

EPHESIANS: THE HOLY WAR



*A series of sermons on the armour of
God by Pastor David Legge*

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The Holy War - Chapter 1

"The Christian Warrior's Brief"

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Ephesians 6:10-12

1. ***The Soldier's PREPARATION For Battle (Ephesians 1-6:9)***
2. ***The Soldier's POWER For Battle (verse 10)***
3. ***The Soldier's POSITION For Battle (verse 11)***
4. ***The Solder's PREDATOR In Battle (verse 12)***

That was good singing to begin our Bible Reading this year - and this is the first Bible Reading of the New Year, and let me welcome you to it. We're continuing in the book of Ephesians, starting a new sub-series tonight on 'The Holy War' - looking at the armour of God in Ephesians chapter 6. Thank you for coming, especially if you're a visitor - perhaps it's your first time - we make you welcome and trust that the Lord blesses you around His own precious word.

We're turning to Ephesians chapter 6, the last chapter of this little book, Ephesians 6. As I have said, we are entering into another sub-series - we had a sub-series looking at 'Christ In The Home', and the influence of the Christian faith and the Lord Jesus Christ within the home, with regards to the wives, husbands, sons and daughters. Then we looked at how it infiltrates into the very workplace in the world, where Christians are put by God to be a witness - and that was a series in itself in this book. Here we enter another, and I've entitled it: 'The Holy War' - and indeed, this is perhaps the most famous passage within the whole of the book of Ephesians. It deals with the Christian armour, and we won't even have time tonight to deal with that specifically, but we will be dealing with the whole of the Christian armour in the weeks that lie ahead.

But what I want us to do tonight is look at 'The Christian Warrior's Brief'. Any army, or any individual soldier who goes into battle, by his superiors are usually given a brief: what their aim is, what their operation and the strategy of it is, with a view to victory. No soldier goes onto the battlefield intending to be defeated - or very few ought to anyway. So we look at the brief that God has given to His own divine warriors in Christ, the Christian soldiers that we've already been singing about.

So, let us read this passage of scripture tonight, that we'll be studying in the weeks that lie ahead. We'll begin reading in verse 10, where we left off just after verse 9 - and here's the final message and conclusion from Paul the apostle. You remember, the first half of this book has been dealing with the doctrinal things, the things - spiritually speaking - that we are blessed with in heavenly places in Christ - chapters 1 to 3. Then we saw how there's a split, we can't say it's a naked split, in that these two things are mixed together a little. But, from chapter 4 on, we look at the walk of the believer: how, practically, this doctrine or this belief behaves itself in every day life.

Now we come to an intensely practical chapter, and here is his conclusion of all this matter that he has been discussing about, of the blessings that we have in Christ: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your

feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak".

We're looking tonight at verses 10 to 12: The Christian Warrior's Brief. As I've said already, the Ephesians - after they read this letter, and get through the first five and a half chapters that we have studied already - I'm sure they are floating in the cloud of the heavenlies! They ought to be anyway, and we ought to be - looking at the blessings that we have in the heavenlies, in the Lord Jesus Christ! In chapter 1 we looked at the blessing of election, how God's free sovereign grace has chosen us unto salvation in Christ before the foundation of the world. Then in chapter 2 we looked at the wonder of salvation, how God - looking at our past in the perspective of the past - sees the ruin and the damnation and the depravity that we all had in our first state, the old man in sin and trespasses, absolutely and utterly dead. But he takes us up that mountain, and he lets us survey our past, and then he lets us survey what we have come to, how we have been quickened alive in the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life - and you have there that spiritual resurrection, and then throughout the chapter later on he goes into literal resurrection, he tells us how the power that rose the Lord Jesus from the grave, that set Him at the right hand of the Father, is the power that is available in us to live the Christian life in this world.

Then we saw the mystery of the church, and those Ephesians would have read of how God did a new thing, He created a new man, a new community and society in the Lord Jesus Christ - and that the middle wall of separation and partition has been broken down, and all nations, all cultures, creeds and colours, can be brought together in the church of Jesus Christ. There can be peace and unity! Then we saw the gifts of the church that God has given, that it may operate in the way that He has ordained. Then in recent days - chapter 5 - we have been called to walk as children of light. The whole theme of that chapter is to walk worthy of the calling wherein we are called. Then there is that great climax of being filled with the Holy Ghost of God, and if there is any secret to the Christian life surely it is that: that we be filled with all fullness of God! We learnt, practically, how that fullness of the Spirit operates in the life of a husband and in the life of a wife, and in a man and a woman in the assembly - how it operates in ordinary everyday lives, right from the assembly to the home. How children that are filled with the Holy Spirit obey their parents, how parents that are filled with the Holy Spirit do not provoke their children, but bring them up in the fear and discipline of the Lord. How it infiltrates into the workplace, we Christians are not to hang our fiddle behind the door, we are to go to the workplace and tell of Christ, and show Christ in our very lives.

So, if you like, these Ephesians - from chapters 1 to 5, and six and a half - have been lifted into the heavenlies about all the blessings and inheritance that they have in Christ. Yes, they have been challenged...but now, like a slap in the face, they are brought down to earth to a bloody, gruesome, gory battlefield. They have been sunk down to the grounds of the spiritual war, the holy war that we read about in this passage - the battlefield of the Devil. But the miracle of this book is this: the first five or so chapters, outlining all the blessings, outlining all the life of light that we are to live in the fullness of the Spirit - the message must be this: even in the battleground of the Devil, that life can be lived! That is it! 'Finally, my brethren', verse 10, because of all these things, 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might...and fight the good fight with all thy might'.

Surely is it not so, that if our Lord Himself - perfect, sinless, undefiled, separate from all iniquity and transgression - if He was harassed by the Devil...is the servant greater than his Master? Shall we not be on such a road as that to face the Devil and all his foes? And my question, at the very outset of our meeting tonight, to each believer in this building is this: are you in a war? Are you in the holy war of God or the

alternative? - and the only alternative can be: are you in the world? War or world? Indeed, I think that many Christians live today as if they didn't have a spirit - not a soul now, the soul is the seat of your affections, the soul is your personality, the soul is who you are, distinct from the body, but the spirit is the part of you that has been given to you by God, the part that relates to God, the part that is dead in trespasses and in sins until you are regenerated by the grace of God - and when it becomes alive within you, that is the part, that is the mercy seat where the sinner meets with the Saviour and you have communion. Do you walk in this world as if you had a spirit? For this is a spiritual war.

I would say that if Christians are living the Christian life the way they ought to be, it will not be a picnic. Immediately you're saved, it's not long - if you're living the Christian life the way the Bible tells me about it - until you find the foe face-to-face in your life, and you immediately realise: 'This is a battle that I am in'. Now, there's a gospel song - and I must say, I do not like it all, it grates on me every time I hear it - some of these American singers sing it: 'Sunshine and Roses'. Now, that's not the Christian life that I read about in Ephesians chapter 6 - there are many blessings within it, I don't underestimate that, but it is certainly not all 'Sunshine and Roses'. It is a bloody battlefield, it is a terrible thing that we read about where there is so much at stake. We as Christians, we can't just be born again, we can't just have the blessing of God's forgiveness - what fool would turn that down? - but we are actually, when we trust Christ, when we are saved by the grace of God, being enlisted into the battle of the ages! And if you don't want to fight, you don't want Christ!

So many within the church today have imbibed a materialistic view of life - it is not the spiritual but it is the carnal. Materialism today is simply the philosophy that anything that is without a physical cause does not exist. This pulpit exists because a man made it, and that man was material - and a material cause had a material result. This building, everything you see around you practically - of course they deny creation totally - but if it hasn't a physical well-being at the very beginning, it doesn't exist. So, of course, materialism doesn't believe in your spirit. Materialism doesn't believe in God - but has the Christian church, and individual Christians living and breathing in a materialistic world, somehow imbibed this view in their minds? A world, and certainly now becoming a church, to whom the supernatural is a stranger! It almost doesn't exist. When men talk about the supernatural there is a question mark in the mind of many Christians, a scepticism that the supernatural must be a stranger never to be courted. But, my friend, if you're going on in the Christian life - and many of you will know what I'm talking about: going on with God - you will find, very soon, that you're standing in a horrific battlefield in the war of the ages!

If you doubt that, you only need to look at our author in this little book: where was he? He was in a prison, chained to a Roman soldier. This man Paul, if anybody knew, knew what it was to be in the holy war of God. Watchman Nee, in his famous book on the book of Ephesians, says that the Christian's experience in this little book begins with sitting - isn't that right? We are sitting in heavenly places in the Lord Jesus Christ, blessed with all spiritual blessings. He says that it then leads to walking: walk as children of light, walk in the calling wherewith ye are called. But it doesn't end there, and that is why in chapter 6 we are met with not sitting, not walking, but standing. You see, you need first of all to sit before you can stand. That's the order in the book, and that is God's order, the order the Holy Spirit has ordained within this theological treatise of how we are to live. You've got to know the blessings that you have in Christ before you can fight in this battle. You've got to come into the realisation of what Christ has done for you, and the blessings that He has bestowed on you - and then you must walk worthy of that calling before you can ever stand against the foe.

Paul calls that in this chapter: 'wrestling with wicked spirits' - wrestling! Have you ever wrestled with wicked spirits? Many people are, from day to day, attacked - God's own people - by Satanic forces, by principalities and powers, rulers in high places that we are reading about. Now we must beware, as many in this world attribute things to the Devil that we bring on ourselves. In other words, when you break a divine law, when you transgress God's commands and precepts, and the outcome is bad - don't blame the Devil, it's your own fault! Many of the things that we do that come from our own flesh, and the old man within our nature, are

brought on us by ourselves and our own lust - but let me say this: do not throw the baby out with the bath water! There are people who know physical attacks, attacks on the mind, on the body - and we tonight, as we study this passage of Scripture, must take these things seriously and we must ask the question: are we helpless [against] such a foe? Can the Devil come into our lives, into the church of Jesus Christ, into our homes, can he oppress us, and are we to stand and not challenge him?

How do we fight this holy war? This holy war in which Satan is committed to knock Christians out of the battle as fast as he can. And the more you are in the battle, Christian, how do you fight it? Because the further down you get to the front line, the further you engage in the army of God, the hotter the battle becomes, and the Devil is out and out for you! He doesn't waste his ammunition on spectators...no, but he wants to get men and women in the front line of the battle.



We've said before that this little book of Ephesians reminds us of the book of Joshua, because you remember that Moses was promised that land flowing with milk and honey, and it was Joshua who was going to have to go across the Jordan and enter into the land with the people, into that blessing. Now, people have an idea, a misunderstanding, I believe in their mind - and it's sometimes because of hymnology - that Canaan is heaven. Canaan is not heaven! Dear help us if Canaan is heaven! Because, when the Israelites got into Canaan, they had to fight their way in, and all the time that they were in it - for the first few years or so - they were fighting to get all the Canaanites out. I don't want to go to a heaven like that! But Canaan speaks of the spiritual life of blessing that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ - it's ours, it's been promised by God, it is our purchased possession that the Lord Jesus Christ won for us at Calvary by His own blood. But nevertheless, there are those Canaanite-ish, demonic principalities and powers who want to withhold our blessings from us! If we are to get hold of these blessings that we have in spiritual heavenly places in Christ, all those things that we have been talking about in weeks gone by, we will have a fight on our hands! We need to realise that that old Devil takes no prisoners.

But thank God tonight that the Lord doesn't leave us on our own. He doesn't save us and give us a pat on the back and say: 'Away you go, try your best'. He gives us a brief, He tells us how this battle is to be fought, how we are to walk, how the holy war is to be won. The first thing He tells us is your first point there on the sheet: the soldier's preparation for battle. Now, we're not going to read the whole book - don't panic! - but it's everything that we've learned in the last few months as we've been studying this book. He's reminding us of the order, I believe, we must not take this chapter out of context, we must remember that Paul - the Holy Spirit through him - has been teaching us to sit in heavenly places with Christ, to walk in holiness by the power of the living God, and now he's coming to the battle: to stand. The point of the book is this: no Christian can hope to enter warfare without learning these first two things.

You can't enter the holy war without being able to rest in Christ, sure that's obvious, sure that's how you're saved: to rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His blood at Calvary. But it's more than that - in faith, as a believer, to rest in Christ, to realise the blessings that you have, and to sit down in them and enjoy them, ponder them, and let them become part of your spirit - that's what must come first! Then secondly, by the strength of the Spirit, you must follow the Lord Jesus practically in a holy life. You can't fight a battle if your hands are unholy, you cannot be on the Lord's side if, by your action and your way of life, you're on the world's side! If you're deficient in either - if you're deficient in your sitting in Christ, if you're deficient in your walking in Him - you can be sure that you'll be deficient in your standing in the battle. If you're talking about spiritual war, if you're talking about spiritual oppression or anything like that to do with the holy war, or if you look at yourself as a Christian soldier - and you're not sitting, you're not

walking, and you think you're standing - it's only talk! It's only talk. You can't take it out of God's order - and let me go further and say: Satan can afford to ignore you. He can! I wonder, today, how many Christians he's ignoring - you don't bother him.

'Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees'.

Does he tremble much for you? Is he worried about you? Someone might say: 'I don't care [about] the Devil. The Devil's as faraway from my mind as I like. I'm not worried what the Devil thinks of me!'. Well, is that a scriptural way to be? I think not! Turn with me, tonight, to Acts chapter 19. If I have a spiritual desire and aspiration and dream, this is it, Acts chapter 19. I want to have my name in lights, big big letters, shining bright for all to see - in verse 13 we read this: 'Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded'. I want to have my name in lights in hell! Do you not? If you had to cast a demon out tonight, would the cry be from the spirit of that poor possessed creature: 'Paul the apostle I know, Pastor such-and-such I know, missionary on the other side of the world I know, but who are you?'. You see, that's what we're to strive for. 'I don't care what the Devil thinks of me' - you ought to! You ought to care! In a battle you ought to care how you are walking, how you are fighting - and the soldier's preparation for the battle is to sit in what Christ has done for you, to walk in a life of holiness, and then you will be able to stand and fight this battle.

Secondly, in the brief that God gives us, it is the soldier's power for the battle that you find in verse 10 of Ephesians chapter 6: 'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might'. Now, turn with me for a moment to Jude chapter 1 - I'm going to get you to turn to a few passages of Scripture - Jude chapter 1 and we're going to read from verse 9. In the summer we studied this passage in a little more depth - but we have, in verse 9 of the only chapter in Jude, the account that we don't find anywhere within the whole of Scripture of the incident over the body of Moses. In verse 9 we read this: 'Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the Devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee'. Michael the archangel couldn't rebuke the Devil. Now, as we come to this great topic tonight, we need to remember that we are no match for Satan. Let that be grounded in your mind. Satan is extremely powerful, all you have to do is look at the book of Job and see what Satan was able to do to a man's body, see what he was able to do to his family home, to his friends, to all his wealth and livestock - wipe them out in a few days! And Satan, we need to realise, is a powerful foe!

The Lord Himself said that he came as a murderer, to rob and to kill, he is the greatest thief of all. Therefore the first command that God gives to us in the battle - engraven this in your heart - the first command is this: that if we are to fight this battle, we must be strengthened by the Lord. Verse 10: 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might'. I am utterly convinced, more even so in recent days, that most Christians in evangelicalism today are 'trying' to live the Christian life. Listen to that: 'trying to live the Christian life'. Maybe trying by prayer, or trying by understanding the Bible, trying by going to church, trying by witnessing to a saint everyday - many of those things are good things, but the Christian life was never meant to be 'tried'! It was never meant to be striven after! The life of Christ in you is what it is all about! It is the life of God, the might and the power of God flowing through the spirit of the individual child of God. You can't live the Christian life no matter how much you try, and you tonight who have tried know that you can't! You can't live the Christian life, and it's sure that you can't fight the Devil, in fact I believe that you cannot do anything that is in this Bible - not one thing - you can't do [it] by trying.

Do you know where the Christian walk and the Christian holy war takes off? When you come to a brick wall of self and say: 'I can't do this' - that's when it starts. When you say to God: 'I can't, I can't live this life' - and I wish that a lot of us, myself included in my times of delusion, would just waken up and realise that God does not want me to live a holy Christian life, but my God wants to live His life in me! There's a difference. This is the faith that we have, it's the life of God in you, as Paul says over and over and over again, it's Christ in you, when you come to the realisation that you have a total inability to do anything for God! That's why in verse 10 it's in the literal passive imperative tense, it means this: 'Be made strong in the Lord'. Be made strong in the Lord, find your strength in Him! You need to be made strong! It's in the continuous tense: 'Be daily strengthened in the Lord'. Day by day, in all of your Christian walk, that is the secret to the Christian life - the open secret - God's life transferred to you in communion with Him!

Oh, that you would get that...oh, that I would get that: that that is how the strength of God is conferred to you, through meeting with Him, through communing with Him, through fellowshiping with Him. The preacher is powerless without it, the missionary can do nothing without it, the personal worker will never lead a soul to Christ, the Sunday School teacher will never lead a child to the cross, the office worker will never have a ministry or a witness, you'll never even have the power to do your ordinary work day by day, if you don't realise that God wants you to live His life! The book on the book stall entitled 'The Calvary Road' by Roy Hession - that's the theme of that little book that blessed me, it's this: the only life that God is pleased with is His own life. The sooner we get to realise that the better, we'll stop striving, we'll stop trying to be like other people, and we'll just try to be like God and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Wasn't it Isaiah that said: 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength'? Warriors need to be waiters, that's where you'll get your strength - and you must have that strength, for that is the power of battle

Thirdly, the soldier's position for battle is found in verse 11. After you have derived that power from God, he says: 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil'. Now, it's this word 'stand' that I want to concentrate on. There's been 'sit', 'walk', and now 'stand'. The Greek verb 'stand' has a preposition before it, it's the word that's after it in your version in the English, 'stand against' - but in the Greek it comes before. It simply means in the Greek language: 'hold your ground' - against stand! Hold your ground, stay your ground, put your bearings down and your anchor and don't move an inch! Now this is an important truth that I want us to note tonight, for if you make a comparison, foolishly, with modern warfare to the holy war here and what the Christian warriors are taught to do - you'll make a fatal mistake! Because modern warfare has the intention, indeed the command, of invading foreign territory, of going forward. The command of modern warfare is: 'March', but that's not the command here. The command that God gives us in our war is to stand!

You see, the ground that we're standing in is not disputed by us, it's disputed by the Devil. It's our ground! We own the ground, and it's the enemy that wants it. We don't need to struggle to keep it, but we need to make sure that the Devil does not get a foothold on it. We have a foothold, we're on it! That's why it's not struggled for, that's why nearly all the weapons that you read about in the whole of the armour of God - we'll see in the weeks that lie ahead - are defensive. Every single one of them are used defensively, except the sword that can be used offensively, but you can also use a sword to defend yourself - and the whole purpose of it is to stand on the ground that God has given you. That's the difference between defensive warfare and offensive. Defensive is: 'I have got the ground, and I only seek to keep the ground'. Whereas offensive is: 'I have not got the ground, and I am fighting in order to get the ground'.

Not this war - hallelujah - my Lord Jesus Christ has won the war! He was the one who fought the offensive war, but ours is now defensive. He is the one who went into foreign territory and gained the ground and the victory over Satan. He is the one who, through the cross, carried the very fight to the threshold of hell and led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. And today, tonight in our world, and in the church of Jesus Christ, we only fight to maintain the victory! He's won it - hallelujah - it is finished, it's all done. He finished

the work that God gave Him to do, and we tonight, if we're redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, are to stand in the victory already won - and God was so pleased with that work and that victory that He rose Him from the dead, and proclaimed Him Lord, and Victor, and King of kings, and Lord of lords. He gives us that ground, by faith in grace it is ours. We are not holding by attacking, we are holding by defending what is already ours. We are conquerors tonight, in fact Paul says we are more than conquerors through the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not fight for, but we stand in, the victory

Practically, let's get practical for Paul is practical here: what happens when we are faced with an attack? Say the old Devil comes into the home, as he does so often today, or he comes into the work situation - and you find a circumstance that you can't deal with, practically speaking, and it's going to overwhelm you. Maybe you pray, and you fast about it, and you struggle over this great issue in your life. You try to resist what is happening, but nothing seems to change - why? Because so often in our Christian life, when we are faced with the enemy, we're trying to fight into victory - isn't that right? We're trying to defeat the Devil, and by doing so we're giving up the ground that has already been given to us and is already ours. To us, many a time in a conflict, the victory is a distant thing, we have to strive for it and reach out for it - but God is saying the victory is ours, here and now.

