in this case, μάχαιρα (sword) (O'Brien, 1999d).

ἐστὶν – this is the present indicative form of the verb εἰμί, meaning 'is.' It functions as the main verb of the relative clause.

ῥῆμα – this is the nominative singular form of the noun ῥῆμα, meaning ‘word’ or ‘utterance.’ It is the subject of the verb ἐστίν. This could either be a Spirit-inspired word (Scripture) or the gospel (O'Brien, 1999d).

θεοῦ - this is the genitive singular form of the noun θεός, meaning ‘God.’ It serves as a genitive of possession, indicating the possessor of the word. Translated as ‘of God.’

The phrase can be translated as ‘which is the word of God.’ The relative pronoun ὃ introduces a clause that describes the sword, the verb ἐστίν connects the subject ῥῆμα to its predicate, and the genitive θεοῦ specifies the possessor of the word as being God. This phrase emphasizes that the sword is the Word of God, representing the spiritual weapon of truth and divine revelation.

Verse 18

διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκατερήσει καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων

Illocutionary act – the illocutionary act is primarily a directive or imperative speech act. The speaker (Paul) is instructing the readers to pray in the Spirit, be alert, and keep on praying for the entire Lord’s people.

Perlocutionary act – the expected effect is that the readers will understand the imperative to pray in the Spirit, be alert, and continually pray for others. The perlocutionary effect is to motivate the readers to engage in consistent and varied prayer.

Speech act functions in this verse include:

1. Directive function – the primary function is directive, instructing the readers to pray in the Spirit, be alert, and keep on praying for others.

2. Expressive function - there is an expressive element, conveying the importance of prayer and the need for a continuous, varied prayer life.
3. Constative function – while the focus is on action, there is also a constative element, stating what the readers should do to maintain a life of prayer.

The illocutionary force is directive, urging the readers to take specific actions – praying in the Spirit, being alert, and maintaining a continuous prayer life.

Summarizing this verse, from a speech act perspective, is a directive speech act with the illocutionary force of urging or instructing the readers to engage in various forms of prayer, to be alert, and to ‘continually pray’ for the well-being of the entire Lord’s people. The perlocutionary effect expected to motivate the readers to adopt a lifestyle characterized by consistent and diverse prayer practices.

Merkle (2016a) points out the coherence in this verse through the consistent use of *πάς* (*παντὶ, πασης, παση παντων*), and the employment of alliteration, as seen in the repetition of words starting with the letter *π* (*πάσης προσευχῆς... προσευχόμενοι... παντὶ... πνεύματι... πάση προσκαρτερήσῃ... περὶ πάντων*). Additionally, the parallel use of participles (*προσευχόμενοι* and *ἀγρυπνοῦντες*) adds to the verse’s cohesion. Notably, he highlights that despite its connection to the preceding context, the theme of prayer takes prominence due to its placement at the end of the verse.

διὰ πάσης προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως προσευχόμενοι ἐν παντὶ καιρῷ ἐν πνεύματι,

διὰ - this is a preposition meaning ‘through’ or ‘employing’, indicating the manner or method by which the act is done.

πάσης – this is the genitive singular form of the adjective πᾶς, meaning ‘all’ or ‘every.’ It functions as a genitive of description, modifying the following nouns προσευχῆς καὶ δεήσεως. Translated as ‘of every’ or ‘of all.’

προσευχῆς – this is the genitive singular form of the noun προσευχή, meaning ‘prayer’ or ‘supplication.’ It is the first part of a compound noun phrase, modified by the adjective πάσης.

καὶ - this is a coordinating conjunction meaning ‘and’, connecting the two elements in the compound noun phrase.

δεήσεως – this is the genitive singular form of the noun δέησις, meaning ‘request’ or ‘petition.’ It is the second part of the compound noun phrase, modified by the adjective πάσης.

προσευχόμενοι – this is the present middle participle form of the verb προσεύχομαι, meaning ‘to pray’ or ‘to make supplication.’ The participle indicates a concurrent action with the key verb and functions as the key verb of the clause. It can be translated as ‘praying’, or making supplication’(O'Brien, 1999c).