Watchman Nee, in his little book, relates an incident where he came across an attack. He said that he tried everything: fasting and praying, and doing all sorts of things. He was reading the book of the Revelation, and he wrote this: 'It only took a breath from the Lord to finish off the man of sin, and here am I trying to cause a hurricane'. He got it, you see. Satan doesn't need to be defeated, he is defeated. Oh, hallelujah, he is defeated already, we have won the victory - and only those who sit, who walk, are able to stand. Satan, his primary goal - I believe that this is what his primary goal is - not simply to pull Christians into the mire of sin and backsliding, but first of all he wants to get you off the ground of your perfect triumph and victory in Christ. Then it will be easy for you to sin, when you get dejected, you think: 'God's not for me. I'm not blessed, I can't do anything for the Lord Jesus, I must look so poor in His sight' - when the Devil pumps all that into your mind you will move away from standing in the victory that Christ has won for you, and it'll be no problem to sin.

Do you see his plan? He wants to rob you of the rest that you have in Christ. Don't let him! Oh, Christian, don't let him. That is his plan, and praise God, God has told us that's his plan - and also He has given us away of escape, His own armour. Paul says, verse 11: 'Put on the whole armour of God' - there's no room here for nominal Christianity! No room for half-hearted fundamentalism, no room for it! The whole armour of God, there's no provision for the back, which means there's to be no retreat. There's armour for the head right down to the toe, there's no chink of the body that the enemy can penetrate. It's an out and out onslaught, standing your ground, defending the patch that God in Christ has given to us! If only, tonight, each one of us would stop trying to gain the victory, and start trying to maintain it. We will have a great triumph if we take that step.

Do you know how we'll do it? By stopping asking the Lord to enable us to overcome the enemy. We all do it: 'Lord, help me to overcome this great foe' - even more than that, not even looking to the Lord to overcome him. We're asking the Lord to do things He has already done! Praise Him - we ought to praise Him - that's the secret. The secret is praise, coming into the presence of God and praising Him that He has given us the victory already. He has defeated the world, the flesh, and the Devil - and the key is faith, faith in what Christ has done, not in my work, not in my striving. 1 John 5:4: 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith' - we ought to praise when we pray! If we don't, we will continually face defeat, and we will continually give the Devil ground that he has never had and isn't his right at all. Are you facing defeat tonight, Christian? Young Christian, are you flat on your face with defeat in sin? You're crying to God to give you the victory, but God the Spirit would point you to Calvary and show you - through the death, the resurrection, the ascension and the giving of the Holy Spirit in fullness to men and women, and boys and

girls in Christ - that you've won! Oh, if He could lift you up to those spiritual realms and let you see what is yours in Christ, and see yourself in Christ - that's what it's all about.

We must move on. The fourth point, the brief that God has given us fourthly is: the soldier's predator in battle. He has given us an outline of who it is we're fighting. You will know, in any war, that the Intelligence Corps is an important element of the army in battle, because you need to know your enemy - don't you? You need to know what to expect. This enemy of ours is called 'Lucifer, the Son of the Morning'. He's called the 'Devil', meaning 'The Accuser'. Indeed, Revelation 12 says that he accuses the righteous day and night before the Throne of God. Satan he is, the Adversary, the enemy of God. He's called the Tempter, the Murderer, the Liar. He is described as being like a lion, a serpent, an angel of light, and the god of this age.

Now, we need to think about this: is our battle against philosophy? Is our battle against false religious persuasions and cults and so forth? Is our battle with a pagan, irreligious government and politicians? No! Look at the verses, look at the word of God, verse 12: 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places'. We need to be careful not to be wrestling with the Devil's instruments, but to wrestle with the Devil himself! Demonic forces, battalions of fallen angels, evil spirits with great power. I believe many have fallen for Satan's plan, that materialistic outlook: 'If I can't see it, I don't believe in it'. Liberal theology has birthed that awful heresy from hell, that Satan was the evil influence - that Paul was talking here about the Roman government and Nero when he speaks of Satan - [it's] of the Devil himself to delude us that he is only in the mind. A little red figure with a pitchfork, and horns and a forked tail!

Some Christians go to the other extreme, and they're too morbidly occupied by evil and the Devil and all of his realms. But we want to strike a balance tonight, and we want to make sure that in the Iron Hall Assembly, that we are not ignorant of his devices. So, let us come and see what Paul asserts, in verse 12, about these spiritual beings that we wrestle with. The first thing that he asserts is that it is a supernatural battle, it is a wrestling that is supernatural. Secondly: it's a wrestling that is personal. That word 'wrestle' literally means a hand-to-hand fight. The root idea is a swaying back and forth, while locked in mortal battle. It's not an exchange of weapons or guns, or artillery, but it's sweat with sweat, breath against breath, and muscle against muscle. The third assertion that he gives is: that it is futile to wrestle in the flesh. Now this is conquering wisdom - get those three things if you want to conquer in the battle, first of all you need to be wrestling supernaturally, second you need to wrestle personally - don't be relying on your church or your parents or your husband or your wife, it's a hand-to-hand combat, and if you think you're going to win it in the flesh it's futile! We must move on, God help us to move on in this fellowship from vain evangelical lip service to these truths - and realise that Satan never retreats without a fight. To realise in the church of Jesus Christ, we need wrestlers!

In Ephesus they were witnesses to what was called 'Curious Arts' - there was much occult and Satanic worship and so forth going on, and specifically this is the book in the New Testament that tells us the most about the kingdom of darkness in verse 12. Look at it, he talks about principalities, powers, rulers of darkness of this world - the Greek word for all those phrases is: 'cosmocratiros' (sp?). You could translate it literally into English: 'Cosmocrats'. You've heard of 'securacrats' (sp?) - 'Cosmocrats' of this darkness. Possibly high-ranking demons, such as the Prince of Persia and Greece that you read about in the book of Daniel that hindered the archangel in his divine errand to answer prayer - [in] Daniel 10 you can read about that. These are princes of darkness!

Then he goes on, verse 12: 'spiritual wickedness in high places'. Literally 'evil spiritual beings in the heavenlies', and we see here evolving, verse 12, a spiritual hierarchy, a disciplined chain of command in this evil realm. Some actually believe that this, verse 12, reflects the same spiritual command that you find in the Scriptures with regard to the angels themselves - after all, these are fallen angels. This is a far cry from

'Caspar the friendly ghost', isn't it? Serious stuff, wrestling with this great power - is he not called, in this very book, the prince of the power of the air? He is God's arch enemy, under his power there are countless demons seeking to saturate the world with evil and exclude God. This is the explanation for what's happening in our world! The world can't give you a reason, but God tells us this is why: we are not wrestling flesh and blood. There may be a hostile world system, kings, and rulers, and sinners, and politicians - but behind it all there is the Devil himself! Two thrones at war, Satan seeking to usurp God, and the church of Jesus Christ, in the power of God, called to displace his influence and to bring glory to God in Christ - what are we doing about it?

Are we in the battle? There's so much more I could say to you tonight. We haven't time to go into it, we will have in weeks that lie ahead, but let me just say this: the consensus of all of Scripture is this, that this realm in which we are called to live is the Devil's realm. He is the god of this world that has blinded the minds of them which believe not! Paul's commission to the Gentiles in Acts 26 was that he, by the preaching of the Gospel, would open their eyes to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. It is Satan that keeps souls from God! This old world is his. We are not to be ignorant of his devices, but let me say this in closing: we must realise tonight that if we are to fight this battle, turn with me to Colossians as we close, Colossians chapter 1 verse 16. We need to realise what our victory is: 'For by him', the Lord Jesus, 'were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him', chapter 2 and verse 10, 'And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power', verse 15, 'And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it! Hallelujah! For our Saviour has triumphed - and just like Gideon (remember he went into the battle and God said: 'No, 32,000 is too many', he put it down to 10,000 soldiers, and then God told him: '300 it's going to have to be, and you're only allowed to go into the battle with trumpets and lanterns'). What was the difference about that battle that they won? It was fought in the strength of the Lord! In the Lord's strength!

This is the Christian message: all of it - listen - is substitution. When God was wanting to forgive us, what did He do? He substituted us for Christ at the cross, and when God wants us to have the victory, do you know what He does? He doesn't change the plan, He substitutes Christ in us, in here. Simpson said this:

Fainting soldier of the Lord,
Hear His sweet inspiring word,
I have conquered all thy foes,
I have suffered all thy woes.

Struggling soldier, trust in Me,
I have overcome for thee.
Fear not though thy foes be strong,
Fear not though the strife be long.

Trust thy glorious Captain's power,
Watch with Him one little hour.
Here Him calling: 'Follow Me' - listen!
I have overcome for thee'.

What a Saviour! Let's bow our heads, and if you're in that battle and you feel it hot and hard - praise God that there's a Victor, and we're fighting in the victory, not for it. Oh, that you would rest in Him tonight, and stop fighting and stop striving, and just let Him takeover - Him who has won the battle, Him that is the life. Will you let go, and take hold of that faith that overcometh the world?

Father, help us to live the life of faith. Help us to walk in the Spirit, and disown the arm of the flesh for it will fail us. For we wrestle not against flesh, and Lord our foe is an awful foe - but we thank Thee that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Lead us into victory in these weeks, we pray in the name of our lovely Lord Jesus, Amen.

*The Holy War - Chapter 2****"The Christian Warrior's Armour - Part 1"***

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Ephesians 6:13-14

- 1. *The Belt Of Truth (verse 14a)***
- 2. *The Breastplate Of Righteousness (verse 14b)***

Now let me welcome you to our Bible Reading tonight here in the Iron Hall. It's great to see you all with us, especially if you're a visitor - perhaps this is your first time, we're glad to see you tonight, and we trust that the Lord blesses you through the preaching of His own inspired truth. Thank you for coming, and may the Lord bless you.

We're turning to chapter 6, again, of Ephesians, chapter 6 of Ephesians. We're entering our second study in this sub-series: 'The Holy War', looking at the armour of God and this spiritual battle that we have all been called to fight in through our salvation. We're reading tonight from chapter 6, and we'll begin reading at verse 10, where we studied last week from verse 10 to 12.

We begin at verse 10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness".

Our subject this evening is 'The Christian Warrior's Armour'. Last Monday night the subject was 'The Christian Warrior's Brief', and we looked at what God tells us we must do before we even begin to fight that battle. And we see, in verse 10 and 11 especially, what we need to do - first of all we need to be strong in God's power for this fight, it's not a fight that we can fight in our own strength. Verse 11 also told us that we must put on the armour of God in order to stand against the wiles of the Devil. We spent much time last Monday night looking at this old foe, the arch enemy of God and God's people, Satan himself. We looked at how every believer is called into that battle with him, and let me just say that I have realised that battle all the more in the week that has gone by - since I've begun to study in this study. For Satan does not like his cover being uncovered, he doesn't like it one bit!

The consensus that we came to last week is that the word of God teaches that this world in which we live, the world into which we have been born, the world which we often call our home, is the Devil's realm. It is the place where the Devil holds sway. Indeed, we looked at the text, 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4, which reads: 'The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them'. To summarise it, it's saying: 'This world is his, he is the god of this planet'!

If you cast your mind back to the first few chapters of the book of Matthew, in chapter 3 you find there the temptation of the Lord Jesus Christ - and you remember, during one of the temptations of the Lord, Satan took the Lord Jesus to a high pinnacle and showed Him the whole of the kingdoms of the world. It was in Satan's remit to offer to the Lord Jesus all of those kingdoms, if He would just bow down and worship him.

Have you ever thought about how Satan had the power to do that? How Satan could give to the Word of God, who created all things - without Him nothing exists, and all things, Colossians tells us, were created for Him - how the adversary, the Devil, could offer to the Lord Jesus Christ all of the kingdoms of this world? Of course, the answer is simple: he could offer them because they were his. They still are his.

The question could be asked: how did he get them? For the answer to that question you would need to go into the beginning, into the book that is the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis - right into the garden of Eden, between that perfect fellowship of God and man. You would have to witness that great holiness and sanctity that there was in the beginning, you would have to then see the serpent coming into the garden, you would have to see Eve being tempted - and there, in that snapshot of history, you would see the handing over of the worlds reins over to Lucifer himself. It was Adam, our forefather, who handed the deeds of this world over to the Devil when he sinned. Death came upon all men by that one man's sin - and because of his original sin there in the beginning, this world has been handed over to Satan himself.

You don't have to really know that in order to see the Devil in our world today. I think this proves more than anything that the Devil has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them and they believe. They cannot see what is going on in our world! They cannot see the falsehood of relativism that is ingrained in the minds of so many folk, even on the street, who have never had an education - they just believe: 'My way is God's way, and I'll get there in the end. I'll follow my path and God will shine His love on me'. 'All roads lead to God, it doesn't matter what religion you are. As long as you're moral, sincere, and believe in some kind of a deity' - and even if you don't, you believe in yourself as a deity - 'it doesn't matter' - there is this hotch-potch of a smog of relativism, that 'We'll all get there in the end'. If you can't see that in the philosophical world, you look to the moral world, and you see ingrained in the cultures of this whole planet great debauchery and depravity of all kinds that we couldn't even mention here from the pulpit tonight. Great licentiousness, licence on every hand, everything goes in the religious world and also in the moral world.

Kent Hughes puts it like this: 'This world is approving of things even dogs in the full sway of their animal instincts would never do'. All it takes is for you to turn to the first chapter of the book of Romans, and read the account of the world as it was in Paul's day. It gives a detailed reflection, indeed, of how it was in Noah's day, and how it is today, and how the Lord Jesus Christ says it will be in the coming of the Son of Man - which is on a day that is not too far off, I believe. This is the Devil's world! We hear sung: 'This is my Father's world' - no, it is the Devil's world. We must come to this conclusion - and this is important - that the Devil is unredeemable, there are no redeemable features within him, there is no virtue. He is a dark void as a creature and will always be so, and he is trying to bring this planet to hell, he is trying to drag our loved ones, our friends, our relatives, our workmates, down to hell with all his schemes, with all his lies, with all his plans. That has been his plan for all time, and will never cease to be so!

Indeed, his plans are specified in verse 11 that we looked at last week - and let's look at it, we didn't get time to look at this specifically. We're told to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. The Greek word for 'wiles' there in verse 11 is the Greek word 'methodias' (sp?). It is the word that we derive our English word 'method' from. So if you look at this verse, what it's saying is that we adorn the armour of God that we may be able to stand against the methods of the Devil himself - speaking of his cunning, crafty ways, his artistic strategies whereby to drag the world down to hell. He has a method to his madness, it is not simply wild, chaotic evil that is let loose - this being, this principality, this old fallen angel has a plan for this world and it is damnation!

If you think of this for a moment, the old Devil has been perfecting this for years. If you read through history you will find that he has sat on church councils, he has introduced heresy into the church of Jesus Christ. In our land he presently sits on the boards of universities, and he - in our world, contemporary as it may be - is

at the forefront of technological and scientific discovery of all kinds. This Devil is an expert, he is an accomplished philosopher, theologian, and psychologist. And unless we realise tonight - as the soldiers of the Lord Jesus Christ - who our enemy is, we will be soldiers with our eyes closed, and we won't even see our own grave! We won't be able to see how the Devil is trying to draw us in with all the baits he can, until we are bound by him - yes, even as Christians - under his sway and control.

Now think of this for moment: imagine if you studied mathematics for 100 years. I studied it for 7 or 8 years, and I still can hardly add 2 and 2 together! Imagine studying it for 100 years! Imagine having the privilege of reading thousands of years of theories, looking at Einstein and Newton and all the theories of gravity and physics - and if you were given that time, probably all of us or any of us at least, could become experts in almost anything! Satan, if you think of it, has had thousands upon thousands of years to study humanity, to study human disciplines, and in the end to subvert the race through them. Satan is an expert at his art, he is an expert at deceit, he is an expert murderer, and liar, and thief - and he is the expert accuser of the church and believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. It's his job, and if I can say it tonight - it galls me to say it - but he's good at it!

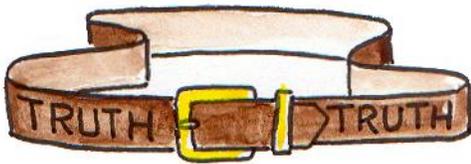
One of the most sinister roles he has is masquerading as the agent of God, for that was his role in eternity past before the fall. He was that great cherub above all creations, in the garden of God there he was in all his splendour and glory - he's used to being an angel of light, and so much today he appears in that way. If you turn with me to 2 Corinthians for a moment, chapter 11, we see that. 2 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 13, Paul is talking about false prophets and he says: 'For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works'. You can name them off - we wouldn't even have time to name them all tonight - the cults, the Roman Catholic system, Islam, Buddhism that we have all witnessed in the media in recent days, the New Age movement, apostate Protestantism, lukewarm evangelicalism, ecumenism of every kind. You look around, in the religious world at least, and you see Satan there as the angel of light bringing thousands to hell with him!

I believe that he has made inroads into evangelicalism, and even into fundamentalism. Indeed I believe that one of the plans of the Devil for [God's] servants, and indeed all Christians today - especially in Ulster at the minute - is to discourage them, to depress them, to make them become disillusioned as God's sovereign servants in His will. They actually get into a scenario where they believe that God has forgotten them, God has forsaken them, God's promises are not 'Yea and Amen', God is no longer good to them in His providence and in His care. But, like Martin Luther the Protestant reformer, who on one occasion doubted the goodness of God toward him and said this: 'For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell', how many of us are brought close to there by the Devil himself? Maybe you know what I'm talking about tonight, and we see it especially in our land among God's servants. Pastors, missionaries, evangelists - because of the day of small things, because of false doctrine, because of opposition the Devil has begun to get them! He is working inroads into the church of Jesus Christ to drag us down into the dirt, to discourage us, to disillusion us - and even, at times, he imitates the people of God and the power of God to do it. His evil methods, and schemes, and wiles are beyond our comprehension at times, for he is without conscience and without principle at all! No wonder Luther wrote in his great hymn, 'A Mighty Fortress':

'For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe.
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate...
On earth is not his equal!'

We have an enemy, and he is an awful enemy! He is a fearful enemy, and there is none his like upon the earth - but hallelujah! That's not the case in heaven! Turn with me to Colossians, we have to look at these verses again - we looked at them last week, but we can't let the Devil have any of the glory tonight. Colossians 1, and remember that Colossians is almost a mirror epistle of this book of Ephesians, you find the same themes right throughout it - Colossians 1:16. Remember it's the Lord Jesus it is speaking of: 'For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him'. Chapter 2, verse 10: 'And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power', verse 14, '[He blotted] out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it' - hallelujah! He has defeated him, haha!, the Devil is defeated!

Just like Aaron's snake swallowed up the snakes of Pharaoh's wizards, God's Snake still swallows up the Devil - isn't that wonderful? To know that all of the Devil's poor imitations are trodden down by the God Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, by the Saviour of the world - He is the Saviour, He has sealed their doom - and we are strong in the Lord! We are not strong enough to face him ourselves, but praise God tonight, He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world.



As we think of that, and begin on that footing, let's look at verse 13 of our passage tonight [chapter] 6. Remember that Paul is under house arrest, and it's probable that he's chained to a Roman soldier, and he can survey this scene before him - he's looking at him from head to toe in all the armour of the Roman soldier. And Paul, as we

read him, we find that he's always very quick to see spiritual lessons in the natural realm, and making illustrations out of them. Paul, here in this passage, focuses on six essential items. First of all you find a belt, then a breastplate, sandals, shield, helmet and sword - and then he adds a non-clothing part, which is the part of prayer. But that reminds us of what we learnt last week, that we wrestle not against flesh and blood - this is not a physical battle or a political battle, this is a heavenly, spiritual battle.

As Paul presents his charge to wear these seven items of the armour of God, Paul reiterates what he said in verse 10. Look at it, he tells us: 'Stand - be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might', verse 11, 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil'. Verse 10 is 'be strong', verse 11 is 'stand', and then verse 13 again he says: '[Put on] the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand' - and then at the very end - 'having done all, to stand'. It's a command, but just don't see a command, see a promise within it - Paul is saying, he is promising us that if we will really put on the whole armour of God we will stand, and we will be victorious. But note: it is the whole armour of God. Look at it: 'Put on the whole', the full, 'armour of God' - that's what's needed, do you know why? Because Satan is surveying your person, and he is looking for a chink, he is looking for an unguarded part of your spirit just to throw one of his fiery darts into - but if you're wearing the whole armour of God he'll not be able to get in. He's looking for an unguarded area where he'll make a beachhead.

That's what we find in chapter 4 and verse 7, look at it: 'Neither give place to the devil' - in other words, don't give a foothold to the Devil, don't give him any ground. In this 21st century in which we live in, we're inundated with foes, aren't we? We're inundated with enemies of every kind and on every side, we can't even imagine at times, perhaps like last week we aren't aware of it - but the fact remains that today is a day of awful sin, and sin is abounding on every hand. And when the fight reaches its fiercest it's very hard to stand, isn't it? It's hard to stand. But what Paul is saying in verse 13 is this: 'Stand in the armour of God, and when you've done everything else, stand'. He's saying: 'You see in the smoke of the battle? When you're standing resisting the enemy, and the smoke of the battle dies down, and the sound of battle cannot be heard any more, you are seen standing! Left there!'

The armour of God is described in Romans as an armour of light, it's described in 2 Corinthians 5 as the armour of righteousness - and that armour of light and armour of righteousness is the armour that we are to have. Paul says this, note verse 13: 'Take the armour of God' - take it! It doesn't say 'make it' - take it! It is there for you, all that has to be done is for you to lift up the armour of God and wear it! God has given you it, it's not your armour, it's the armour of God! We saw last week that the reason we are victorious - not can be, but we are victorious - in the Lord Jesus Christ, is because we are fighting in the victory. We are not to go forward, but we are to stand in the victory we are already in. We're not to let the Devil push us off. He wants to make us retreat, but our duty is not to go forward - we can't go forward any more - we are victorious! The Lord Jesus has defeated him in every area, and potentially in every area of our life - so we are to stand.

Is that not what the Lord told Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20 and 15? 'King Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's! Stand your ground, that's what Paul said, don't be moved. Stand firm and when you have done all, having accomplished literally all things, stand! Withstand his assaults. And think: if we distrust our cause, if we don't rely on our Captain, the Devil will gain ground. If we don't follow the Captain of our salvation, if we neglect our spiritual armour, we give him an advantage. We are to ignore the cries and the wails of battle, we are to ignore the anguish and the bloody scenes that we see before us of ones who have fallen before us in the awful tragic warfare. We're not to be shattered or discouraged by some of the casualties that fall in the wayside, but we are to stand, stand, stand - and when we have done all, and the smoke of battle dies down, we're to remain standing!

The reason for that is because of the evil day. Look at verse 13 and you get those two words 'evil day' - and I believe Paul is speaking of the time when the enemy comes in like a flood. You know what I'm talking about: the time when you're overwhelmed by evil, overwhelmed by things that go against every sinew that is in your body - a Satanic opposition that seems to occur in waves at times. Sometimes it advances, sometimes it recedes - it is the day, the evil day, which is the special day of Satan's assaults! In Luke chapter 4 we find it in the temptation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and we find there the onslaught of all the powers of darkness that could not make our Lord sin because He couldn't sin - and never you forget that! He couldn't sin, no possibility of Him falling, otherwise God would topple off His throne and fall into hell - never. But at the end of that wonderful discourse, in chapter 4:13 of Luke's gospel, it says this: 'And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him'.

In Isaiah 59 and verse 19 - and I have claimed this promise in the week that has gone by, in the very face of the Devil himself - we read this, now listen soul tonight in hardship, in distress, facing the onslaughts of the Devil himself: 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him'. What a verse! If that was the only verse you had wouldn't it be tremendous? The Lord is there! And Paul, looking at this Roman soldier - I don't know whether he's ever seen a battalion of Roman soldiers, but what they used to do was: when they were attacked they formed a human square or rectangle with their armour over their heads, their shields. There would be men right around all the sides, facing all the different directions, ready to fight the onslaught of the enemy - and if one soldier fell another took their place and rose up against the enemy. Their greatest duty, you see at that moment, all huddled together in a square with the enemy all around them - do you know what their greatest duty was? Not to go forward, because they couldn't go forward or they would separate, but their duty was to stand - and when they had done all, to remain standing! And above all, more often than not, they won because they simply stood and refused under any circumstances to retreat.

That's what Paul wants us to do. You might say: 'How can we face such an enemy?'. Do you know how we do it? By adorning the real armour of God Almighty. Think about this: what size are you? On the anvils of

God's heaven there has been hammered out an armour for you, an armour with your name on it. But, my friend tonight, this is the whole point of this epistle, isn't it? You have the doctrine, but what about the practice? The armour is there, and Paul says: 'Take it up! Lift it and put it on and wear it!'

So, what's the first item that he instructs us to wear? The first item on your sheet is the belt of truth. Verse 14, look at it: 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth' - having your loins girt about with truth. Now that's the first step, indeed that's the first step of preparing for battle. This was a belt that was put around the soldier's waist. If you see a picture of a Roman soldier, you'll find out that underneath that belt there was a long skirt, like a kilt. That belt held up the kilt, and the prelude to battle was simply this: when the soldier saw the enemy coming, he would lift up and roll up the skirt, and tuck it into the belt, so that he could run or he could fight. He didn't want to trip up over the skirt, and that was the preparation, the prelude to battle. So, whenever you saw a Roman soldier tightening his belt, he was ready!

I used to play rugby, and just before the whistle went you were all on an edge. You've seen it: one foot to another foot, then you would tighten your laces and pull up your socks, then you would tighten your belt, you would fiddle around with your gum shield, make sure everything was ready - why? You were preparing, and when the Roman soldier was preparing for battle he would tighten his belt. And if the enemy was about to get him, he would roll up that skirt and tuck it in - and this was more than a sport, this was a life or death matter. My friend, this is spiritual battle! It's more than airy-fairy, pie-in-the-sky, this is real! This is every day meat and bread of a Christian - at least it ought to be. And when you think that Satan is a liar, the liar from the beginning, the liar in the garden, and the liar every day in your Christian life, you better believe that you need the belt of truth! Truth defeats the Devil. This is how, Paul is telling us, to prepare to meet our enemy: to gird everything with truth. The girdle held everything together for the Roman soldier, and the girdle of truth holds everything, all the other parts of the armour, together for the child of God. It allows us to fight, it gives us the freedom to face the enemy.

There's an interesting story in the Old Testament in Exodus chapter 12, and there's one verse I want to refer to. Verse 11 in Exodus 12, we find the Passover, and the children of Israel are just about to be delivered out of Egypt by God - and you know where they would go: to the Red Sea - but before that they had to celebrate the Passover. Have you ever noticed the way they were told to celebrate the Passover? They were to eat that slain, burnt, lamb with their loins girt up and with shoes on their feet. Isn't that a beautiful picture? It's a wonderful picture of exactly what Paul is talking about here. The victory of the slain Lamb that we stand in, as we stand in it we must be girt about with truth, we must have our loins girt about and shoes on our feet ready to face the foe - standing in the victory wherewith Christ the Lord has made us free.

If you think about it, also the belt held the sword up. The sword was in its sheath in the belt. Think about this, Christian: there's no point in you using the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, if your life is not bound up with the truth of God. That's what's killing the church today: men and women that know the word of God, but their life is not bound with God's truth! It's not just necessary for us to hold the truth of God, but it's necessary that we be held by the truth of God - it must hold us, it must bind us, support us! It holds the rest of our spiritual warfare and armour together. It must be applied to our daily life, the truth of God - day-by-day, when we sit, when we rise up, when we lie down, when we talk to one another and to our children - the word of God, the truth of God, everything must be tested by it!

It's what we find strength from, it's what we will find protection in combat against the enemy with. Pilate stood and asked the question: 'What is truth?'. Looking into the face of the Son of God! 'What is truth?' - truth is the Word of God. We worship the Word of God - not this book - but the Word that was with God, and is God. But we have His written word here, and that is the truth of God that we're to bind ourselves round about with: the Scriptures. As the Lord said: 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free', 'Sanctify them', He prayed to His Father for the church, 'through Thy truth' - 'Thy word is truth!'

Ephesians 4 and verse 21, if you to look at it quickly, we read there of the truth of God in its exact, specific realm. Ephesians 4:21: 'If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus'. Imagine old Pilate asking the question: 'What is truth?', and there He was standing before him!

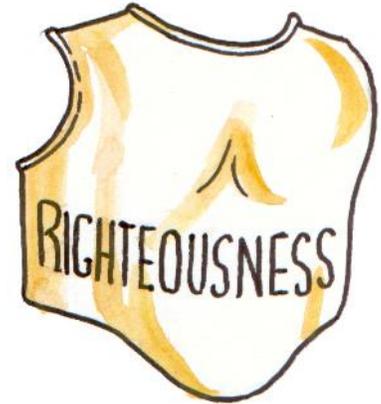
If truth doesn't bind us, do you know what will happen? The rest of our armour will fall to pieces, and the spiritual victory that we have in Christ...we will give ground to the Devil. All the other armour that we have will become useless, and untruth will get in. It's amazing when you study church history and you find out that God's great warriors of history overcame by the truth. Martin Luther, the father of the reformation, do you know what was said of him? History books tell me this, hard to believe: he memorised virtually the whole of the word of God - now it was in Latin mind you, but I wouldn't care whether I learnt it in Latin or not if I could learn it! Wesley, who was used to bring a revolution of God instead of a political revolution like France, he came up against the ecclesiastical system of the Church of England by preaching the gospel in the open-air. That great man Wesley, it was said of him that he memorised the whole of the Greek New Testament! God's overcomers had bible blood, the word of God, they had the girdle, the belt of truth - and these warriors in victory had the truth in their heart, but they had the truth in their life. They had an honest, truth-trafficking lifestyle.

That's what Paul points out to us: that knowledge of truth, combined with a truthful character, holds together our armour for the fight. It's priceless - in a world like today's world how could it be anything but priceless to have truth. When the god of this world, the liar of the age, is sowing all his deceit round about, and we live in a morally exhausted planet where words have begun to be meaningless and have lost all meaning - they're manipulated now to mean whatever perverts and obscure men want them to mean. For the politician taxes has become 'Revenue Assessment Enhancement'. Perversion is now said to be 'gay'. Murder of unborn children is 'freedom of choice'. Marxism in the church is called 'Liberation Theology'. Sin, and repentance, and the blood, and justification, reconciliation, regeneration, means absolutely nothing! Grace is irrelevant! Preaching falls on deaf ears! This world rushes to a spiritual holocaust! Think of it: Bill Clinton tells a bare-faced lie for all of America to see, and he gets away with it. He remains unimpeached - in fact he's held up as a great President because of the economic revolution that he's brought to that country. Think of what is broadcast on our television today, it's now accepted as literally objective truth - when you watch the news do you ever even think of questioning what you hear? You don't! You just lap it all up, and we believe almost everything we hear from the television - and this is Satan's strategy!

The sad thing is that this culture of untruth has begun to infiltrate into the church of Jesus Christ - and this is my fear, and this is my whole point of these messages in the weeks that lie ahead. In chapter 1 we can be a believer, we can be positionally sitting in heavenly places with Christ, but practically speaking we are controlled by fears, by anxieties, by temptations and habits, by the Devil himself! That is possible for a child of God - if it wasn't why would God give us armour? Why would God tell us to put armour on? But think of this, positively, the effect that a clear conscience has when facing the Devil. Imagine coming face-to-face with our great accuser with the truth! As Paul said to Timothy: 'Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck' - the way not to make shipwreck is to take the belt of truth, to tighten our belts, and to live by our belts, and let truth hold everything in our lives up.

Now, that's the first step of battle. My question to you tonight is this: have you taken that first step? Secondly we have the breastplate of righteousness. That breastplate comes from up here right to down here, and it is said to cover all the vital parts of the body. It was meant to protect from the arrows and the swords of the enemy. In this context, the spiritual breastplate protects from the fiery darts of the Devil, the wiles of the Devil. Do you know that Satan, probably everyday, and his hordes are aiming fiery darts at your heart, at your vitals? Just as the worldly enemy always shoots toward the chest, so Satan does that - and that is why God gives us, praise His name, an impregnable covering for the soul of the Christian.

We said with regard to the belt of truth that Satan was the liar from the beginning, and we find with regard to the breastplate of righteousness that, to the child of God, Satan is the accuser - indeed, that's what 'Satan' means in Devil. He throws things at the Christian day-by-day, the accuser of the brethren, and every believer comes across him - filling their minds and their heart with guilt for the things that they have done. The problem occurs when believers try to take their own righteousness and make it a breastplate - that's when believers get into trouble. They try to be better, they try their best to live a Christian life, they try their best to walk in the truth that we've been talking about. But do you know what Isaiah says in 64:6? 'We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags' - imagine what a breastplate of filthy rags would do for you in a battle! Wouldn't do much, sure it wouldn't? Our righteousness is not what Paul is talking about. Romans says: 'There is none righteous, no not one...all have sinned...there is none that doeth good...all have fallen short of the glory of God' - but, praise God, the message of Romans is: there is a righteousness from God!



When we go into the book of Isaiah again, we find the Lord Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate state, and we read of Him walking in battle, for He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation upon His head, and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak. Imagine this: the Lord Jesus Christ doesn't ask you to wear any second-rate clothes, but He gives you the armour that He wore Himself. Oh, how can we not be victorious? How can we not stand in the evil day? Paul describes in Philippians 3, if we had time we could look at it, verses 7 to 9 - how he had that breastplate of righteousness. Let's have a quick look at it, Philippians chapter 3 and verse 7 to 9: 'But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ', and he's just been going through all the qualifications he had in the flesh, religiously speaking and morally speaking. Those were gain to him, but he counted them loss to Christ - they're useless! 'Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith'.

That's the righteousness we need, and I want you to notice tonight that that is by grace through faith - that's how you get everything in the Christian life. By grace, God has given it. Through faith, that's the mechanism whereby you are given it. Faith! And, my friend, if you want to put the armour of God on tonight, if you want to gird yourself with that belt of truth, if you want to wear the breastplate of righteousness, and in the weeks that lie ahead put on every other part of the armour of God - you're going to have to have faith! Paul said to the Thessalonians: 'Putting on the breastplate of faith and love' - you must have faith toward God to put it on, and you must have love toward men to put it on. It is a righteousness that affects you toward God - God cleansing you - and a righteousness that affects others around you, because His Spirit is working in you an in-wrought righteousness of God in your life!

Someone has said: 'When a man is clothed in practical righteousness he is impregnable. Words are no defence against accusation, but a good life is'. Like Paul, what did he say? 'I work and labour to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men!' You see if you have a conscience void of offence toward God and men, you can look the Devil straight in the eye and he can't do a thing about it. Isn't that wonderful? The great accuser of the brethren - can I ask you tonight: do you have this? Oh, we're all trying it on our own steam, aren't we? But do we have God's breastplate of righteousness? Would we not be better tonight discarding our filthy rags, and by faith bending over and lifting up God's righteous breastplate that will become a deadly weapon in the hands of the Almighty?

In ancient times before a squire was knighted, do you know what he would do? He would spend a night in vigil in the Castle Chapel, and he would spread out his whole armour before him, and he would lie prostrate and offer up his soul to Almighty God. That's what we need to do. Our duty is to put on the whole armour of God and stand our ground. Stand our ground - what is that ground, as we close? Revelation 12:11, listen, the martyr's of our God say this: 'They overcame him' - the great accuser - 'by' - and that word 'by' means this: 'on the ground of' - 'the blood of the Lamb, and by', on the ground of, 'the word of their testimony' - the word of what that blood does, the word of what that blood means - 'and they loved not their lives unto the death'!

There's an old rabbinical tradition that says this: that Satan the accuser had to shut his mouth on the day of atonement. What a thought! For our day of atonement started that day at Calvary, and if we're in Him it hasn't stopped yet and it's never going to. You may hear your accuser this evening, and every day of your life, but the word of God for your heart - and as we go into this spiritual battle together is this: we can stand, and when he has thrown everything against us, we can do all and still stand - why? Because if God is for us - if He is for us - who can stand against us? What a wonderful Saviour He is, isn't He?

As we bow our heads, and we have known the Lord's voice tonight, why not set aside those old rags? Why not be done with untruth, and half-truth, and spiritual compromise? Put on God's belt and God's breastplate, and stand in the victory of the Lord. We are overcomers tonight, not trying to be, we are - but we've got to, by faith, enter into that armour. Our Father, we thank Thee tonight that we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. We thank Thee that He is a nail in a sure place, and though the winds may blow, and the rocks may quake, and the waves may roar, our house is built on the rock Christ Jesus and will stand firm. Lord, may we have that deep spiritual realisation tonight, and may You impart grace to us to believe Thee - that Lord, You have won, and that we are standing on the victory side and none can be against us, for God is for us. Amen.

*The Holy War - Chapter 3****"The Christian Warrior's Armour - Part 2"***

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Ephesians 6:15-16

1. ***The Shoes Of The Gospel (verse 15)***
2. ***The Shield Of Faith (verse 16)***

Now let me welcome you to the Bible Reading this evening here in the Iron Hall, it's good to see you all with us. There are some visitors with us - several visitors in fact - and we're very glad to see you all with us this evening. Thank you for making the effort to come under the sound of the word of God, and we trust that the Lord will bless you for coming.

Ephesians chapter 6, and we'll take time to read from verse 10 again to get the whole of the passage of Paul's thoughts. We're looking at the second pair of pieces of armour that Paul has outlined, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Verse 10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand".

As we study this passage of scripture week after week, it becomes greater and greater - the universal truths that we can draw from it. We could take a series - as many of you will already know - out of this little sub-series. For many weeks we could dwell on these thoughts, but we want to get from them the main themes that Paul has laid for us in this little book of Ephesians. We've been looking at the Christian warrior's armour, what God has given to us - and it is called the armour of God rightly so, because it is God's armour - it's not something that we have of ourselves, is that something that we conjure up or make by any of our works of faith. This is God's supernatural armour, it is the gift of God given to us.

One author has said regarding this chapter: 'If, for 60 seconds, we could see the size and the ranks of our enemy: General Satan, his cosmocrats, their lieutenants and foot soldiers - we would forever reject reliance on conventional methods, and would flee to God's armoury for instruction and for outfitting'. We see in verse 12, if we really believe it, that 'we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' - we must then adorn ourselves with God's armour, nothing else will do. We must put on the armour of God!

As we study in these pieces of armour, we find that all of them correspond to the armour that the Lord Jesus Christ wore when He was upon the earth. In fact we looked last week at the book of Isaiah and saw that the armour that we are looking at here in Ephesians 6 is the armour that God Himself - omnipotent God - adorned Himself with. So He's not asking us to put on some second-rate Christian experience only for humans, but God Almighty is giving us His own armour, the armour that the Lord Jesus Christ wore, the armour that is victorious and has already been proved here in the sinful environment in which we live.

Last week we saw that we ought to be fitted out with the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. It's important to be truthful - the way to be truthful, we learnt, is to uphold the truth of God, and the Lord Jesus tells us that: 'Thy word is truth'. But we saw that that girdle of truth held up the rest of the armour, it bound it

together. We also saw that the sword was attached to the belt of truth, and therefore we concluded that it wasn't just holding doctrine in our heads, but it was a life of truth, a life of transparency, a life of blamelessness, that should adorn the Gospel. Not just holding the truth but, as this great epistle teaches us, to walk in the truth, to have a life that testifies and witnesses of trustworthiness, faithfulness to the word of God and to the principles that are laid down.

We then looked at the breastplate of righteousness. We saw that that righteousness is the righteousness imputed by faith by the Lord Jesus Christ. Indeed, as the book of Romans teaches us, the righteousness of God specifically. Because our sins were imputed on Him at Calvary, His righteousness by faith in Him through grace is imputed to us in conversion. But we also see that there was another side to that: our lives must therefore adorn that righteousness of Christ in a practical righteousness - it's not good enough to say, like some were saying to Paul and in the church of Rome: 'Shall we sin that grace may abound?'. There must be a life, there must be a pattern of footsteps and - as the word of God says - conversation that lends itself to godliness, and testifies that the righteousness of Christ is living in my life.