ἐν – this is a preposition meaning ‘in’ or ‘with’ indicating the sphere or context in which the action takes place.

παντὶ καιρῷ - this is a noun phrase where παντὶ is the dative singular form of πᾶς and καιρῷ is the dative singular form of καιρός. Translated as ‘at every time’ or ‘in every season.’

ἐν – this is another instance of the preposition ‘in’ or ‘with,’ indicating the sphere or context.

πνεύματι – this is the dative singular form of the noun πνεῦμα, meaning ‘spirit’ or ‘wind.’ It serves as the dative of instrument or means, indicating how the action of praying is performed. It can be translated as ‘in the Spirit’ (Hoehner, 2002g)

The phrase Translated as ‘praying through every prayer and petition at every time in the Spirit.’ The preposition διὰ indicates the means or manner, the genitive πάσης specifies the kind of prayer and petition, the participle προσευχόμενοι conveys the ongoing action of praying, the dative παντὶ καιρῷ indicates the time or season, and the dative ἐν πνεύματι specifies the means or sphere of praying. This verse encourages believers to engage in comprehensive and Spirit-led prayer at all times.

καὶ εἰς αὐτὸ ἀγρυπνοῦντες ἐν πάσῃ προσκατερήσει καὶ δεήσει περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων

καὶ - this is a conjunction meaning ‘and’, indicating a continuation or addition to the previous clause.

εἰς αὐτὸ - εἰς is a preposition meaning ‘into’ or ‘for.’ αὐτὸ is a pronoun meaning ‘it’ or ‘this.’ Together, it can be translated as ‘for this’ or ‘into this’ suggesting a specific focus or purpose (O'Brien, 1999e).

ἀγρυπνοῦντες – this is the present active participle form of the verb ἀγρυπνέω, meaning ‘to be awake’ or ‘to be vigilant.’ The participle is concurrent with the key verb and functions as the key verb of the clause. Translated as ‘being vigilant’ or ‘staying awake.’

ἐν – this is a preposition meaning ‘in’ or ‘with,’ indicating the sphere or context in which the action takes place (O'Brien, 1999e).

πάσῃ προσκατερήσει - πάσῃ is the dative singular form of the adjective πᾶς, meaning ‘all’ or ‘every.’ προσκατερήσει is the dative singular form of the noun προσκατερήσις, meaning ‘perseverance’ or ‘persistence.’ The dative case indicates the sphere or context. Translated as ‘with all perseverance’ or ‘in every persistence.’

καὶ - this is another instance of the conjunction ‘and,’ connecting the previous phrase with the following one.

δεήσει – this is the dative singular form of the noun δέησις, meaning ‘request’ or ‘petition.’ The dative case indicates the sphere or context. Translated as ‘with prayer’ or ‘in petition.’

περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων - περὶ is a preposition meaning ‘concerning’ or ‘about.’ πάντων is the genitive plural form of πᾶς, meaning ‘all’ or ‘every.’ τῶν ἁγίων is the genitive plural form of the noun ἅγιος, meaning ‘holy’ or ‘saints.’ The genitive case indicates possession. It can be translated as ‘for all the saints’ or ‘about all holy ones’ (Wallace, 1996a).

The phrase can be translated as ‘and being vigilant for this in all perseverance and prayer for all the saints.’ The conjunction καὶ connects the elements, and the prepositions εἰς and ἐν indicate purpose and context, respectively. The participial phrase ἀγρυπνοῦντες emphasizes the ongoing action of vigilance, and the dative constructions πάσῃ προσκατερήσει and εἰς περὶ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων provide additional details about the manner and focus of the vigilance.

Conclusion

When Paul wrote to the Ephesians, the Roman Empire was at the height of its power. The Roman army was nearly invincible. Paul certainly observed this fearsome

army when he was in Rome. When Roman soldiers entered battle, they carried helmets and shields. Their rectangular shields coated with a fireproof substance to quench flaming arrows. The front row of soldiers marched with shields, protecting the row behind them. Many soldiers also carried two weapons – a short sword for close combat and a lance. Roman soldiers could defeat almost every enemy, even when outnumbered, as long as they did not break rank. However, Paul knew the real enemy for believers was not the Roman army, the Roman Emperor, or any human institution. Rather, it was the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world (Ephesians 6:2).

In this study text, Paul issues a compelling call to action using the lens of speech act theory revealing his intention not merely to inform but to prompt a specific response from the audience. Employing imperatives like ‘put on’ and ‘stand,’ Paul engages in directives that function as performative speech acts, urging the recipients to take concrete actions.

By instructing believers to ‘put on the full Armour of God’, Paul is not merely providing information about spiritual warfare; rather, he is prompting a performative act of readiness and preparation. The imperatives function as directives, inviting the audience to participate actively in their spiritual defence.

Furthermore, the repeated use of imperatives in the passage underscores the urgency and significance of the actions Paul advocates. The speech acts are not passive suggestions, but compelling calls to engage in a deliberate, ongoing process of spiritual readiness. Through the strategic use of language, Paul shapes not only the understanding but also the behaviour of the recipients.

The relational aspect of Paul's communication - highlighted by addressing the audience as 'brothers' and emphasizing the communal nature of the struggle, Paul establishes a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility. The imperatives, then serve not only as individual directives but also as a collective rallying cry for the community of believers.

In conclusion, through speech act theory, Paul's intentional use of language to elicit a specific response revealed. The imperatives function as performative acts, urging believers to 'actively participate' in the spiritual battle, emphasizing both individual and communal solidarity. Paul's words go beyond mere information; they are a dynamic call to action, inviting believers to stand firm in the face of spiritual challenges, armed with the full AoG as a resource.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Summary of the First Four Chapters

The primary focus is on how the ‘Armour of God’ metaphor used to address spiritual warfare among believers in these churches. The researcher has examined the rhetorical techniques employed by Paul in Ephesians 6:11-18, analysing the metaphor of the ‘Armour of God’ and how designed to persuade and inspire believers. This study has investigated the structure, language, and persuasive elements of the passage.

The study has also explored how believers in Pentecostal churches should interpret and apply the teachings of this passage in their daily lives. This includes understanding how the ‘Armour of God’ influences their spiritual practices, personal faith journeys, and communal religious activities.

The study has considered the unique cultural, historical, and social contexts of Pentecostal churches, analysing how these factors shape the interpretation and implementation of the ‘Armour of God.’

Warfare definitions and interpretations by historical figures highlight the complexity of understanding SW, which involves a continual battle against malevolent forces as depicted in the Bible.

Misinterpretations of SW have practical consequences, such as distracting from addressing social issues, exploiting cultural beliefs, and fostering fear and control among congregants.

There is a gap in understanding the rhetorical and pragmatic significance of Ephesians 6:11-18 within Pentecostal churches. Current interpretations often lack depth and fail to address the cultural nuances and specific realities of African believers. Practical guidance and strategies derived from this passage are also lacking, leaving some believers struggling to apply its principles to their spiritual battles.

This analysis delves into the definitions and significance of the ‘Armour of God’ as a resource for SW, examining biblical interpretation, how Romans, Jews, and Africans perceived it. Additionally, it provides an in-depth review of scholarly perspectives on the focal text, Ephesians 6:11-18.

An examination of the meaning of SW done employing three approaches employed by various scholars. By utilizing rhetorical and pragmatic analyses, the researcher reveals additional (and possibly different) insights from the text. These approaches emphasize the use of statements, the performance of spoken words, and their effectiveness.

This has clarified Paul's intended message in the study text and demonstrated how Ephesians 6:11-18 integrates with the overall message of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Additionally, it has shown the application of the text in contemporary Pentecostal churches. The approaches reviewed in Chapter 2 omitted some of these insights, yet they are crucial for facilitating a proper understanding and application of the text in the African context.

Chapter 3 has provided detailed information about the two methods—rhetorical criticism and pragmatic analysis—that the researcher employed to study the text for deeper interpretation and application. These two approaches differ from other methods, as they emphasize the central role of the AoG as a resource for spiritual warfare among believers.

This emphasis aims to address and correct the misuse of spiritual warfare in Pentecostal churches and to highlight the resources found in the ‘Armour of God.’