It's amazing that, right throughout all these pieces of armour, the word of God is through it all. In fact, I believe that that is the whole testimony of these pieces of armour: the word of God, the word of God, the word of God, and then obedience to the word of God in every facet of our lives. And we're beginning to get the idea that the armour covers us from the tip of our head to the tip of our toe, so that the devil has no foothold with us, so there's no gaps, so that we are not left naked - and the way to be like that is to adorn ourselves with the word of God. So, tonight we look at the next two pieces of God's armour that He gives us. There's the shoes of the gospel - the gospel of peace specifically - and then there is the shield of faith.



Verse 15: 'And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace' - the shoes of the gospel. You will recall that last week we were looking at how Paul is under house arrest in Rome, he's probably chained to a Roman soldier and so he is looking at an illustration of what a soldier is like, specifically a Roman soldier. At this point, after looking at the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness, he casts

his eye down to the feet of this Roman soldier. He sees a pair of sandals, on the sole of those sandals there are hobnails. Like spikes on a pair of golf shoes, or studs on a pair of football boots, they are there for a purpose: that the Roman soldier may have a footing in his battle, that he may be able to dig his heels in hard and not be moved. These shoes are sturdy shoes, leather shoes. They also have these prongs in them so that whenever the Roman soldier, perhaps, stands on a trap - a sharp trap laid by the enemy - it'll not stop him marching forward. These are soldier's shoes!

Now when we talk about sandals we conjure into our mind flip-flops, perhaps, that we take on our Mediterranean holidays, that flip on and flip off. But that's not what Paul is talking about here, these aren't 'Moses sandals', these are sturdy boots for war. On the bottom of them there is hard leather, and these studs and spikes - and then there are two pieces of leather, two straps, and they are wound around the leg right up to the very ball of the lower leg - tight! So that this soldier is able to move, so he's able to stand strongly without worrying about his footwear.

There are two thoughts, I believe, that Paul the apostle is bringing to us through the shoes of the gospel of peace. The first is very simple, and you've probably thought of it already: these shoes are for standing in. They are for standing firm, as the passage has told us in the introduction: that we are to stand, and when we have done all, to stand - to stand and remain standing! When the smoke of the battle has died down - and we have stood at the beginning - that when everything disappears and you can begin to see again, you're still standing in the same victorious position. We have been learning that that position is the finished work of our

Lord Jesus Christ. To stand in His victory, to stand on what He has won, the ground that He has given us by the blood of the cross - we are to stand in it, and having done all, to stand.

The second point that he has, I believe, is also the suggestion that the soldier was ready for battle. It is the preparation of the gospel of peace. He has readiness to go forth with his message, whatever it may be, or with his warfare - and even go into invasion of enemy territory. Paul knew what he was talking about it. If you were to turn with me to Romans chapter 1, if you wish, verse 16 you will find that Paul knew both of these things in his life. He knew what it was to stand firm upon the victory ground of Christ, and he also knew what it was to go forward and to be prepared to take the Gospel wherever God led him. Romans 1 and verse 16: 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth' - I am not ashamed! It doesn't matter that it's foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jew, I am not ashamed, I will not be moved from off that ground, I am digging my heels in firm, I am standing. But in the same chapter you have verses 14 and 15, he says that he is ready to publish it: 'I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also' - a standing and also a readiness.

Now let's look, first of all, at this standing. Standing in the battle - we can stand in the battle and be at peace! Now I want you to see the seeming contradictions - or I'd rather call it 'spiritual paradoxes' - that you find so much throughout scripture. This Roman soldier, the picture Paul is painting, is standing in the bloodiest, smokiest battle that you can imagine - yet he is standing in shoes of peace! We can stand in a battle and be at peace, that's what Paul is saying. When we stand in the finished work of Christ, no matter what assails us, no matter what the devil can throw at us, no matter what comes from within our fleshly heart and what attracts - 'magnetism' from the world around us - we can be at peace! That's remarkable. In fact Romans 5 and verse 1 testifies of that in our salvation, that we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God'. We have entered into it, through the finished work, in the process of salvation and we have been granted peace with God. Then what flows from that is the peace of God that passeth all understanding, and then we are meant to be at peace one with the other - isn't that right? As Colossians says, when we let the word of God dwell in our hearts richly, that is what will happen. We will know the peace of God that passeth all understanding, and we will be at peace with those around us: our brethren and sisters in Christ.

When that happens, when we are at peace with God, when we are at peace with ourselves, and when we are at peace with one another, James chapter [4] and verses 1 to 7 says that is the way the devil is defeated. You remember in that passage, James chapter [4], that he says: 'Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you'. That is in the context of peace with God, peace with yourself, and peace with one another - that is the victory that we have in the Lord Jesus, standing in these shoes. Now my question to you is: are you standing? Are you standing at this moment in the peace of God's gospel? It's very easy to answer, all you have to do is look into your heart and see if it's a storm of absolute chaos, or is it at peace? Someone has said that the heart is like the referee of the human being, when the whistle is blowing your peace is lost, the rules have been broken and there's a lack of peace now - but do you know that? Do you know that calm stillness of a child of God? Are you walking according to the gospel victory that the Lord Jesus Christ has given to us? You might say you're saved - and that's great that you're saved! - but there's another step, and it's walking in the victory of the Lord Jesus, it's knowing the peace of God through victory. It's what the poet said:

'Blessed quietness,
Holy quietness.
Blessed assurance in my soul.
On the stormy sea,
Jesus speaks to me,
And the billows cease to roll'.

I've said in the last couple weeks that I believe that the devil - to put it bluntly - has a lot of believers over a barrel. I believe that one of his schemes - and remember last week, one of his mischievous devices and methods and wiles - are restless spirits in the life of God's children. Restlessness, anxiety, fear - and believers, by this, have allowed Satan to bind them with anxieties and troubles. But if you learn to stand in the gospel of peace, that goes - it must go! You remember Israel's fearful enemy, Pharaoh, in the book of Exodus. You remember that he - just like Satan for us - was bent upon their destruction. But the night the angel of death appeared over Egypt, the Israelites, where were they? They were in their homes, shut doors, blood on the lintel on the doorpost - they were under the blood of the lamb! And when you're under the blood of the Lamb there's no need for restlessness! When God has promised: 'When I see the blood I will pass over you', when He tells you that there's protection under the blood, and if you're saved and standing in the victory of Christ, that is the peace of Passover! God has said, as He said to them: 'And thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded and shoes on your feet'. Shoes of peace!

Wasn't it Isaiah said: 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee' - and we always forget to finish quoting that verse: 'because he trusteth in Him'. Trust, that's what it is. Standing, standing and refusing to be moved! Now, I believe the parallel to the book of Ephesians, and indeed the book of Hebrews, in the Old Testament is the book of Joshua. There's a mistaken notion that goes about Christendom and it's because of two reasons specifically. First of all: hymnology, and also Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress' - which I will not even attempt to criticise, but I do believe that he was wrong in this aspect. Many believers see Canaan, the promised land, as heaven - and many also see the Jordan as being our crossing over death to heaven as a believer. But, you see, if you look in the book of Joshua you find that for the Israelites, the children of God, that the battle only began when they got into Canaan. It was only when they entered the promised land that they had to put their battle armour on, and start fighting a very bloody fight and clearing the land of all the Canaanites, the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and all the rest of them!

In the Old Testament, to put it briefly - and we haven't got time to go into it - but typically speaking, the Red Sea represents the death of our Lord Jesus Christ and His resurrection. And you can see that by the fact that once the Israelites were crossing the Red Sea, and they got to the other side, the enemy began to chase them - and God sent His Spirit which closed those waters and all the Egyptians drowned. What did it say? 'All the Egyptians drowned' - all of their enemies were destroyed in an instant, they had no more enemies! They were free now to walk towards the promised land, although they went through the wilderness - and the wilderness in our Christian lives, to put it typically, represents the temptation. It represents, once we are saved, how the devil throws everything at us - and it's very difficult to be a babe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it's difficult to get to grips at times with the things that we have to learn, and the repentance, and the life, daily crucifying the flesh and daily carrying the cross of our Lord Jesus. But eventually what is meant to happen, just like the children of Israel, we cross the Red Sea through the cross of the Lord Jesus who died and rose again for us, we enter into those very early teething stages of Christian life, but eventually we ought to come to the Jordan.

I believe the Jordan represents our spiritual death, and our spiritual resurrection with the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that Canaan is the land of spiritual blessing, I believe it is the promised land of Christian maturity that we are all to strive to - and because of that, it is the very place that the enemy takes on the greatest battle because he wants to forfeit us from the blessing that God would have for us in His promises. The blessings are ours! Ephesians 1 tells us, our key verse, we are blessed - we are, past tense, 'we are blessed with all blessings in heavenly places in Christ'. But the second half of this book, as we all know now, is telling us to enter into the blessings that are ours - and we have got this mentality in evangelicalism and fundamentalism today, that: 'If the blessings are ours, I have them!' - no!

Turn to Joshua, so that we can lay this down. Joshua chapter 1, now this is a famous passage of Scripture, Joshua chapter 1 and we read from verse 2. God says: 'Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel' - listen - 'Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses'. Now there's a promise, the word of God: 'From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Therefore be strong'. Now, what we do is: we stop at verse 5, and say: 'Well, God has given us this, He's given to us! What do I need to be strong for?'. I mean the Israelites could have said, couldn't they: 'Well, if You've given us this land, Lord, why do we have to fight for it?' - isn't that right? But He says: 'Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them' - you're going to have to fight, you're going to have to divide the land - 'Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest'. Then verse 9: 'Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest'. Verse 18: 'Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage'.

Do you see the parallel? God says: 'That land is yours' - He'd been saying it since the promise of the land to Abraham, but they still had to appropriate their promises. That's the book of Hebrews, to me at least, you've got to go in, God has no pleasure in him that turns back, but you've got to take that step of faith. But the tragedy is for many, we can be saved and still in the wilderness of temptation, still grappling with the childish things, but we have to start to put away those childish things and become men - and quit you like men! We've got to begin to cross the Jordan that is uncrossed, and there is a lot of fruit there, there's a lot of corn that hasn't been touched for years. They were on Canaan land -don't forget that, they were stepping unto the land - but their job was to begin to appropriate these things. What was theirs, they had to claim it, they had to defeat Satan's attempts to deprive them of what was theirs, they had to go forward! And that is what Satan wants to do to every believer today, that is his battle strategy: to deprive us of what is ours! And we can't let him! The Lord Jesus died that we might have it, and it is by grace through faith that we can get it - and we're sitting here tonight, and whatever it is that we don't have, we can appropriate it now by faith!

Oh, it's wonderful. Josephus tells us of a Roman soldier on one occasion, who tried to run and he fell over and he fell on his back onto the stone ground, and he was despatched from the Roman army. You can't run in Roman soldier's shoes, they're not for running, they're for standing - and there is also this thought: they're not for running away. When a Roman soldier saw that there was an enemy that was very large, he had to fight to the death because the shoes he was wearing couldn't take him away! Now, we don't have to fight to the death and be worried about whether we'll win or not, the shoes of the gospel of peace can't run away because the Lord Jesus Christ who bought them with His blood can't be defeated! That's the thought.

But it's not just the security that we have in the Lord Jesus and His blessings, but as I said earlier, the second point is: Paul wants us to prepare for service in the gospel. Not just steadfastness, but swiftness in witnessing - that's the idea in the preparation, verse 15: 'the preparation of the gospel of peace'. It suggests promptness, a readiness. The Spanish translation says this: 'Having your feet shod with a joyful readiness to propagate the gospel of peace' - a joyful readiness to preach the Gospel! Isn't that what we need? There are millions around our world - millions, now - who have never heard, never heard. Isn't it the 10/40 window (I hope I've got the numbers right), no-one has ever heard, the centre of the planet, one of the largest scales in the whole of geography, and people haven't heard. The 21st century, the age of the website, the age of human cloning, and people haven't heard the gospel. Paul wants us to have a readiness to take that gospel. Satan wants to blind

them, but he wants us - God - to take them and unbind them. And as we preach the gospel, is that not what we are doing? We are preaching deliverance to the captives, the recovery of sight to the blind, setting at liberty them that are bruised. Paul quotes Isaiah and Nahum talking about this in Romans 10:15: 'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' - and what the word of God is saying is that the feet that are beautiful in the eyes of God, are the feet that take the Gospel, that walk with the Gospel to those that need to hear it. That is the two inseparable things about the gospel of peace: you've got to preach it, but you've also got to walk by it! Those things are never divorced in Scripture, theory and life are never apart, the two must be inseparable - mouthing the gospel and manifesting it.

These shoes, as you've probably gathered, aren't dancing shoes for your pleasure. They're not carpet slippers for you, in your old age, to sit with your feet up by the fire and relax - but these are fighting shoes. As Peter said: '[We are to] be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear' - being ready at all times. Like those eating the Passover, they were eating with their shoes on ready to go - and there's an interesting statement in Deuteronomy 29:5, to those very people God said: 'I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot'. These weren't Dr Martin's - but they went forty years ago, and the shoes that they wore going out were the same shoes that they had on. That is the gospel that we have, praise God it hasn't changed! Praise God it hasn't worn old - no matter what modernists and liberalists tell us today - it is the same gospel, it has the same power, because it points back to the same cross and the same Christ. We can go with it, we can be assured that if we are standing in the same gospel shoes that the apostles stood in, and that the Lord Jesus Christ procured, we can be sure that it will never grow old! The burning sands of the desert of temptation - it will last the journey. The sharp stones, and traps of the enemy, and adversity, won't wear them out!

Paul is saying that the sign of a Christian - and if you're a Christian tonight, the sign that you are one must be: a readiness to move, and eager to go and preach the gospel, the way of peace. Always ready at every opportunity to share it with those who have never heard. Now I want to make a little digression for a moment, because I believe that we are missing something in this passage that we so often look at in our Christian lives. I asked the question: why would a soldier be armed to the teeth, and be carrying with him a message of peace? It seems strange, doesn't it: how a Roman soldier, the state-of-the-art in military of the day, and in technology, could be carrying a gospel of peace to anyone? Of course, we've already looked in a sense that while the battle is raging outside, with regard to the Christian we can be at peace inside. It doesn't matter what the devil is throwing at us, that peace in the stern of our boat can be very very quiet.

But I believe that there's something more, I believe there's something connected with the evangelistic commission - and we tend to believe today that it's enough just to preach the gospel and leave the rest to God, and I don't subscribe to that theology. I do subscribe to the theology that salvation is of the Lord, but I also believe that God in His sovereign will has ordained that we be the means of preaching that gospel. I believe that here we have, in the armour of God, a method whereby we as the children of God are able, with the armour of God, to disarm in some measure the enemy! I believe that that's the purpose of this armour: that we, as we go forth with the gospel, are covered with God's armour so that we can, in a measure, defeat the devil - so that when we fire the gospel arrows that we have, that they will have a clear, clean entrance.

I believe that this is how we can preach the gospel and signs follow. I wonder have we lost, somewhere along the way - I don't know when - but have we lost the art of spiritual warfare? We've done the old pendulum again, haven't we? The charismatics go nuts, so we forget all about it! Isn't that right? But what that the Lord, our Lord, say? He said in Mark 3:27: 'No man can enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house'. Of course, people object: 'Oh, but He did that at the cross. He bound him at the cross'. Yes, He did! But what are we saying? We have to appropriate that victory! We have to take the devil on, face-to-face, upon the victory of the Lord

Jesus Christ at the cross - and that is the beginning of walking and standing in these shoes of the gospel of peace. Surely it's our job as foot soldiers to appropriate the victory face-to-face in the battle, and to spoil Satan's kingdoms? Are we not told by Paul that we are labourers together with God? And if, as he says, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, are we not told Christ is in us? And if God was in Christ reconciling the world, is Christ not in us doing the same?

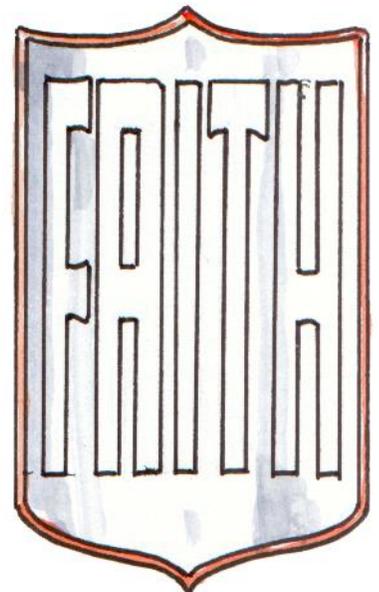
Is that not why Paul told the Christians in Rome in chapter 16:20: 'The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly' - and the God of peace did that because the Soldier was wearing the shoes of the gospel of peace. You see, when we relax in our tents we're in trouble. When we feel safe, we're not following the beautiful feet of the Lord Jesus Christ on the mountains, bearing good tidings and publishing peace - but what we need to do is come to a position tonight by faith, whereby we say like that great hymn:

'Take my feet and let them be,
Swift and beautiful for Thee'.

Are you ready? Are you prepared, right now, to go wherever God tells you, to do whatever God asks you to do?

'Ready to go, ready to stay,
Ready my place to fill.
Ready for service, lowly or great,
Ready to do His will'.

That's what it is. But then secondly we have the shield of faith, verse 16, let's spend a few moments on this. 'Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one'. So, you have the shoes of the gospel and now you have the shield of faith. The question is: do most believers believe Satan is out to destroy them? Now, come on, this is important! Do you really believe Satan is out to destroy you? I know believers, and you talk to them, and you would think Satan didn't exist! But if he does exist, and you believe he exists, he exists to destroy you! That is his purpose - and if that is the case we need all of the armour of God to withstand, we need to cover every inch of us with the armour of God. Here we have the shield, next week we'll look at the sword of the spirit - and the shield and the sword go together, because our faith is attacked when the devil attacks the word of God. The shield of faith protects [against] the devil's attacks upon the word of God.



Paul says, verse 16: 'Above all' - above all! That literally means 'in addition to' - and I believe what he is meaning here is, we've already had the breastplate of righteousness, the girdle of truth, and we've just had the shoes on our feet, and he is saying: 'All those first three parts of the armour, that shield is above them'. In other words it's in front of them, it protects what you have already put on. Those other three things will be very weak if you don't have a shield. A breastplate will do you no good, or a belt, or shoes, if the enemy can penetrate your defence. So you need this shield of faith above all, it covers the rest of the armour already on. And of course the shield, in the battle, was literally put above all things - many a time you see a picture of all the Roman soldiers coming together in a square or a rectangle, and putting the shields over their head - that's what it was used for in its very nature.

But the miraculous thing about this shield is this: it's not just above all, but it is able to quench all - and that is a good enough reason for it being above all, isn't it? All the fiery darts of the devil - there's no exceptions, there's no Exocet missiles that can get past this shield of faith! It protects the child of God, it is a shield.

Now, the word for 'shield' here is not the little round shield that you often see, that's commonly called in the word of God 'a buckler' - but literally the Greek says: 'a door-shield' - a door-shield. It is what it says: this was an oblong shield about two and a half feet wide, and four feet high. Massive, heavily armoured, it was a warrior's shield! It literally means 'taking the great shield of your faith that it may quench the fiery darts of the devil'.

Now, what were these fiery darts? Well, these were one of the most advanced weapons of the day, the most dangerous weapon, perhaps, in ancient warfare. It was a dart that was tipped with pitch, it was set alight and it was fired at the enemy. Dangerous if it gets into you, and past your defences! But the point was this: you have this big two and a half foot wide and four foot [tall] shield able to quench it! This shield was made of two layers of laminated wood stuck together with glue, and over that laminated wood there was a linen cloth, and over the linen cloth there was a leather hide, and at the top and the bottom they were galvanised with iron, and there was an iron crest put on the front of it. That's the kind of shield we're talking about - two and a half feet wide and four feet long. Once the darts penetrated that shield and stuck into the shield, they were immediately extinguished naturally. The history books tell us that after the Siege of Deracium (sp?) one man called Sceevea (sp?) counted no less than 220 darts on his shield! Two hundred and twenty that he had been protected from by this great shield!

What Paul is saying here is that these fiery darts, or literally these missiles, of the evil one - it doesn't matter how many he has, and let me tell you he has thousands of ways to set you aflame with destruction. And the problem with our bodies is: we are easily set aflame. We don't have to leave it all to the devil, for the Lord said: 'Out of the heart proceed adulteries, fornications, lies, murders, hatreds' - isn't that right? So when the fire comes, and if it penetrated and got past, somehow, this shield - if we weren't using it - and it hit us, we would go up in flames because we're very flammable, very sinful. But what a thought, what a thought indeed, that although these darts may be set on fire of hell, we've got God's shield. God's shield!