In a broader picture, Paul rhetorically presents the identifying believers as the agent in the pericope, the act being teaching and exhortation, and God’s armour presented as an agency. A call for believers to actively participate and have a personal engagement and commitment to putting on the whole ‘Armour of God.’ The scene is in the spiritual realm where the battle is taking place, and the purpose presented by Paul is to show alignment with the will of God and foster spiritual virtues. The motive was to show how believers should have spiritual preparedness, and be active in their engagement in SW.

Consequently, with speech act theory in play, rhetic acts, identified in the text, giving reference or information about what happened in this scene. Illocutionary acts, particularly declarative, declare statements used in the texts, declaring what the believers should do - ‘put on the whole armour’, and perlocutionary acts show the outcome- ‘to stand firm’. The dominant terms converge on the transformative and intentional nature of the central action - the act of putting on the whole Armour of God. This action involves individual believers (agents) actively engaging with spiritual tools and elements (agency) with the purpose of spiritual preparedness, alignment with divine will, and active participation in the cosmic battle. The passage underscores the significance of intentional, spiritual engagement for believers in facing spiritual challenges.

Summary of Findings

Objective One

To analyse the rhetorical strategies used in Ephesians 6:11-18. That is, examine the language, imagery, and metaphors employed by Apostle Paul in the passage, and

identify how these rhetorical elements designed to communicate the importance of spiritual preparedness.

Finding one

Use of Imagery and Metaphor: The passage is rich in metaphorical language, particularly the imagery of the "AoG." This metaphor serves to create a vivid and memorable picture in the minds of the readers, enhancing the persuasive impact. Paul employs the metaphor of the 'AoG' to illustrate the concept of spiritual preparedness. Each piece of armour (belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword) represents a specific aspect of spiritual defence and offense, making the abstract idea of SW tangible and relatable.

Paul uses the language and terminology associated with Roman military equipment, which would have been familiar to his audience. He invokes the image of a well-equipped Roman soldier, ready for battle. This choice of language emphasizes the seriousness and urgency of the spiritual battle believer's face, encouraging them to adopt a similarly disciplined and vigilant stance.

Finding two

Appeals to Ethos, Pathos, and Logos

Ethos: The author establishes credibility by aligning the message with divine authority, urging readers to "put on the full AoG" (Ephesians 6:11).

Pathos: The passage appeals to the emotions of the readers by evoking a sense of urgency and danger, describing the struggle against "the powers of this dark world" (Ephesians 6:12).

Logos: Logical reasoning employed through the structured presentation of the armour pieces, each representing a specific virtue or spiritual tool (e.g., the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness). This logical structure helps the audience understand and remember the message, similar to the logical sequences used in Philippians 4:1-9 to persuade the audience to live according to the gospel.

Findings three

Rhetorical Techniques

Direct and Impersonal Appeals: The passage alternates between direct commands ("Put on the full AoG") and impersonal statements ("Our struggle is not against flesh and blood"), a technique that engages the audience while also providing general truths.

Hyperbole and Antithesis: The passage uses hyperbolic language to emphasize the severity of the spiritual battle and antithesis to contrast the forces of good and evil.

The passage filled with imperative verbs such as 'put on,' 'stand firm,' and 'take up.' These commands are direct and forceful, underscoring the necessity of taking immediate and decisive action. Paul's use of imperatives serves to motivate and galvanize his audience, stressing the importance of proactive spiritual engagement.

Objective Two

To examine the pragmatic implications of Ephesians 6:11-18 as a remedial aimed at enhancing believers' consciousness of SW and the resources required in Pentecostal Christian communities.

Finding one

Heightened Awareness of Spiritual Realities: Emphasis on Non-Physical Struggles, the passage explicitly states that the struggle is "not against flesh and blood, but against...

spiritual forces of evil" (v. 12). This resonates with Pentecostal Christians who often perceive life as intertwined with spiritual dynamics. The text pragmatically reinforces the belief in a spiritual dimension to daily challenges, thus increasing vigilance and awareness among believers.

Finding two

Empowerment through spiritual resources: Equipping with Spiritual Tools – this is on detailing the "AoG," the passage provides a practical framework for spiritual preparedness. This equips believers with concrete actions and symbolic tools (truth, righteousness, faith, and salvation, the Word of God) to combat spiritual forces. For Pentecostal Christians, this can translate into specific practices such as regular prayer, fasting, and engagement with scripture as protective and empowering measures.

Finding three

Integration with Traditional Beliefs: Syncretism and Contextual Adaptation, Pentecostal Christian communities often integrate biblical teachings with traditional beliefs about spiritual forces. Ephesians 6:11-18 provides a Christian framework that harmonizes with indigenous concepts of spiritual protection and warfare. This integration can make the Christian approach to SW more accessible and relatable to believers familiar with traditional spiritual practices.

Finding four

Moral and Ethical Framework: Righteous Living as Spiritual Defence, the emphasis on righteousness and truth (vv. 14-15) aligns with African values of communal harmony and moral integrity. By framing ethical behaviour as a form of spiritual armour,

the text encourages believers to adhere to Christian morals not just as ethical imperatives but as essential components of their spiritual defence mechanism.

The breastplate of righteousness and the belt of truth interpreted as calls to live morally and ethically upright lives. This has practical implications for personal conduct and community interactions.

Faith and trust in God: the shield of faith represents trust in God's protection and provision, encouraging believers to rely on their faith in practical and challenging situations.

Finding five

Collective Spiritual Resilience

Community support: the directive to pray 'for the entire Lord's people' highlights the importance of communal support. In Pentecostal Christian communities, this can reinforce the practice of intercessory prayer and collective spiritual exercises, strengthening the overall resilience of the community.

Unity and solidarity: understanding that the battle is against spiritual forces rather than flesh and blood can foster unity among believers, reducing internal conflicts and promoting solidarity against common spiritual adversaries.

Finding six

Addressing fear and anxiety

Combatting fear: the passage provides a framework for understanding and combatting fear and anxiety related to spiritual threats. By equipping believers with spiritual armour, it offers a sense of security and confidence in God's protection.

Peace and assurance – the readiness from the gospel of peace and the helmet of salvation offer assurance of God’s salvation and peace, which can mitigate fear and anxiety.

Objective Three

To identify potential gaps or discrepancies between the interpretation of the study text and the lived experiences of believers regarding SW in African contexts.

Finding one

Theological Understanding and Indigenous Beliefs

There is a gap in the theological concepts presented in Ephesians 6:11-18, while foundational to Christian doctrine, may not always align seamlessly with indigenous beliefs and practices concerning spiritual forces.

A discrepancy seen when an examination done on Scriptural and Traditional Spiritual Weapons. The passage emphasizes spiritual tools like truth, righteousness, and faith. However, in many African contexts, believers may also rely on traditional spiritual practices, such as the use of amulets, charms, or rituals for protection. This syncretism can create tension between adhering to biblical teachings and maintaining cultural practices.

Perception of Spiritual Forces: The biblical text speaks of a cosmic battle against the spiritual forces of evil. In contrast, many African believers may interpret SW more concretely, focusing on witchcraft, ancestral spirits, and specific local spirits, which might not always be addressed directly in the biblical framework.

Finding two

Communal and Individual Focus

There is a gap in Communal and Individual Focus: Ephesians 6:11-18 promotes both personal and communal spiritual vigilance, but the application may vary significantly in practice. Similarly, a discrepancy exists between individual Armour and Communal Practices. The text metaphorically describes the "Armour of God" as an individual's spiritual gear. In African contexts, spiritual practices are often communal, involving collective prayers and rituals. There might be a mismatch in how believers perceive individual responsibility versus communal action in SW.

On matters of Leadership Roles, Pentecostal churches often place significant authority on spiritual leaders (pastors, prophets, etc.). These leaders perceived as key figures in SW, sometimes overshadowing the notion of individual believers actively engaging in their spiritual defence.