Now, his darts take many forms. They take filthy thoughts, sexual lust, business compromise, pride, worry, unbelief, jealousy, covetousness, and often they enter into our minds with accusing lies - the accuser, that's what he is - throwing lies, and telling us things about ourselves that aren't true, blasphemous thoughts at times even when we're on our knees in prayer, perversities that we think or contemplate, hate towards others, doubts, and burning desires that we want to fulfil! He shoots so much at us, doesn't he? There's times that we don't extinguish those darts right away, isn't that right? They catch light, they get into a bigger fire and that's harder to put out.

But my friends, if we would only realise what this shield of faith is - and as we have another five minutes left, let's look at what this shield of faith is, because people think it's working up, like I said before as one man said to me, some people think faith is standing in front of the mirror and saying - when you've got the chickenpox: 'I don't have the chickenpox, I don't have the chickenpox, I don't have the chickenpox'. Convincing yourself of something that's not true, and in a spiritual realm saying: 'God is going to give me that house, I have to believe that'. There are those who testify this, charismatics - they tell you that if you imagine the things, and dream about the things in your mind, God will give you the things. Now, that is not what faith is - what is this shield of faith? It's only mentioned here in the New Testament scripture, so we have to go into the Old Testament to get an understanding of it. It's a metaphorical term, I believe. I shield in the Old Testament always generally represents the person of Almighty God. It represents His protecting care.

The first mention about a shield in the Bible is in relation to Abraham. You remember, in Genesis chapter 14, there is the battle of the patriarchs - and the patriarchs, the fathers in the Old Testament, are struggling against unbelieving kings. Remember the kings that attacked, the King of Sodom and his allies, and Abraham had to come with all his men to defeat them. After he defeats them in battle, Genesis 15 verse 1: 'The word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy

exceeding great reward'. He saying: 'I'm able, I'm able for all the kings, I'm able for all your enemies. And the struggle that you've just seen in chapter 14, Abram, if you were frightened going into the battle, Abram, don't be afraid because God is your shield and you need not fear a man, or a demon, or a devil, or hell, or anything!'.

The second mention is of Moses in his song of praise for God's majesty and excellency, in Deuteronomy 33 and verse 27 to 29 - I wish we had time to read it, but you know that passage: 'Underneath, underneath are the everlasting arms'. And then God reveals himself to Moses as his shield of protection, the shield of his people. Now, that's what the faith is here: it is a firm confidence in the Lord, in who He is! It's not us working up a faith, it's a firm standing in the Lord and what the Lord has said! And when temptations burn, and circumstances are adverse, when doubts assail our minds and heart, when shipwreck threatens our spiritual lives - if faith would look up to God, and just say: 'I believe God!', that's it! It's not 'I believe', it's 'I believe God'. It's not the faith once delivered to the saints in Jude, I don't believe that's what is meant here. It's not the system of doctrine and belief, but as Harry Ironside says: 'It's not so much what you believe, but how you believe' - how you appropriate, in your living, what God has granted to you. It is confidence in God, it's nothing mystical - that's not what faith is. Romans 10:17: 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God' - that's what faith is!

Standing on the promises of Christ my King through eternal ages - that's what faith is! To stand on God's character, and what God has said - and you can defeat everything with that. You can defeat the world: is the world causing you a problem tonight? Is it? Its temptations, its sins, perhaps its opposition as you try to reach people for the lost? Listen: this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. That's the victory, and John goes on to say in that same chapter, 1 John 5 verse 18: 'And that wicked one toucheth him not' - he can't touch you! What a statement.

Isn't it amazing that he says this about the shield of faith: 'ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts' - all of them - 'of the devil'. You're able - it doesn't say you might be able, or you may be able if you get to this standard - you are able, certainty. But there's a condition, a condition: take hold of it! I believe, today more than ever, that our sovereign eternal God is there, but we need to take hold of Him by faith, and that's why this is a shield of faith. Incidentally, these shields were made in such a way that they could link together, and interlock with all the other soldiers - and I believe this: that the greatest barrier to Satanic opposition and the work of the kingdom of darkness here, is the church of Jesus Christ when they link together by faith. The people that know their God shall be strong and do exploits!

Are you prepared? Are you standing where you ought to be in this battle? Listen, this thrills me: we have everything we need, everything, but - if I can say it - like the carrot dangling in front of the donkey, we haven't appropriated it. Let's finish on this note, as we go into the battle:

'We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender.
We go not forth alone against the foe.
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender.
We rest on Thee and in Thy name we go'.

The Holy War - Chapter 4

"The Christian Warrior's Armour - Part 3"

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Ephesians 6:17

1. *The Helmet Of Salvation (verse 17a)*
2. *The Sword Of The Spirit (verse 17b)*

Now let me welcome you to our Monday evening Bible Reading here in the Iron Hall. It's great to see you all with us, making an effort in the bad weather to come around the word of God, to hear what God has to say to us. Especially if you're visiting, we welcome you and trust that the Lord speaks to you through His eternal word.

We're turning again to Ephesians and chapter 6 once more, this is our thirty-first study and it is our fourth study in *The Christian Warrior's Armour* - looking at the armour of God that has been given to every believer who is in Christ. So let's turn again to Ephesians 6, Ephesians chapter 6 - and I would advise you (there is some notepaper on the back of this little sheet, and if you have a pen with you, or if you can borrow a pen very quickly) I would advise you to take down the truths that you will hear tonight. They're not well-known in the sense that - well, I'll explain as I go through, perhaps, why they're not well-known - there are reasons for this. But everything I have to say - let me say at the outset of our meeting - is from the word of God, you will not find anything I'm saying tonight that is not found within our text.

So as we come, let's come again and read about the whole armour of God so that we get the flow of the weeks that have gone behind. We are now on the last two parts of the physical armour of God - we've dealt with four already. Verse 10 of chapter 6: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" - and this is our verse tonight - "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak".

We've been going through the book of Ephesians now for 31 weeks, [this is] our thirty-first study, and our fourth study in a sub-series on the armour of God. I have entitled this sub-series: 'The Holy War'. Many are not aware that John Bunyan, who wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, also wrote another great book that was an allegory of the Christian life and, indeed, the Christian battle - and he entitled it: 'The Holy War'. If you're not aware of that, you most definitely are not aware of the full title of that book - that's a shortened version of it. The full title is this - now listen carefully: 'The Holy War Made by King Shaddai upon Diabolus For the Regaining of the Metropolis of the World; or The Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul'. Now let's go over that again, listen: 'The Holy War' - that we've been talking about in this week - 'Made by King Shaddai'. Now who is King Shaddai? El-Shaddai, God! This war made by our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of

kings and Lord of lords - '...upon Diabolus' - which is Latin for devil - 'For the Regaining of the Metropolis' - the city - 'of the World; or The Losing and Taking Again of the Town of Mansoul'.

You see the picture that Bunyan was trying to paint. He was bringing to us what we've been learning in weeks gone by, of this great spiritual battle that all those who are Christians have entered into in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have learnt, and we will learn again this evening, that this is no picnic - that this battle is a bloody, gruesome, horrible sight. It is hand-to-hand warfare, face-to-face as we stand glaring against the enemy of our souls, it's a breathless wrestling to the horrible cries and deadly moans of a great spiritual war. That is why we need the armour of God. It is not enough to be saved and to enter into this battle by ourselves, we must be fitted out and kitted with an armour - not of ourselves, but an armour that God has given to us so that we might win the battle that we are entering into as believers.

That is why, in the weeks that have gone by, we have learnt about buckling in the belt of truth around our loins, that all of the armour must be held up by God's truth. That in turn should flow out within our lives, in the truthfulness of God in the way we walk, and the manner in which we live. Secondly, we saw that we are to adorn the breastplate of God's righteousness in our Lord Jesus Christ. That is an imputed righteousness - in other words a righteousness that He has given to us. We saw that God gave to Christ our sin on the cross, for Him to suffer for - and in turn, because of that imputation of our sin to Him, He can now, when we have faith in Him, impute His righteousness, the righteousness of God, to us. So, we are to adorn by faith the breastplate of God's righteousness, and we also saw that there's a twin part to that, that that is to be seen in our walk of righteousness, day by day as we testify that the life of God is within us.

Thirdly, we were to fasten tightly the shoes of the gospel of peace, those sandals upon our feet. We are to stand firm, and let those studs on the sole of those shoes dig deep into the victory ground that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. We're not to retreat, we're not to run away, we're not even to go forward, but we're to stand on the victory ground that we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. At that point of standing we're to take up the shield of faith, whereby we can quench the fiery darts of the devil. We saw the many wiles and methods that the devil has to try and shoot down the soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we also saw that this great shield of faith, which is not our faith, but the shield is God - and it is a shield of faith because we are to put our dependence in the character and in the word of God. If we hold up the word of God as our shield, it will never fail to protect us.

So, tonight we're looking at the last two parts of the physical armour. There is the helmet of salvation, and we are to unsheath the sword of the Spirit. Now let's look at the first little statement at the beginning of our verse 17: 'And take the helmet of salvation'. 'And take the helmet of salvation' - now that Greek phrase is a different phrase than you find in verse 13 and verse 16. Look at verse 13: 'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God' - verse 16: 'Above all, taking the shield of faith'. Verse 17: 'take the helmet' - that's a different Greek word. This word means to receive, it means to accept, it means that this thing is offered into your very hands, and you're just to accept it. Now, the other words for 'take' meant that this whole armour is laid out before you, and all you have to do is bend down and take it for yourself. But this is speaking of this piece of armour, the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, actually being handed into your hands by someone else.

Now this is actually the way it would have been. Remember Paul is in prison and he's been chained to a Roman soldier and he can look at this Roman armour, as the soldier is wearing it - and that is exactly what happened. You see, they put on all the armour that we have been studying in the weeks gone by, and if you can imagine it: when their arm is in the shield of faith, well they can't really pick anything off the ground, they can't bend down because they're laden with their armour. What happens is an armour-bearer gives them their helmet, which they probably put on before the shield of faith, and then when they've everything on, finally the armour-bearer hands him his sword. There is this sense that these two things, the helmet of

salvation and the sword of the Spirit, are not something that we lift up, but something that is given to us by the armour-bearer - and of course the armour-bearer is the Lord, for this is the armour of God, isn't it?

The book of Jonah testifies many things to us, but one of the greatest things it tells us is this: salvation is of the Lord. I believe, in this sense, this phrase 'take the helmet of salvation' is speaking of the giftedness of salvation. It is not something that we can lift up in a moral sense within our life, it's not something we can achieve through our birth, or through our character make-up, or the way we live, or the religious persuasion that we are, but it is a gift from God that we must receive, we must accept it from God. Now that's very important to note, not only about salvation, that if you're not saved you need to realise it is a gift of God which is eternal life, and you must receive it by faith - that's it! We saw last night, He is the door: 'By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved'. There's nothing required of you, but to enter through the door: the Lord Jesus Christ.

But as we go to these next two pieces of armour, I believe this giftedness that we find in it being given to us as a gift, handed by the armour-bearer - the Lord Jesus Christ - there is this sense that we are not going into the battle in our own confidence. We're not standing in our own strength, we have not adorned our self in this armour, but it is God's armour - and we go not alone against the foe:

'Strong in Thy strength,
Safe in Thy keeping tender'.

Isn't that right? I want to lay as the foundation, before we go any further - for I will say a lot of things tonight that empower us as believers - we must always remember, and we hear it so often in prayer: 'Without Thee, Lord Jesus, we can do nothing'. But sometimes we labour that too much, because we can do all things through Christ - never forget that! He has lavished upon us every single thing that we need, and we are not simply poor, redundant sinners now, we are rich! We are heirs, with Christ Jesus, of the grace of God. We must also remember though, that it is in His strength: 'Wherefore', verse 10, 'be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might'. Remember the book of Jude, chapter 1 verse 9: 'Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee'. So, before we go any further, we're not getting any fancy ideas that we are great spiritual warriors without God on our own - no! But we are standing in the strength of the Lord, and if we stand in His strength the rest of what we're going to study tonight is ours!



So, let's look first all at our first piece of armour tonight: the helmet of salvation - 'Take the helmet of salvation'. Now the helmet, literally, of that Roman soldier that Paul was looking at, was made of bronze and it had leather attachments whereby he fastened it onto his head. It had a band to protect his forehead, and it had plates that come down like sideburns to protect his cheeks. It also extended down the back of his neck, so that no one could come round the back and crack him on the neck with anything. So you can see that this helmet is protecting the whole of the head, and about all that can be seen are the eyes and the nose and the mouth, so that he can communicate, and so that he can see. A very heavy piece of armour it was, so heavy that they had to line the inside of it with felt, or with a sponge of some kind, so that it was comfortable. The history books tell us that the only weapons that could probably penetrate a helmet like this, was a hammer or an axe.

Now why is it that we need such a strong instrument of armour upon our heads? Well, it's quite obvious in the physical, military sense, that the head of the soldier is among one of the most important parts to be

defended - isn't that right? Even when we get on a motorbike, we put a helmet on, because so many important faculties that many of us have - maybe not all of us! - but many of us have, are found within our head. They need to be defended! The deadliest wounds that the enemy can inflict were on the head. The head was the part that commanded the whole body, and if the enemy wanted to wipe out that soldier he would aim for the head. Cut an arm off, and he could still resist a wee bit. Cut another limb off, perhaps he could still go on resisting - but if you cut his head off there's nothing much he can do about it, is there? He can't fight on in that battle. If he loses his head, he's in trouble!

Now what is the sense of the spiritual truth that Paul is wanting to convey to us this evening? Well first all, we must be fundamental with this. The helmet is salvation - let's not miss that - it is salvation, and salvation is simply the deliverance of you from sin by God. In Isaiah 59 we saw that this was the armour of God - it's actually God's armour! It's the armour that God wears, and God is giving us that armour, verse 17 he says: 'For he put on', God, 'righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak'. So, this is the helmet of God's salvation. Now, this is important, it's not just our heads being protected by a message, but it is our head being protected by God! For God is our salvation, not a message, God is our salvation, the message of the Gospel is that God is our salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. So we must see that, that this is the helmet of God's salvation. Our deliverance is offered in a person, the person of God Himself incarnate in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is His presence, it is His promise that covers the head.

If you imagine this: as the soldier faces the fight, imagine the effectiveness of facing the fight knowing that God is on your side. No matter how hot the battle gets, you can never be daunted if God is on your side. If God is for you, the word of God says nothing can be against you - why? Why can you not be daunted if you're wearing the helmet of salvation? Can I repeat it: because the ultimate victory has been secured! It is victory ground, it is victory armour, and this helmet of our salvation: it preserves us from surrender and retreat! If God be for us, who can stand against us?

So, it is the helmet of salvation - but secondly there is the sense that it is knowledge and assurance of salvation. You see, it's important for us to understand, and especially if you're not saved, that salvation is not an emotion. It is not without emotion, but it is not in essence an emotion. It is a rational knowledge, whereby you rationalise that you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to have your sins forgiven and to be saved. We dare not, in our circles, minimise the intellectual sense of the Gospel. You must think to believe. Therefore this helmet of salvation is protecting that thinking process, whereby you realised you were a sinner, you realised Christ died for you, you realised you needed to repent, and you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and you were born-again.

Now, let me say this: if there's any doubt in your head that you're saved - let me repeat that - if there is any doubt in your head that you are saved, you can never fight this battle. You have to have the helmet of assurance and knowledge of your salvation - and let me say to you tonight: if you've never ever accepted that, if you reach your arms out by faith, God will give you that helmet of salvation tonight! You can be assured that it is well with your soul. So, there is that knowledge and that assurance. Now believers, if you think about this for just a moment, what is the first thing that people begin to do when they're in a spiritual conflict? I'm not talking about mediocre temptation, I'm talking about a real spiritual war - sometimes we doubt our salvation, don't we? If you're honest, at least, you'll maybe say that. We think to ourselves: 'See that thought that just came into my head? Could a Christian think a thought like that?' - and then the devil perhaps comes along and says: 'No, a Christian couldn't think a thought like that, that must mean you're not a Christian! You've been kidding yourself! You're kidding your wife, you're kidding your family - you see what you're thinking, the things that you are starting to feel, and those temptatious desires that come upon you in a moment? You can't be saved!'

Now, let me say this: Satan may disrupt your daily victory, but he can do nothing to disrupt your position and your identity in the Lord Jesus - and never you forget that! No matter what he says, no matter what he does, he cannot change the fact that Christ has died, and you have died with Him; and Christ has risen, and you have risen with Him - and if you have put your trust and faith in Him, He is able to save to the uttermost all who come onto God by Him! Just as well He's a Saviour like that, otherwise we'd all be in trouble. But if he can get you to believe for one moment that you're not strong in Christ, to believe for one moment that you're not on victory ground, he has got you over a barrel! This is very important for us to note everything that is being said tonight - but if you have this helmet of salvation, in the sense of a knowledge and an assurance that it is well with your soul - you are persuaded and know that He is able to keep what you've committed unto Him against that day - you have the hope, the sure certain hope, of eternal life.

Now there's a few conclusions that emanate from that. The first is this: you'll not accept false doctrine. If you have a knowledge of what salvation is in the word of God, you'll not accept anything that is apart from that, any false teaching that tells you have to work for you salvation, or the cross was good but it wasn't enough and you have to do a wee bit more, or you have to belong to this church, or you have to wear these clothes. If you believe and imbibe that, you haven't got this assurance on your head, you haven't really got to grips rationally and intellectually with what this great gospel of God's grace is. If you have this helmet on, you'll never despair. You will never despair - never! You will never ever panic about the state of your soul, because this helmet of salvation lifts up the believer's head. Psalm 3:3: 'But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head'. Luke 21:28 says, speaking of the end times that we are probably in today: 'And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up', don't despair, 'and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh'. It's hope, not despair, not pessimism that we hear so much of today - but it is an assurance and knowledge that God is our salvation!

Now, what we tend to do is: we relegate salvation to the past, don't we? 'My salvation happened on the 3rd of November 1984, that's when I had salvation' - now, that's not biblical. Now yes, when you're saved, if you're truly saved and there is evidence of that salvation in your life, you are saved for eternity, you'll never be lost! But salvation in a sense is a process - the book of Ephesians, we've learnt in weeks gone by, teaches that you were saved, you are being saved, and in a later date you will be saved, for the redemption of the body still has to take place when we all go to heaven and we are like Him, because we see Him as He is. So there is a process here, and we need to be careful that we don't relegate this to the past in some way. Now here, I believe, is not a relegation to the past, but it means a strength now! A strength for the fight at this very moment to deal with Satan, to deal with the world, and to deal with the sins that attack us day by day - God is giving us a salvation that is able to cope now! It is able to overcome now and in the future!

Now I believe this is the third thing. First of all it was: helmet is salvation. Secondly, it's a knowledge and an assurance of our salvation. But thirdly it is a sure hope of the consummation in the future - the consummation of our salvation! What the devil would love us to believe is that 'You're never going to get to the end! You're never going to be able to see this Christian thing through! You're falling at every hurdle, you haven't even got through the first stage of the race, you're nowhere near the prize!' - but if you could just, by faith, take this helmet of salvation, you would realise that there is a hope! A hope in a biblical sense doesn't mean an airy-fairy, 'I hope it'll happen' - it is a sure faith upon the word of God that it will happen! In 1 Thessalonians 5 verse 8 this is exactly what you get, listen: 'But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation'.

What is the hope of salvation? Is your head cast down? Is it? Do you feel: 'I don't deserve to be here tonight. If you knew what I did today, if you knew the things that I'm going through, and the temptations that I'm grappling with...'? Listen: there is a hope that one day God will come through, God will consummate it. Philippians 1:6: 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ'. So many Christians, Satan trods them down, Satan accuses them,

Satan whispers in their ear: 'You're useless, you'll never make anything of this Christian life. Who ever told you to be Christian, did they not know what you were like? Did they not know you'd be a failure?'. But when you have this helmet of salvation upon your head:

'When Satan tempts me to despair,
Upward I look and see Him there,
Who made an end of all my sin'.

That's what it's all about. The point behind this helmet is that a good helmet is a confidence builder. Now, how's your confidence tonight in the Lord Jesus? You need the helmet. In 1988 there was a heavyweight championship fight between Mike Tyson and Michael Simms, and there were two things that were said about that fight. The first was the calm demeanour of Tyson before the fight - that's not strange, sure it's not! When you look at his muscles, the massive muscles that he had, and still has - those muscles gave him lethal confidence. It made him calm before the fight, that's the first thing. The second thing about the fight is his punching power, that Simms was down after 91 seconds. Two things notable: his confidence in his muscular power, and secondly the quickness of the defeat. Now that's a very fleshly example, but it is true, isn't it? If you're confident in God, you will be confident of a quick victory.