Finding three

Righteousness and Ethical Living

A gap seen when conceptualizing Righteousness and Ethical Living. The passage emphasizes ethical living (righteousness, truth) as part of the spiritual armour, which might not always align with local social and cultural norms. Moreover, a discrepancy appears in cultural Practices when compared with Biblical Ethics. Certain cultural practices may conflict with biblical definitions of righteousness. For example, practices like polygamy, traditional conflict resolution methods, or certain communal obligations may be at odds with the ethical standards depicted in the Bible. Additionally, on social Justice Issues in some African contexts, social and economic injustices may make it difficult for believers to practice the ethical living advocated in the passage. Issues such as poverty, corruption,

and political instability can create environments where maintaining biblical righteousness is challenging.

Finding four

Practical application of Spiritual Tools on the metaphorical tools (e.g., "shield of faith," "helmet of salvation") might not be easily translatable into actionable steps for believers facing real-world spiritual threats. Between abstract concepts and tangible actions - while the text provides a spiritual framework, believers often seek tangible actions to protect themselves. The metaphorical nature of the "AoG" might not provide clear guidance on dealing with immediate threats like witchcraft or curses. Similarly, some Pentecostal Christians might expect miraculous interventions as part of SW, which can lead to a discrepancy between the expectation of supernatural deliverance and the daily practice of spiritual disciplines outlined in Ephesians.

Finding five

The passage calls for continuous spiritual vigilance and prayer, which may conflict with believers' practical realities and endurance. Therefore, continuous engagement in spiritual practices, as recommended in the text, can be difficult to sustain due to the demands of daily life, work, and family responsibilities.

The expectation of persistent prayer and vigilance might lead to spiritual fatigue, especially in communities where believers already burdened by socioeconomic pressures. This could result in burnout or a sense of inadequacy among believers who struggle to maintain such high levels of spiritual activity.

Objective Four

To propose exegetically grounded strategies for enhancing the teaching and preaching of the study text within Pentecostal churches, aiming to deepen believers' understanding and consciousness of SW and identify the required tools required.

Finding one

Cultural Contextualization:

Strategy: relate the historical and cultural context of Ephesians 6: 11-18 to the contemporary Pentecostal context. Encourage pastors and teachers to contextualize the teachings of Ephesians 6:11-18 within the cultural realities of Pentecostal communities.

Implementation: explain the context in which Paul wrote Ephesians, highlighting the spiritual challenges faced by the early church. Compare these challenges to those in contemporary Pentecostal societies, such as beliefs in witchcraft, ancestral spirits, and other spiritual forces. Provide training and resources for pastors to understand local cultural beliefs and practices related to SW. Incorporate relevant cultural metaphors and illustrations to make biblical concepts more relatable.

Cultural relevance – draw parallels between the spiritual battles faced by the Ephesians and those faced by Pentecostal believers today. This helps the congregation see the relevance of the text to their own lives.

Finding two

Holistic Understanding

Strategy: Foster a holistic understanding of SW that integrates biblical truths with practical realities.

Implementation: Teach believers to recognize SW not only in supernatural manifestations but also in social injustices, economic disparities, and mental health challenges. Emphasize the importance of addressing both spiritual and practical dimensions of warfare.

Finding three

Community Engagement

Strategy: Promote community engagement and mutual support in SW.

Implementation: Encourage believers to pray together, share testimonies of victory, and support one another in times of spiritual battles. Facilitate small group discussions and prayer meetings focused on spiritual warfare, fostering a sense of unity and accountability.

Finding four

Empowerment through Discipleship

Strategy: Empower believers through discipleship to ‘actively engage’ in spiritual warfare.

Implementation: Provide discipleship programs that equip believers with biblical knowledge, spiritual disciplines, and practical strategies for spiritual warfare. Mentorship by mature Christians can help new believers develop spiritual discernment and resilience.

Finding five

Integration of Spiritual Disciplines

Strategy: Integrate spiritual disciplines into believers' daily lives as a means SW.

Implementation: Teach believers the importance of prayer, meditation on Scripture, fasting, and worship as essential spiritual weapons. Provide practical guidance on incorporating these disciplines into daily routines, emphasizing consistency and perseverance.

Finding six

Ethical Living and Spiritual Armour

Strategy: Emphasize the connection between ethical living and the effectiveness of spiritual armour.