The shield of faith that we studied last week was a confidence, wasn't it? A dependence on God - but it was more of a general confidence, generally speaking, in all of God's promises and God's word. But this confidence that I'm talking about in the helmet of salvation is a bold, joyful, consciousness of what you have in Christ. It's that knowledge of what you have in God going down to your heart, and thrilling you to enthuse you and to go through your veins to strengthen you to stand. Now, let's expand this: what is the mind? That's where the helmet is, on the head where the mind is found. Well, the head is the seat of the mind, isn't it? The seat of our thought, and our reasons, and our intellect - and that is where Satan wants to attack. He wants to attack the mind. Satan's objective is to shift us off the victory ground that we have in Christ. He wants to convince us that we are not on it, he wants to undermine God's word that tells us we're on it, and he wants to rob us of the joy of knowing we're on it.

Now how many of us here tonight has he done that for? How many of us have heads that look down, and Satan has pushed us off our victory ground that is our own? He plants a certain thought in your mind, and it stays there. You get involved in a certain sin, and you can't get untangled from it, and Satan convinces you that you're done for - that's the end. That's why Peter says in 1 Peter 1:13: 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ'. 2 Corinthians 10:5 Paul says: 'Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ'. There is a battle for the mind, a battle! Christian, you are in that battle, and if the devil gets into your mind he'll take off your head!

It's a fact, isn't it, that the spiritual battle will either be won in the mind, or lost in the mind? Sin doesn't start in your hands, or in your feet, or in your eyes, it starts in your head. It starts when you conceive of a thought, or conceive of an action, and that conceiving stems in an action, and is brought forth in fruit of a deed that is done and a transgression that is committed. That's the way that Eve was defeated in the garden in Genesis 3, and Paul uses it as an example of our temptation in 2 Corinthians 11:3, he says: 'But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ'. Now, what we do is we live thinking that our salvation depends on our success or our failure - we don't really believe that, we subscribe to eternal security, but in our hearts we feel that: 'You know, am I really saved, or am I really going to get to heaven the way I'm living?'. Now let me say this: that is not an excuse for you to be living in sin, and if you're living in sin you need to shake yourself and get out of it now. But when the devil tells you things that are not true, and accuses you of lies - things that don't even

remotely resemble the truth - and we believe it, Satan gains a victory! When he tells us that we have to gain the victory, he's gaining, for we've got it - and the helmet of salvation works when we realise that, no matter what the world, no matter what the flesh or the devil do to us, nothing can alter our standing in God! You are a child of God, and nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! Nothing!

Now this is important, and I want you to note this because I want to be as practical as possible in the realm of this that we're talking about - in the mind. There are channels through which the devil pumps all his rubbish through. There are ways in which the devil communicates thoughts - and at times, as believers, we're shaken by the thoughts that come into our minds. They're so disconcerting, the images that appear upon the walls of our thoughts, and they appal us at times. You know what I'm talking about, the filth that suddenly, out of nowhere, just floods into your head. Now, the problem comes when those thoughts are permitted for one moment to remain in your mind, and the next step from remaining is for them to fester, and the next step after that is that it threatens the health of your soul. It's as if there's a television screen in your head, in the mind of every believer, and when the devil switches it on the most detestable pictures that you can imagine appear. Now if you begin, for one moment, to entertain such a sight you will lose your grip on reality! And let me tell you this: you'll lose your grip on the victory that you have in Christ - and that is exactly what the devil wants you to do, believer! He's not that concerned whether you sin or whether you don't sin, he just wants to get you off your ground!

If you continue to watch, you continue to think about those evil thoughts, the battle is over and you become a slave to your carnal nature. Let me say: it's not always the devil's fault, it's not always his fault. Sometimes it's not the television in our head, it's the television in our living room that's the problem. Pictures being flooded into our minds - and let's ask the question: if I fill my mind with garbage and end up that I have no victory in Christ, what do we expect? As Ivor Powell said: 'When the mind' - this is the alternative - 'when the mind of the believer is filled with thoughts of God's amazing grace, and the soul is tuned to God's broadcasting station, it becomes increasingly difficult for any pirate station to silence God's broadcast from heaven'. That's why Paul says: 'Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, good report - if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things'. Now just before we go on to our next piece of armour: is there anyone here tonight, including me, that needs to pray: 'Lord, restore unto me the joy of my salvation'? You'll not lose your salvation, but if he can take away your joy, he'll be happy.



Secondly there's the sword of the Spirit. Verse 17, second half: 'Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'. Now the Roman soldier that Paul was looking at, the sword that he had was a little short, two-edged, 'cut and thrust' sword that was wielded by the heavily armoured legionary. It wasn't the big broad sword that you sometimes see drawn, it was a short sword. It was a short sword made for the heat of the battle. Now this sword that Paul is talking about, he says it is the word of God - it's been made by the Spirit of God. It has been wrought and edged by the Holy Spirit - it is like Goliath's sword, there is none like it! He - the Holy Spirit - whose sword it is, inspired it, and you find that in 2 Peter 1 and verse 21: 'For the prophecy', the words that we have been reading tonight, 'came not in old time by the will of man' - it wasn't some boy like Peter or Paul said: 'I think I'll write a letter to the Ephesians today' - 'but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost'. This is the word of God!

Now the method of our defence is the sword of the Spirit. But it's not just a method of defence like the other parts of the armour, it's also a method of attack. The history books tell us that Cromwell's Ironside soldiers fought with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other hand - now we don't go to that extreme, because we wrestle not against flesh and blood. But in a sense that is what our battle is to be, with the sword of the Spirit, with the

word of God - and we will never win the battle, we will never defend our souls, without the word of God, the sword of the Spirit. Peter tried to defend the Lord, remember, with the sword in the garden - but he found out later, on the day of Pentecost, that the sword of the Spirit does a better job than the metal sword does, isn't that right? The sword of the Spirit - the physical sword pierces the body, but the Spirit's sword pierces the heart. The physical sword wears with use, and wears down and goes blunt - but the Spirit's sword gets sharper and sharper the more it's used.

It is a two-edged sword, cuts both ways. Some with conviction, some with conversion, some with condemnation. You can read about it when you go home - we don't have time to read it - in Isaiah 11 verse 4, in Revelation 19 and verse 5, you can read about it right throughout the word of God. It's coming out of the mouth of Christ, Isaiah 49:2: 'He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me'. But the miracle about this sword is this: yes, it is the word of God, but it is put into the hand of the believer as an offensive weapon to the devil! Psalm 149:6 says: 'Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand'. What a privilege it is, isn't it? There's not one bit of armour that's for retreating - and this is a bit of armour that's not just for protection, but for going forward. Our safety is not in running away from the devil, believer, for there's no protection for the soldier's back. Our only safety is resisting the devil on redemption ground with the word of God that 'is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart'.

Now what is this sword? Well, I've already said it's the word of God, but it's the sword of the Spirit - look at verse 17: 'Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'. Now that 'which is the word of God' can be translated like this: 'which is God's utterance', which is God's utterance. Now the word of God that you find in the Greek language in John chapter 1 is the word 'logos' - 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' - 'logos' right throughout that chapter. The 'logos' is the personified Christ in flesh, the word, the description of God and who He is. But the word that's used here is the word 'rema' (sp?), and it speaks not of the word of God in flesh, but it speaks of the spoken word, a divine utterance, literally 'a saying of God' - the words that come from the very mouth of God. It's not the usual expression used in the word of God for the word of God 'logos', now why is that?

We must ask the question: why is that so? I'll tell you why it's so - and you note this now, believers, because you're going to need this - in the midst of battle it is the spoken word of God that does the trick. You've got to utter God's words. We defeat the devil when we speak aloud God's truth - and if the devil comes to you and you pick up your Bible and you throw it at him, that's going to do no good, sure it's not? It's the spoken word of God, it's speaking what God has said - there's a difference. When you say: 'Now, here is what God says', when you have a definite saying of God for that definite situation, you'll defeat him! But don't forget this: that the greatest sword in the world is useless if you don't use it. It's here, but we've got to use it - now, it's not the whole Bible, that's not what it is. It's not Genesis to Revelation, that's not what the Holy Spirit is saying here - as Harry Ironside says: 'This Bible is not the sword of the Spirit, it is the armoury and there are thousands of swords in here, and every one of them is powerful and two-edged'. What this 'rema' is, the word of God, is an appropriate word of the scripture for your specific situation to drive away Satan. Now, please note that, it's not the whole word of God. If the devil comes and tempts you tomorrow and you say: 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth', that's not going to do anything. You'll need a specific verse that will deal with your specific situation.

Now here's the second thing to note - we'll come back to that if we've time - the second thing to note is: why it is important to speak the word of God. Why it's important to utter it audibly, and not just believe it in your heart or to think it in your head. Now let me please labour on this for a moment - this is so so important:

never forget that Satan is a created being. He is a creature, and he doesn't perfectly know what you are thinking. Now let me say this: he can, by observing you, get a bit of a gist - because he's been observing humanity for thousands of years - I could look at you and say that you're worried, couldn't I? Well, he can do it to - but he can't read your mind. He doesn't know what you're about to do before you do it. Yes, he can put thoughts in your mind, and he can see by your reaction to those thoughts the way you behave, and he can tell whether you're buying his lie or not - just like I'm trying to influence you with this message, I can't read your mind, but I'm trying to influence you, I'm putting thoughts into your mind - he can do that. But if you're going to resist the devil successfully, listen: you must speak God's word outwardly! He can't read your thoughts, he can't see what's in your heart, if you're going to put him to flight you'll have to tell him.

That's the two most common misconceptions about the devil - people believe he can read your mind, he can't! People believe he knows the future, he can't! Those are divine attributes! Those belong to God alone! Yes, you can communicate to God through your spirit, because He resides within your spirit and He reads the hearts and intents of men - yes! But you can't communicate to Satan that way! Oh, this is so important, and I'm quite sure it's not long since I had this revealed to me - and it's in the word of God: rema, rema, the spoken word, it's all here. It's amazing to me to think that if we command Satan upon the authority of the spoken word, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, he goes! If we, in our own hearts at that moment of battle, commit ourselves to God and outwardly, verbally, resist the devil - he will flee from us! What a victory!

Now let me say this: this is nothing to do with our strength. Corinthians says: 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds' - and if you go home tonight please, and look at the Lord Jesus Christ, look at His example in temptation in Luke chapter 4 verses 1 to 13. Three times He quoted the word of God, not just random, but He quoted the appropriate verse for that appropriate situation. When the devil tempted Him, when He was hungry, to turn stones into bread, the Lord Jesus said: 'It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word' - incidentally 'rema', the spoken word - 'of God'. Satan suggested an easy way for Him to get the world - bow down to me and I'll give You everything - but the Lord said: 'Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve'. Satan can get religious you know, he tempted the Lord to exercise His faith and throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple, and he even quoted the word of God to Him! He says: 'God will not suffer Thy foot to be dashed against a stone, He gives His angels charge over Thee' - but he only quoted part of the scripture, because the word of God says: 'He'll keep thee in all thy ways', and it wasn't one of Christ's ways to throw Himself off the temple to test the devil. The Lord said: 'Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God'. And the miracle of grace is this: that that resisting of temptation is ours, because the armour that He wore, He has given to us. Three times He resisted him, and then it says - glory to His name! - the devil leaves him, and he'll leave you to if you follow His way.

Every talented swordsman has to acquaint himself with the weapon. Are you acquainting yourself with the word of God? Are you assimilating the word of God? Bunyan, in Pilgrim's Progress this time, speaks of Apollyon who is the devil - it's a name for the devil. He says this with regard to Apollyon attacking Christian, listen to this: 'Then Apollyon espying his opportunity, began to gather up close to Christian, and wrestling with him, gave him a dreadful fall; and with that Christian's Sword flew out of his hand. Then said Apollyon, I am sure of thee now; and with that he had almost pressed him to death; so that Christian began to despair of life. But, as God would have it, while Apollyon was fetching of his last blow, thereby to make a full end of this good man, Christian nimbly reached out his hand for his Sword, and caught it, saying, Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy! When I fall I shall arise; and with that gave him a deadly thrust, which made him give back, as one that had received his mortal wound. Christian perceiving that, made at him again; saying, Nay, in all these things we are more than Conquerors, through him that loved us. And with that Apollyon spread forth his Dragon's wings, and sped him away, and Christian saw him no more'. Hallelujah!

He'd got it right, Bunyan, hadn't he? Valiant-for-truth, that we find in that great masterpiece, said this at the end of his days - please listen to this: 'I fought till my Sword did cleave to my hand, and then they were joined together as if a Sword grew out of my arm. And when the blood run through my fingers, then I fought with most courage'. He had resisted unto blood against sin. As we close let me say this: this whole armour of God is putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, putting off the clothes and works of the flesh and putting on Him. The belt of truth: 'I am the way the truth and the life'. The breastplate of righteousness: 'We are made the righteousness of God in him'. The shoes of peace: 'He is our peace, who has broken down every wall of partition'. His faithfulness makes our faith possible. 'The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' - He is our salvation! He is the word of God made flesh to dwell among us. Paul told the Romans in chapter 13: 'It's time to waken up, put off the flesh, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ'.

Let's bow our heads, and you see if you're here tonight and you're not saved, well you can have the victory through the Lord Jesus. Victory over sin, temptation, and you can know Him as your Saviour and your Lord - speak to me afterwards if you want to trust the Lord. Christian, how mighty it is that we have a Saviour who has overcome, and if we stand in His armour and on His victory we will know the joy of our salvation. Lord Jesus, we thank Thee, we worship Thee and bless Thee, for Thou art a great Saviour - the Victor, the Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords. Lord, we pray that we will know more of Thee in these days, more of the victory that was won at Calvary, in Thy name, Amen.

The Holy War - Chapter 5

"Constant Prayer"

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Ephesians 6:18a

1. **PRAYER – A Way Of Life**
2. **PRAYER – A Constant Communion**
3. **PRAYERLESSNESS – A Cause Of Defeat**

We're turning to Ephesians and chapter 6. If you're warm, I'm feeling quite warm - I think the temperature has gone up slightly in last 24 hours, so if you're warm just take your jacket off, or make yourself comfortable in some way so that you can concentrate. We don't want anybody falling asleep in the meeting! Get comfortable so that we can hear the word of God. This is our fifth study in the armour of God that we've been going through in Ephesians chapter 6. It is our thirty-second study in the book of Ephesians itself, and we're beginning, as it were, another little series around verse 18 of chapter 6. We've been looking at the many items of the armour of God that we find here, that God gives us as His children to fight the battle of faith.



We're going to read the verses to begin with, from verse 10, the whole of the armour of God. Verse 10 of chapter 6: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'. Here is our verse, and we'll be spending perhaps three or four weeks on this verse: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints".

Now I want simply this evening, just to deal with those first few words in verse 18: 'Praying always'. I've entitled this study: 'Constant Prayer' - praying always. Now, we're dealing tonight with the seventh piece of armour within the armour of God - and you might have thought last week as we looked at the sixth piece, the sword of the Spirit, that we were finished looking at the armour of God. But that, I believe, is not the case - for in this passage prayer is given as the energy that enables the Christian soldier to wear the armour of God, and effectively to wield those weapons that he has been given, specifically the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. Therefore as we come to verse 18 in the context of all these verses, we see that prayer is the necessity of every soldier in the battle of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's necessary for a soldier to be in constant communication with his great Captain and Commander, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We have learnt in weeks gone by that this battle is the Lord's, it is not our battle, but the battle belongs to the Lord. That is why we stand in the confidence, and stand in the victory that we have in the Lord - it's not in our own strength that we fight against the enemy. So, with that as a backdrop we realise that if we are clothed with the armour of God, given by God to fight and to take on the enemy, it's important that we always keep in communication with our Captain, with the High Command. This is the way, Paul says, that we stand in the strength of the Lord, this is the way that we equip ourselves in the power of His might. Now some scholars link verse 18 with verse 19 and verse 20, and they don't believe that there is a link in the sense that this is part of the armour of God, they believe that the armour of God finishes in verse 17 at the end. They believe that verse 18, 19 and 20 are a section on their own - but I don't believe that. I believe that we're dealing with this evening, in verse 18, the seventh piece of the armour of God Almighty.

We are told: 'Watching', look at verse 18, 'Watching thereunto with all perseverance' - there is the call to battle, the call to be alert, and I believe that's in keeping with the theme of this chapter of the warrior of God, and the armour of God. The other pieces of equipment are important, but once they are adorned by the soldier of God, prayer is the energy with which to walk onto the battlefield. Prayer is the equipment by which the soldier breathes, prayer is the life flowing through his veins, enabling him to fight for God and for Christ. Without prayer, even the greatest Christian that you could ever, or do ever, know is absolutely ineffective and helpless within this holy war without prayer. Now please let me emphasise that: for we go into the battle, and we are to be going into the battle not in our own strength, but if we go into the battle with the girdle, the belt of truth, with the breastplate of righteousness, with our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel, with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, we are useless! Can I repeat that? We are useless without prayer!

There's no use getting a statue of Montgomery, and putting him onto the battlefields of Europe, and dressing him up in all the armour that you can, and giving him all the medals along his breast that he won - he will do nothing in the battle because there's no blood running through his veins, there's no breath in his lungs, there's no life in him! You might as well push a statue onto a battlefield as go in with all the armour of God upon you, as a child of God, and be without prayer. Now this is so important, this is the climax of our studies. Prayer is the energy of the soldier, do you know why? Because it brings God onto the battlefield, it brings God into your situation, your life conflict, the spiritual warfare and battlefield that we are all engaged in, prayer is the mechanism to let God enter into the midst of it!

You remember in the Old Testament when Amalek attacked Israel, as the children of God were being attacked and all the army were on the battlefield - it was Moses, the man of God, who went up onto the mountaintop to pray. While Joshua used the sword on the ground, there was Moses up on the mountain - Joshua fighting, Moses praying. That is what I want you to get into your mind: that there is this dual-purpose of fighting, but if you don't pray as you're in the battle it's absolutely useless, because prayer is the power behind the victory. Now, prayer is obviously a very topical subject within the Christian church, it's very important. So much talk can go on about prayer, that we don't really define what it is, and that's why I'm taking a few weeks over verse 18 - for I believe that there are different aspects of prayer found in this verse, and if we skim over them we'll lose the whole point of it.

It's not just any kind of prayer that will do for this battle, there is a specific type of prayer found within verse 18. Let me say this before I go on any further: there are very few things that the enemy dreads more than this weapon of prayer, and because of that he would do all in his power to let you understand the first, the second, the third, right to the sixth piece of armour, if you could just forget about the seventh! I believe that is what he has done in our world, and within the church of Jesus Christ - he gets people to forget about prayer. Now you will note that prayer is the seventh piece of armour within this series of adornments for the soldier of God, and you will also know - I'm sure - that seven, within the scripture, is the number of perfection. I believe that is not without significance in our context here, that Paul is saying - the Holy Spirit

through him - that this is the perfect, this is the ending, this is the icing, the crown on the head of the armour of God: you need prayer! Without prayer you're useless.

Bunyan called this weapon, and part of the armour, 'All-Prayer'. He says in his great work *Pilgrim's Progress*: 'So Christian was forced to put up his sword and betake himself to another weapon' - when all had failed he called upon All-Prayer - 'So he cried in my hearing, Oh Lord, I beseech Thee, deliver my soul', All-Prayer! What are we saying? We're saying that prayer is the supreme weapon to be used by the soldier in God's army. Prayer is the weapon that God has given to us that we might wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against these principalities and powers, against rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. But if we make the mistake, as half the religious world does today, of thinking that we are just talking this evening about saying our prayers, you may forget about it! What I'm talking about this evening is a lot more than 'saying prayers', we're talking about a weapon of God, we're talking about a prayer, a type of prayer that prevails with God and prevails with men.

Now my question at the outset and at the introduction of our study is this: do your prayers prevail? I believe it was Montgomery, I think it was, Bishop Montgomery who was the grandfather of Montgomery that I've just mentioned, the great commander, who wrote that hymn, great hymn of prayer. One of the verses says: 'I often say my prayers, but do I ever pray?' - a very valid question. Do our prayers prevail with God? I sense, maybe I'm wrong, that some might say: 'Oh, here he goes again. Prayer again, we've heard it before. He gets it into some of his messages, and even when he's not doing a series on it he fits it in! He's talking about it again, about praying!'. Can I say this: that as long as I have breath in my body, and as long as I can preach or talk in any sense, I will preach upon prayer! And I'll not stop, no matter what anybody does or says! Do you know why? Because I am following my Lord Jesus Christ, and that's more important than pleasing men, or tickling ears.

He strove - if you read the Gospels - quite clearly you'll see that He strove to put the saints to prayer in His days of ministry, that was one of His purposes: to get His disciples onto their knees, seeking their heavenly Father! Our Lord Jesus Christ was moved by the laziness of His own disciples not to go into the harvest fields and to pluck, as brands from the burning, the ripened fruit of the harvest - and such lack of labours, such lack of prayers with His own people - He was wont to say: 'Pray ye therefore!'. That's the Lord - pray the Lord of harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest field. You see it was our Lord that said, it's recorded of Him that: 'He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint'.

I believe that the Gospel moves like a snail when the saints are not at prayer early, when the saints are not at prayer late, and when the saints are not at prayer long - and as long as I have the grace of God, and the ability, and the faithfulness given to me by His mercy, I will do all that I can to put the saints of God to prayer! We must have prayer, for it is the energy of God's battle, and if we don't have it we don't have the energy, and we will lose! To that end, let us look at what this prayer, praying always, really is. I've defined it in three ways. First of all: it is a way of life, prayer is a way of life. Secondly: prayer is a constant communion. Thirdly: prayerlessness, the antithesis of this always praying, is the cause of defeat, I believe, within the church.

Now, if you look at verse 18: 'Praying always', literally in the Greek it could be translated like this: 'Praying on all occasions'. Not just in the thick of battle, this is not just a weapon that can be used in the bloody, smoky mass of a warrior's battlefield, but this is a piece of weaponry that can be used in preparation for the battle. It is a thing to be worn so that we are ready to fight. Now, of course, it is critical in the hour of need, and in the hour when the enemy attacks, but this weapon itself must be used before you get into the heat of the war. In verse 13 we see this: 'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand' - that's the future, isn't it? Take it now that you will be able to stand, so you're being prepared by all prayer for this great battle.

I'm sure that you've already gathered, but I want to really tease this out, that this prayer by necessity and definition in this word 'always praying' is not a sporadic thing. It's not out of the blue, but it's habitual. It's not an isolated act, literally it means 'in every season of life, always praying'. It implies opportunity - in other words, every opportunity you get to pray, you ought to pray! Now we've seen that Colossians is almost a mirror image to parts of this book of Ephesians, and Paul again in Colossians 4:2 reflects this truth, listen: 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving'. Again the words are used, Luke 21:36: 'Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man' - watch ye therefore, and pray always!

Now what does this mean? Well, it means first of all that it's not just in emergencies. Isn't it true that sometimes the only word that the Lord hears from us, as His children, is 'Help'? When we need Him - now we need Him all the time, but when we are conscious of our need because of some calamity that has come upon us. You know that praying around the flag pole in America is banned, but I've been told that in a certain American school there's a sign on the wall, and it says this: 'In case of an earthquake the ban against prayer will be temporarily discontinued'. Isn't that the way we view prayer? We use it in an emergency when we need it! But that's not what Paul is talking about, the idea here is that it's a continual thing, a habitual thing, not reserved for special occasions, but - as our first point says - a way of life.

Ivor Powell says of this, let me say that I'll be quoting a great deal of writers tonight, because they say it in a better way than I can say it - and I want to encourage you to go away and read them on prayer. Ivor Powell says: 'Periods of anxious prayer are only known when a doctor suggests a visit to the hospital. When trouble looms on the horizon, or when people are about to lose something they eagerly desire to retain, then they besiege the throne of grace asking for divine intervention! Afterward they go on a vacation, blissfully forgetting that their heavenly Father would dearly love to see a little more of the people whose voices are heard only when the need becomes frightening' - he's right, isn't he? The truth of the matter is, when things are going well there is little use of prayer for many of us. But that is not what Paul's truth that he has had revealed to him is, his truth is: when the sun is shining, when the storm clouds are gathering, prayer is the constant practice of the believer's life - if he calls himself a Christian, and one of Christ's-ones, he is as he said to the Thessalonians: '[to] pray without ceasing'.

Now, let's face it, we're in the battle every day - if you're conscious of it, and if you're not just giving in to every temptation that comes along, you're in the battle everyday. If you're like a corpse every day in the battle, you're not going to get too far. You need that energy, that breath, that vein pulsing through your body, to face the enemy. So that necessitates that it must be a habitual, daily practice ingrained in your life - not something only when we face trouble. Arthur T. Pearson wrote a biography on that great Christian George Mueller. One day Arthur Pearson was sitting with him, talking to him about the great provision that God had brought for Mueller by his faith and his prayer. As they were talking together about God their provider, Mueller was writing a letter and Pearson noticed that he was having difficulty within the nib of his pen, it didn't seem to be working right. Right in the middle of their conversation together, Mueller bowed his head in prayer and prayed to God for a few moments. Then he began writing again, and Pearson asked: 'What were you praying about?' - and Mueller said: 'Well, perhaps you didn't notice I was having trouble with this pen point, and I haven't got another pen point, and this is an important letter, so I was asking the Lord to help me so that I could write it clearly'. 'Dear me', said Pearson, 'a man who trusts God for millions of pounds also prays about a scratchy pen point'.

That's what Paul's talking about here: a way of life. Not just praying about the big things, but praying about all things at all times - when things are going well, when things are not going well, we need strength for the battle. We can't think that we can just rush into the throne room of God when we're in trouble, push into His

presence by some quiet time that's relegated in some part of our week - or even some part of our day, let me say! But in the midst of God's battle the soldier has a constant, every moment, need to fall on his knees, knee-deep in prayer - he fights on his knees! You may not have heard of Edward Payson (sp?), but he said this: 'Prayer is the first thing, the second thing, and the third thing necessary to ministry. Pray, therefore, my dear brother, pray, pray, pray!'. And the biographer of Payson said this: 'Prayer was pre-eminently the business of his life'. That's what I'm talking about, and that's why those who have followed him called him 'Praying Payson of Portland'.

Let me tell you a story about him. When they were preparing his coffin, they were taking his clothes worn off him, and they found that his knees were calloused, like James the great apostle of prayer. They went into his bedroom and they noticed at the side of his bed - he had no carpet, none of the luxuries that we have - but at the side of his bed there were two grooves in the floorboards, six inches long. You know how they got there - a way of life, a way of living, to be in constant intercession, so much so that your life ploughs into creation by the very fact that you're crying to God right with every breath that you have. Now I want to say this: no man is greater than his prayer life. Listen: no man is greater than his prayer life, and that cuts us down to size, doesn't it? I don't care how well you preach, it doesn't matter how many books a man has written or a man has read, it doesn't matter how well he is in dispensational prophetic teaching, doesn't matter. All God wants to know is how much his heart follows after Him.

Now my friends, this is serious stuff, this is a life of prayer, this is learning it young - and I hope the young people learn this young, that they're never ever going to impress God by anything that they are, or anything that they have, but like Enoch if they would walk with God they would please God! Oh, that we would learn it as an assembly, that in the book of Acts they all continued - all of them - with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren. Acts 2:42: 'They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers'. You see, the reason why I labour this subject so much is because the Lord Jesus, as I've already said, was a man of prayer. He was a teacher of prayer. E.M. Bounds says this, listen: 'The Lord essentially was the teacher of prayer, it covered the whole of His life. He was the suppliant of all suppliants, He was the intercessor of all intercessors. On earth He knew no higher law, no holier business, no diviner life, than to plead to God for men. On earth He lived and prayed and died for men. In heaven He knows no more higher royal estate, no higher theme, than to intercede for men. His life, His death, and His exaltation, all plead for men. Is there any higher work for the disciple to do than that his Lord did? Is there any loftier employment?' - no there isn't!

Can you see Him going into the wilderness? Can you see Him climbing up the mountain to pray? Can you see Him kneeling in the garden? Can you see Him withdrawing from the crowd that press upon Him for attention? He must, He must needs pray. As the poet put it like this:

'How oft He sought the mountain top, and knelt upon its crest,
To pray and lay His weary head upon His Father's breast.
Before He called the twelve to Him, He prayed all night alone,
And when the day began to dawn, He chose them for His own.

They saw Him lift up holy hands, and raise His tear-stained eyes,
Again they saw Him on His knees, and with new strength arise.
The awe of His appealing words grew greater day by day,
Until they humbly said to Him: Lord, teach us how to pray!'

S. D. Gordon, who has written many books on prayer, said this of our Lord: 'The Lord Jesus is still praying. Thirty years of living, three years of serving, one tremendous act of dying, 2000 years of prayer - what an

emphasis on prayer!'. When men's lives are full of prayer in the quiet place, they don't need to waffle in the prayer meeting. When men are praying long at home, do you know all they need as they walk along their way? A little arrow to God and they have power with God, because their life is saturated with Him in presence of prayer - a life of prayer! What am I talking about? I'm talking about you and God! I'm talking about prayer, you and your wife, you and your family, you and your meal, you and your decisions - in all your ways acknowledging Him! Och, I know the cry comes: 'I'm too busy'. Do you know what the tragedy is today? We are too busy! We are fatally too busy when we have no time for this great occupation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I want to bring a note of caution, because I don't want to create the impression to you this evening that long praying is always good praying, because it's not always good praying. But let me say this: if you're praying well you'll be spending a lot of time over it. We don't want to get the stage where we are measuring our prayer life by the quantity of time that we have God, looking at the clock: 'I've got by 10 minutes, or 20 minutes, or half an hour' - that's not the reason why I'm talking about always praying. But what I want to emphasise and impress upon your mind from the word of God is this: much time is needed with God in prayer! Much time! The great Spurgeon, I'm led to believe, said - and I've said this before - that he couldn't, at times, pray any more than 20 minutes long, but he said that 20 minutes never ever went by that he didn't pray to God. That is living by prayer, that's a life of prayer with God.

It's not a hasty decision that you run like a comer and a goer into the presence of God, but what I'm talking about is Jacob's victory - if Jacob hadn't wrestled with God all night he wouldn't have got the blessing! Don't dilute it! Don't doctor and mechanic the word of God! He had to wrestle with God! We have to wrestle too. I'm talking about what Daniel did, three times a day he set his face toward God to seek Him. I'm talking about the apostle Paul, he prayed day and night. David: 'Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice!' How do we measure up?

It's a way of life, but secondly: it is a constant communion. People look at this verse and they say: 'Well, what did he mean? You know, is this possible? Always praying?'. Well there's a dual answer to that: yes and no. No, it's not possible to carry on a running dialogue with God every moment of the day, that isn't possible for anyone to do throughout all of our business. We can't be continually saying our prayers in a sense, but that assumes that praying is a running dialogue with God. As far as I can understand from the word of God it's not, it's not just talking out loud to God, it's not just consciously talking to Him through your mind, that's not what prayer is within the word of God. There are various types of prayer, and some of them include those types of things, but more than that: prayer is an attitude of dependence, conscious dependence on God. It may not be a continual dialogue in your mind or out of your mouth, but it is conscious nevertheless. You are aware that you are in the presence of God, and it is possible - Yes! It is possible! - to know that all of the time.

We're not talking about much speaking, that the Lord talked about in Matthew 6, but we're talking about a constant communion with the Lord Jesus - in other words, as one man said: 'Keeping the receiver off the hook'. We should never have to say when we're coming into prayer: 'Lord, we come into Thy presence' - now I know it's a matter of form that we say that, but in a sense we should always as a child of God be in the presence of God. Let me say in relation to the armour of God: if that is our disposition, none of the devil's attacks will find us off our guard. That is Paul's point: if you continue in prayer as a way of life, if you continue always praying as a constant communion with God, he will never get a foothold!

Now, what does this mean, this constant communion? Thomas Kelly, in his book 'Testament of Devotion', says this: 'There is a way of ordering our mental life on more than one level at once. On one level we can be thinking, discussing, seeing, calculating, meeting all the demands of our external affairs - but deep within, behind the scenes, at a profounder level, we may also be in prayer and adoration, in song and in worship, and

a gentle receptiveness to the divine breathings of God'. Oh, this is wonderful. This was the vision of the medieval monk that I keep mentioning to you, Brother Lawrence. Do you know what he said? 'The time of business does not differ with me from one time of prayer, and in the noise and clatter of my kitchen, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in a great tranquillity as if I were on my knees'.

John Fletcher, whose whole life was a life of prayer, it is said of him that he wouldn't rise from his seat without rising his heart to God. Robert Murray McCheyne said: 'I ought to spend the best hours in communion with God, it is my noblest and most fruitful employment and is not to be thrust into a corner. The morning hours from 6 to 8 are most uninterrupted and should be thus employed. After tea is my best hour, and that should be solemnly dedicated to God. I ought not to give up the good old habit of prayer before going to bed, but guard must be kept against sleep. When I awake in the night I ought to rise and pray. A little time after breakfast might be given to intercession' - what a man! What a life of prayer! This was the man who also said: 'What a man is on his knees, he is, and no more'!

Now please don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting that you go away and make the mistake that many men, including myself, have made, and try to imitate these great men of God - because you'll not do it. You will fail. Imitating Mueller, imitating Murray McCheyne - but what I do want you to do is get the vision that they had, get the desire to be men and women of prayer like they were. If you come to God with such a holy, righteous desire spawned by His Spirit in your soul, and ask Him: 'Lord, teach me to pray like these men prayed' - He'll lead you! Start off small now, don't be trying to do great things too fast, but come to God - but whatever you do, start somewhere! Don't do what most do and give a wink and a nod, and a casual approach to prayer, that in the eyes of God means nothing in heaven.

John Wesley had this experience of a constant communion with God, let me quote him: 'His heart', his biographer said this, 'Wesley's heart is ever lifted up to God, at all times, and in all places, in all this he is never hindered, much less interrupted, by any person or by anything. In retirement or in company, in leisure or in business, in conversation his heart is ever with the Lord. Whether he lie down or rise up God is in all of his thoughts. He walks with God continually, having the loving eye of his mind still fixed upon Him, and everywhere seeing Him that is invisible'. Now we asked this question: praying always, is it possible as a way of life? Yes! Praying always, is it possible as a constant communion with God, that is conscious in mind and heart? Yes! Oh, it's possible! It's possible for the housewife and the full-time mother, the businessman, the student - it's possible. As Watchman Nee said, this is the normal Christian life.

But thirdly, here's the antithesis of it: prayerlessness - not praying always, and that is the cause of defeat. Richard Sibbes said this: 'When we go to God by prayer, the devil knows we go to fetch strength against him, and therefore he opposeth us all that he can'. He knows the armour of God as well as you, he can read you know! In fact he can quote the word of God, and he knows that you will get power to fight him in prayer, always praying - and he will do all in his power to stop you praying! Now how's he doing it? It's right that:

'The devil trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees'.

And the devil, the enemy, is watching always for a breaking of contact between headquarters and the soldier on the battlefield - and he wants to take advantage of every interruption in communication. That means, to impress it upon you again, that we must be constantly in prayer, because we are constantly in danger! It is my fear that in the age in which we live, neither with preacher nor with people is much intent on God. Leonard Ravenhill, in his book 'Why Revival Tarries' which I have recommended so many times - it's in the bookstall - he says this: 'We have many organisers, but few agonisers; many players and payers, but few

pray-ers; many singers, but few clingers; lots of pastors, but few wrestlers; many fears, but few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, and few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters' - and I've added one of my own: a few less preachers on prophecy, and a few more prophets of prayer! We need to be in the battle now!

Bounds said: 'One of the crying evils of these times, maybe of all times, is little or no praying. Of these two evils, perhaps little praying is worse than no praying. Little praying', he says, 'is a kind of make-believe, a salve for the conscience, a farce and a delusion. The little estimate we put on prayer is evident from the little time we give to it'. Do we pray for a few moments before we run to the bus, or drive to the office, and think that that is prayer? That is not prayer, certainly not the prayer that Paul's talking about here - 'always praying'. There is a danger that the church can get occupied by peripheral things, by its mechanisms, by its organisations, even by its preaching - the Pastor can get so engrossed, losing himself in the sermon [so much] that he loses God in the sermon. There is this great danger, and we must beware that we do not let anything orientate us but God! As one man quipped it: 'When the church paid the place was taken, but in the book of Acts when they prayed the ground was shaken'.

My friends tonight, as we close in this last seven or so minutes let me say this: Sodom's sin in the Old Testament was not the sin of sodomy, homosexuality, but we read in Ezekiel that their sin, 'their iniquity', I quote, '[was] fullness of bread and abundance of idleness' - well-off and lazy. In the book of the Revelation the Lord Jesus Christ Himself says to the church at Ephesus: 'Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent' - what a terrible thing! The hymnwriter put it like this, I believe he was thinking of the same thing, and many of us could bring this from our hearts as a song to God:

'What peaceful hours I once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still,
But they have left an aching void
The world can never fill'.

Myers, the poet, put it like this, listen:

'O stars of heaven that fade and flame,
O whispering waves below,
Was earth, or heaven, or I, the same
A year, a year ago?

The stars have kept their home on high,
The waves their wanted flow,
But the love is lost that once was I
A year, a year ago!'

How is our prayer life? How is our love for God which is our prayer book, day by day in the daily life of the assembly, and the daily pilgrimage of the child of God that is in this place at this moment? How is it? Can you remember the day when you were a fire of prayer? Like Lord Baron could you say:

'I now have ashes where once I had fire,
The soul in my body is dead.
The thing I once loved I now merely admire,
My heart is as grey as my head'.

Our God is a consuming fire, and that is what we need - on the altar, the fire of God to fall on the kneel-altar of our hearts. We need to get to the place of prayer again, and if we were half as spiritual as we think we are there would be great things happening for God - but we need to get on our face before God and seek Him, always praying! You see, the danger of the Laodicean church is that they say: 'I have need of nothing' - and the result is we have not because we ask not. I know that there's a great need for people to get comfort today, and I hope through the ministry of the word of God that there is comfort. There are a lot who are sad, and there are a lot who are sorrowing and they have great need in this day - but let me say this: it is not behoven of a child or a preacher of God's gospel to watch a friend's house burning down and let him sleep in his lethargy and his laziness, and let him be damned! We must awake, we must stir ourselves up again, we must be like old John Welsh, the Scotsman who kept a shawl at the side of his bed to wrap himself in when he arose to pray at night. On one occasion his wife complained when she found him lying on the floor weeping and crying, and he would reply: 'Oh woman, I have the souls of 3000 to answer for, and I know not how it is with many of them!'. Oh that God would give us that spirit, for that is His Holy Spirit.

Our prayer must be constant prayer. Constant prayer as a way of life, constant prayer as a consistent communion with God Almighty, and we must beware of prayerlessness for that is the cause of defeat. F.B. Meyer said: 'With the perpetual use of the weapon of All-Prayer, there is no enemy born of hell that shall be able to withstand us'.

The Holy War - Chapter 6

"Varied Prayer"

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Ephesians 6:18b

1. *General Prayer – "all prayer"*

- a. *Praise*
- b. *Confession*
- c. *Waiting*
- d. *Scripture*
- e. *Intercession*
- f. *Singing*
- g. *Listening*

2. *Specific Prayer – "and supplication"*

Ephesians and chapter 6 again, Ephesians 6 - and just in case it is your first time here, and you're breaking into the thirty-third study in the book of Ephesians, then why did you leave this late to come? Now we're on number 33! I can't re-cap that whole book for you tonight I'm afraid! Let me just say that we are the study on the armour of God, and this is our sixth study in the armour of God. We've been looking at the six pieces of the armour that most of us are well acquainted with within chapter 6. We are looking, and have been looking last week, and we will be looking this week, and in the weeks that lie ahead when I return, we'll be looking at this seventh piece of the armour which is entitled: 'All-Prayer'. We're doing our best not to rush over this verse 18, that depicts All-Prayer, because there are many important facets of this weapon in God's armour that we must not neglect, or look over, or ignore.

So, last week we were looking at the first part of verse 18 which said: 'Praying always'. This week we're going to look at the second part: 'With all prayer'. Let us read - it's important, and I hope that as we read these verses together that you're beginning to memorise them, because I know that they're getting into my head as we read over them week after week. So we'll read from verse 10 again: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles", the methods, "of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high", or heavenly, "places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do" - and we'll leave it there.