Implementation: Teach believers that righteousness, truth, and faithfulness are not only defensive but also offensive weapons in SW. Challenge cultural norms that contradict biblical ethics and encourage believers to live lives of integrity and moral purity.

Finding seven

Theological Education and Critical Thinking:

Strategy: Promote theological education and critical thinking skills among believers.

Implementation: Offer workshops, seminars, and Bible studies that delve deeper into the theological foundations of spiritual warfare. Equip believers to ‘critically evaluate teachings’ and practices in light of Scripture, enabling them to discern truth from error.

By implementing these exegetically grounded strategies, Pentecostal churches can effectively deepen believers’ understanding and consciousness of spiritual warfare, equipping them to stand firm in the face of spiritual challenges and advance God’s kingdom in their communities.

Recommendations

Detailed exegesis of the AoG— there is a need to provide a thorough piece-by-piece explanation of the AoG, linking each piece to practical applications.

Belt of truth – discuss the importance of truth in combating deception. Relate this to common issues such as false teachings and misinformation within communities.

Breastplate of Righteousness – emphasize living a righteous life and maintaining integrity. Discuss practical examples of righteousness in daily life.

Gospel of peace – explain the readiness that comes from the gospel. Encourage believers to spread peace and reconcile conflicts in their communities.

Shield of faith – highlight the role of faith in deflecting spiritual attacks. Use testimonies and examples of faith overcoming adversity.

Helmet of salvation – reinforce the assurance of salvation and its protective power over the mind. Address issues of doubt and fear.

Sword of the Spirit – encourage regular engagement with the Word of God. Promote Bible study and scripture memorization as tools for spiritual warfare.

Prayer – highlight the importance of prayer as both a defensive and offensive tool in spiritual warfare. This emphasized through prayer meetings, teaching on prayer, and prayer guides.

Thus to bridge these gaps, it is essential for church leaders and theologians in Pentecostal contexts to - contextualize the teachings. That is, adapt the teachings of Ephesians 6:11-18 to align with cultural practices while emphasizing biblical truths. This might involve reinterpreting traditional practices in light of biblical principles.

Second, they should balance individual and communal approaches. In other words, they should encourage both personal spiritual disciplines and communal support systems, recognizing the importance of both in the African context.

Thirdly, they should provide practical guidance. This done - by offering concrete, culturally relevant applications of the spiritual tools described in the passage, helping believers understand how to apply these metaphors in their daily lives.

Finally, yet importantly, they should sustain spiritual practices. Accomplished by creating enduring spiritual practices that Christians may include in their everyday schedules without experiencing weariness or burnout.

By employing these strategies, Pentecostal churches can effectively deepen believers' understanding and consciousness of SW. These approaches not only make the teachings of Ephesians 6:11-18 more accessible and relevant but also equip believers with the practical tools they need to engage in SW confidently and victoriously.

Conclusion

This research study has demonstrated that the message of the text, Ephesians 6:11-18, applies to the contemporary Pentecostal churches in our African context. The methods used in this study show God as the ultimate provider of the armour, who has given this to all believers who harken to the call of 'putting on the whole AoG. Paul wrote Ephesians to commend Christ as Lord. God's incomparably great power, His mighty strength (1:19) pictures Christ in a position of power at God's right hand, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion (1:21). All things lie under Son's jurisdiction, both in this age and in the age to come (1:21-22). That same power gives Paul his apostolic authority (3:7) to equip the church in its mission of making the gospel known to rulers and authorities in the

heavenly realms (3:10). In other words, every believer can receive this armour, and not only the man of God as portrayed in some of the Pentecostal churches.

These two methods combined have brought about a clear interpretation of the text, focusing on the use of words, and the meaning behind them to have a right interpretation and application of the text. The text - is analysed as a drama focusing on the main terms in the text using a pentadic criticism. Explaining the dominant terms brings out a clear meaning and application of the study text.

Using these two methods together brings out a clearer interpretation and understanding of the text compared to the other methods reviewed. Here, the text - is analysed as a drama to bring out the flow of the message, meaning, and clarity. At the same time, speech act theory brings out the use of words, hence, a clearer interpretation of the text.

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