Let's just take a moment to bow in prayer again, it's important that we ask the Lord's protection as we look at such a portion of Scripture. Father, we have been instructed that the devil is our enemy and is a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. So we pray that You will shut his mouth tonight, Lord that You will bind him

and put him out of this place, and that Jesus the Lord Christ may reign in our gathering tonight - that He might have the pre-eminence, and that through Him we would know the victory ground tonight, to His glory. Amen.

The holy war, and the armour is such an important thing within that holy war. We've looked at constant prayer, and now we look at All-Prayer - and indeed that's how Bunyan depicted it within Pilgrim's Progress, this piece of armour, the seventh, the perfect piece of armour. The piece of armour - perhaps we could say - that is the most important piece of armour that we cannot do without. We know that it is not the armour that makes the warrior, it cannot be. It cannot be the weapons that win the fight, there must be something more - and it must be, as we looked at last week, the courage and the strength that is within that warrior, yes adorned with that great armour, but he must have courage and he must have energy. Verse 10 tells us that that energy, that strength, and that courage is not our own, but it is of the Lord. To stand in the strength of the Lord!



We know that if that strength is to be imputed into our lives, and if we are to come into the good of it within the battle that we may be in day by day, it has to be adorned by prayer. We know - and if you don't know this, I would question whether you're in the battle - that we need help within the battle. I needed help today in the battle, I need help every day in the battle. It is so important, as we've been learning, that the soldier on the bloody battlefield never ever loses contact with High Command and with the Captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Christian must have this divine energy, this force of courage and strength for the battle that he faces day by day. It must be a constant communication - it is not something that we can leave off at any time, for when we do so we give the enemy a foothold. We ought not for one moment to be ignorant of his devices.

But varied prayer, that we are looking at this evening, flows out of constant prayer that we looked at last Monday night. For if we are praying continually and if our prayer is, as we thought, a way of life and a constant communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, if we are living lives of constant, continual prayer we will face various situations. In those situations we will need various types of prayer. That is why God has given us those types of prayer, and when we constantly face differing deadly situations in the battle, we can - praise the Lord - take hold upon these parts of the armour of God, and fight the battle of faith with All-Prayer. It's wonderful, isn't it, to know that there is a type of prayer for every situation. All that life can throw at us, there is nothing that is immune from the prayer that God gives us to use. In the battle, if we are skilled in the art of All-Prayer, and all the types of prayer that God has given to us, we will constantly, day by day, have the victory over the enemy.

Now that is so important as we come to this study this evening. I want to be as practical as I possibly can as we come to this second phrase in verse 18, and to do so I'll be quoting from many writers and Christians of bygone days to show you this varied prayer that many of them used, and we find it within the word of God. Look at verse 18: 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication' - now that's what I want us to look at tonight - 'All prayer and supplication'. Two types of prayer: all prayer and supplication. I believe that Paul is differentiating [between] - as you see on your sheet from the first point and the second point - first of all general prayer, which is all prayer, and secondly specific, definite, direct prayer, which is described as supplication.

Now that's look at the first: all prayer, which is general prayer. You could say, as one man has put it, that this is all sorts of prayer at all sorts of times in all sorts of ways. Varied prayer, all sorts, at all times, in all ways. Now if you think about it for a moment, and you have a brainstorm about the different types of prayer that

you can have, you will right away think that you can have public prayer - as we've had this evening, as we will have on Thursday evening. You can have private prayer also, in your home and - as the Bible calls it - the closet, where you shut yourself away with God and it is just you and God and no-one else - the hardest place that we can pray. We find also that there is deliberate prayer, and there is spontaneous prayer. We have our prayer time, I hope, at home, or prayer times. A time we specifically set aside for God, to have communion with God, or as the old Christians called it: 'the trysting place' with God. We have agreed, we have covenanted with Him to meet at a certain time in a certain place day by day.

That is deliberate prayer, but there is also spontaneous prayer. The old divines called them 'spiritual ejaculations', or 'spiritual arrows' of prayer. When we are in need, day by day, when we face a need - that we can just, from our hearts or audibly, cry unto God a prayer, a little prayer from our hearts or from our lips. Day by day, wherever we are, whatever we are doing, these types of spontaneous or emergency prayers can ascend to God. We read of supplication that we will be looking at this evening, bringing definite specific needs to God on a long-term basis. We also read of intercession, where we covenant with God for a space of time to bring before Him others in great need, and we are determined - like Jacob of old - not to let go of God until He blesses us, an intercession with Him. We read of confession, where we confess our sins - if we are believers walking on to know God, we will know prayers of humiliation when our sins are brought before us, and when we lie low, surrendered and submitted to Almighty God. We find praise and thanksgiving.

We find different factors in prayer: there's family prayer - and this is something that has fallen away in recent days, the family altar, where father or mother brings together the whole family around the word of God, and around the throne of grace, and seeks God. There's all types of prayer: silent, audible, prayer around a meal, prayer in the assembly, arranged prayer, formal prayer, informal prayer - you see all the types of prayer, and it's all incorporated in that one statement: 'all prayer'. It's general, it's all encompassing, it's the panorama of all types of prayer that we can come to God with - and as we think of that this evening: if we are only praying and asking God for things, we lose out tremendously, for we're not using this weapon of All-Prayer.

This word 'prayer' in verse 18, it represents our approach to God in general. It encompasses the first seven points on your sheet, look down at it. All prayer: praise, confession, waiting on God, scripture praying, intercession, singing, and listening to God. Then the second part of this statement is 'and supplication', and that's your second point. Some translations put it 'requests', a special form of prayer called 'supplication' whereby we bring specific needs before God, and we hope and we cry to get specific answers from Him. Now let me say this: this is wonderful, it is all incorporated within this phrase 'all prayer and supplication'. Verse 18, there's so much in it, that's why I want to spend these weeks really digging deep into this verse to get out what God has put in it.

We need this, it's not an option, it's not for the holy men of old, we need all prayer, we need constant prayer, we need supplication, and we need these seven things written down on your sheet. You need them! If you're going to fight in the victory, if you're going to win with the Lord Jesus Christ, if you're going to stand when the smoke and the blood of battle and the smell is gone, that you're still standing after all the standing that you have been doing - if you want to do that, you need all prayer. Every avenue is to be thoroughly explored by the child of God, every item of prayer, and kind of prayer, and shade of prayer, is to be used on every occasion in every opportunity that faces us. Bishop Hanley Mole (sp?), the Greek scholar, put it like this: 'All prayer simply means this: using every variety of worshipping approach to God' - every variety.

So let us look at 'all prayer', this general prayer that we find within this verse. The first definition of it is: praise - that's what I have put down anyway, and I've left out thanksgiving along the way, so what I have done is put praise and thanksgiving together because they're quite similar. Now if you analyse, and we haven't time to do it this evening, but if you look at the Lord's prayer - or it would be better put 'the disciple's prayer' - the prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ gave us as an example, as a skeleton, for our daily prayer life

with Him. If you look at it you find He said: 'After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name' - He began by praise. Now this is very important: we must never ever miss this avenue in prayer - praise, adoration, and worship. The Westminster Divines put it right when they asked the question: 'What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to obey, enjoy God and glorify Him forever'. We enjoy God and we obey God, when we worship God. It is our chief end, it is the chief purpose for which we have been created: to bring worship, adoration, and praise to the God who is our Creator, and now, in the Lord Jesus Christ, the God who is our Redeemer. This is the God who has said: 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me'.

Do we praise God in our prayers? I've mentioned in weeks gone by a monk called Brother Lawrence, who tried to live his life as a continual praise and worship to God. He says this on the subject of praising God: 'The end we ought to propose to ourselves, the end of our life, ought to [be to] become in this life the most perfect worshippers of God we can possibly be, as we hope to be through all eternity'. What is the chief end that we have? The best purpose that you can have, and goal in your life, is to be a worshipper of God - to worship God in spirit and in truth, to be satisfied in God, to enjoy God as you adore Him and praise His holy name. For let's face it: that is what our occupation will be in eternity, for the millions of years - if we can even say that - of the eternal sphere, we will worship God.

The word 'adoration' is derived from an ancient expression which means 'to kiss the hand'. You know what it is when you come into the presence of a lady, a dignitary, and her hand is kissed - it's a sign, yes, of affection, but more than that it's a capturing of dignity, that you are actually revering that person. It's a sign of deep respect and submission to them. I think that is a beautiful definition of adoration and praise - what is it? It is kissing the hand of the Almighty, a deep respect, submission and subjection, and worship of God. The word 'praise' has an old French meaning - its origin meant this: 'to prize' - to prize! Isn't that what we do when we praise our God? When we adore Him, and we worship Him, we prize Him. He is precious to us, He means everything to us, and that draws from our bosom, our soul and spirit, a worship and adoration to Him who alone is worthy to be praised.

Now, we're going to find as we go through these different facets of prayer, and as we have already done within the armour of God, that this is unselfish. The flesh cannot live the spiritual life. We cannot live it with ourselves on the throne of our lives, we cannot live selfish Christian lives, it is a contradiction in terms. As we look at prayer, and specifically praise and thanksgiving, we find that it is of all the elements of prayer the unselfish part. It is the part where you forget yourself, you concentrate on Him and you worship Him! Now that's difficult. 'Praise produces', as one man said, 'forgetfulness of self, and forgetfulness of self is health'. It's hard to do, but we must get to that place where we lay aside our ego, we lay aside all thought of sin and self, and we just come purely into the presence of God to praise God, to thank God, and to worship God. When we do that we will find that this is an indispensable part of the armour of God - All-Prayer.

Now if you activate this in your life - praise and thanksgiving to God - you will find that it is a great weapon against the evil one. Now let's pursue this for a moment, look at 2 Chronicles chapter 5 and we'll see an example of that here in the Old Testament. We have here the dedication of the temple by Solomon, and it was a great event of worship. In verse 13 of 2 Chronicles 5 we read this: 'It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God'.

Praise and thanksgiving bring God into the presence of His people. D.L. Moody, the evangelist, as he was preaching on that passage that we've just read, said this: 'Solomon prevailed much with God in prayer at the

dedication of the temple, but it was the voice of praise which brought down the glory that filled house' - that's what brought God's glory down! When men, and indeed with their instruments, praised God and thanked Him, the glory of the Lord filled the place! Praise is a great weapon against the enemy. Satan hates the prayer of praise. There's a little quip you often see: 'Prayer changes things' - well we could say: 'Praise changes things also'. We could say that praising God sends Satan running away. One man put it: 'Satan is allergic to praise, where there is massive triumphant praise Satan is paralysed, bound and banished!' Do you want to get rid of the devil? Praise God! Praise Him with your whole heart, with your soul and spirit, and mind and body! Praise Him as a whole person and the devil will flee! For God inhabits the praises of His people!

We've seen already that prayer is the weapon whereby we bring God onto the battlefield. Literally, isn't it, it's how we bring God into our life situation. One of the greatest ways of doing that, through prayer, is through praise. When God comes among His people all else is pushed out. It's said of the Israelites that there was the shout of a king among them. The shout of the king, sadly, has died down. As one man put it: 'Mr Hallelujah and Mrs Amen have all died' - they've all gone! But if we read the book of Psalms we read of great praise of God, prayers full of praise and thanks all pointing to their great God - and the miracle of the Psalms is this: most of them are coming from a position of answered prayer. Many a Psalm David, or another Psalmist, begins by trailing out all his sorrows before God, all his enemies, his sicknesses, his weaknesses, his sins - but then, just like a beautiful piece of music, that lower note comes to a change, and then there is a great crescendo as God comes in and answers. Then you find, in the second half of many of the Psalms, David's tune of despair and depression is changed to great praise in his God, for God is the God who answers prayer.

I have twinned thanksgiving with praise. Thanksgiving is quite similar. Many say that thanksgiving is gratitude, and that's true in a sense, but not so accurate in that gratitude is something that wells up within us at times involuntarily. It can stay within us, we find gratitude within us and many would not know - but thanksgiving is gratitude expressed. Thanksgiving is that gratitude voluntarily expressed, outwardly and orally, to the God whom we are thanking. It is giving out something to God, something positive, something active.

We have gratitude and thanksgiving when we meditate and contemplate the great things that God has done for us. Let me say: if you're not with the people of God, around the word of God, around the throne of grace of God, you will find trouble thanking God. For you must meditate upon the word of God, you must be in the presence of God with the people of God, and there, many a time, and mostly around the Lord's table, where we get an awful, great, terrible gratitude for what the Lord has done - for we are presented with the blood of the Lamb! If you're not there it'll be hard to be grateful for it, for I'm there many a day and I'm not grateful for it. We must come and meditate, and think, and contemplate, what the Lord has done for us. Psalm 126:3: 'The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad' - isn't that what it's about? The poet said:

I love to think on mercies past,
And future good implore,
And all my cares and sorrows cast
On Him whom I adore'.

Do you praise Him? Do you thank Him? For if you praise Him and thank Him, do you know what will happen? You will grow to love Him more and more, for love is the child of thanksgiving. Love flows out of gratitude. In Psalm 6 we read this: 'I love the Lord' - why? 'Because He hath heard the voice of my weeping, and my supplication'. If you're not praying you love the Lord little - you need to see your prayers answered at times, and then you get gratitude for the Lord's answered prayer. It wells up within you, and out of your mouth and soul and spirit comes thanksgiving! Throughout the Psalms that's what we find: thanksgiving to answered prayer - so much so that we get so excited about prayer that we pray more and more to see more

answered prayer. The more we see prayer answered, the more we have gratitude, and the more we thank God, and the more we love Christ!

Psalm 116 puts it into words: 'Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live'. Oh, it's lovely, isn't it? You know that was the basis for Paul's exhortation in Romans 12 and verse 1: 'I beseech you therefore', I implore you, 'by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God'. What did he implore them by? 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God' - it ought to be the mercies of God, the grace of God, the goodness of God to us! It ought to be from a heart filled with gratitude and thanksgiving to God that we lay our lives on the altar for Him out of love! It constrains us to give ourselves to Him. So prayer and thanksgiving, praise and consecration, all must go together.

Imagine if we constantly helped someone and they never ever thanked us. We wouldn't help them too much, sure we wouldn't? They're not grateful, no gratitude. Remember the ten lepers? The Lord asked: 'Where are the other nine?'. My friends, we must learn this lesson as we come into the presence of God, this is what will increase our faith. If you want your faith increased: thank Him! Count your blessings and it will surprise you, and it will encourage you, and entuse you to go to God and ask more! Praise Him for who He is, ponder Him in thanksgiving, in love, and wonder, and praise, worship Him. You know the Lord said that Himself upon the earth: 'They that worship me, God seeks these type of worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth'. Old Tozer entitled a book: 'Whatever Happened To Worship?' - sometimes you'd wonder today, in my own life I wonder. I come straight into the presence of God and I've got the shopping list ready to go down, but do we worship Him?

Time is moving on - the second point we find is: confession. Let me say, this isn't an exhaustive list, there are maybe other things that you put within them. But then there is confession, and to put it bluntly: confession is simply an admission of sin. It is spiritually putting your hands up and saying: 'I'm guilty'. Andrew Murray said this: 'God cannot hear the prayers on our lips often, because the desires of our heart after the world cry out to Him much more strongly and loudly than our desires for Him'. Is God hearing your desire after the world more than your spiritual desire to follow after Him? You see, this is where Satan gains the victory in this spiritual battle so often, when he can throw - remember he is the great thrower, the accuser, throwing dirt at us - but if there is sin in our life, often the dirt, the mud sticks. This is where confession comes in.

First John 1 and verse 9, isn't it wonderful? There's many a time I've been on my knees, and I have felt the load of guilt of filthy sin - because I'm a filthy sinner - and my eyes have come to this: 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...If we confess our sins', admit, hands up, 'he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'. That Greek word 'confess' means this: 'to agree with God'. It's not coming to get your sins forgiven again, your sins have been forgiven when you came to Christ - past, present, future. The blood of Jesus Christ goes on cleansing us, but if we live with unconfessed sin it will hinder our fellowship and our power with God. It is a heart-felt recognition of what we are and what we have done.

The Psalmist - and we must be warned - in 66 verse 18 says: 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me'. Now I believe that He has laid down, the Holy Spirit there, the law of confession. It means that if my prayer life never rises above my personal life, there is sin in it. Do you know what I'm saying? I'm saying what Isaiah said in 59:2: 'Your iniquities can separate between you and your God, and your sins can hide his face from you, that he will not hear'. It is possible, the Bible teaches, that at times our prayers are not effective because our life is holding them, our life is binding them, crippling our prayers! Husbands and wives note this, 1 Peter 3:7: 'Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them', wives, 'according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that

your prayers be not hindered"! There are so many things that can hinder our prayers, small things and great things - but even if we're not on right terms with our husband or with our wife, or with our children, or we've fallen out with someone, or are holding a grudge, our prayers can be hindered!

Och, we can't bring everybody to be friends with us - and if we'd be doing that we'd be disobeying the Lord, for He said: 'Woe to you when all men think well of you'. But you know, what we can do is we can make it alright on our side. We can come to God - and this is painful - we can come to God and admit that we are wrong when we are wrong. It's the surgeon of the Holy Spirit, coming in as we confess, and He lances the boil of our sin to allow the infection to drain away that we might be healed from the inside. The man was right when he said: 'Before you pray for a change of circumstances, you should pray for a change in character'. Yes, prayer changes things, but you know what prayer changes most of all? You - for it brings us into line with who God is.

Thirdly: we praise, we confess, and we wait - waiting on God. Madame Guyon, who wrote many books on waiting on God, sought God in her early life. On one occasion she approached a devout monk - again, before the Reformation, before you burn me at the stake or anything like that! - and she explained her desire to know God and to grow closer to God. She admitted: 'I've grown shamefully weak before God'. After hearing her story the monk declared to her, listen: 'Your efforts have been unsuccessful because you have sought without, outside, only what you can find within. Accustom yourself to seek God in your heart and you will not fail to find Him'. For her that was the introduction to waiting on God, and when you look at all the great saints of God in the past, within the word and within church history, you find that all of them set aside time to wait silently in the presence of God.

People ask me: 'What is waiting on God?'. Well, first of all, let me say that it's scriptural. We find it in Psalm 52:9: 'I wait on thy name'. Psalm 62:1: 'My soul waiteth upon God'. Psalm 130: 'My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning' - and we all know: 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength', but what is waiting on God? Is it just sitting, like waiting on a bus? Do you know what it is? It is a silent surrender of the soul to God. It's not day-dreaming, looking out of a window, or drifting in your mind, but it is sitting silently loving God and allowing God to love you. If you don't know anything of this you are missing out.

Let me try and define it a little bit more. An elderly woman was asked the same question: 'What is it to wait on God?', and she was also asked: 'How do you spend your day?'. She said this: 'Well, I always begin my day with a good season of prayer. In fact, I pray until I cannot pray any more, and then I take my Bible and read until I can't read any more. After that I take my hymnbook from my shelf and sing until I can't sing any more, and then I just sit quietly and let God love me'. That's what this is, do you know it? Having your mind, by the Spirit of God, elevated to Him. Being wholly taken up with God, silently worshipping God. This isn't praying to get things, this is far beyond that! This is coming to the point of prayer where you're not looking to get answers, but you're looking to get God! That's what it's all about: to meditate upon Him, to think on Him, and to sit silently without mouthing, or talking, or preaching through your prayer - to just sit with God. It's like the little boy who went into his Daddy's office and bumped his head and fell over and made a noise, and he walked over to his Daddy's office gazing tenderly through his loving eyes and said: 'Daddy, I'll sit still all the time, if you will only let me be here with you'. That's what it is: sitting silently in God's presence, so that He'll just be with you.

I can't explain it - that silent, intimate love exchange between us and our Father that we are sharing in, that was the silent love exchange between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through all eternity - and we are in Christ, and Christ is in God, and we can enter into that fellowship. But friends, if you are not waiting on God, you will know nothing of it. If you rush into God's presence and open up a prayer book, and go down all the lists, and do your reading of two chapters a day and all the rest, and then go to work and forget all about it - that is

not this life of communion with God we're talking about. We're talking about what Andrew Bonar wrote in his diary when he said this: 'Some have the beauty of the Rose of Sharon, and there are others who have the fragrance too. I spent two hours today in prayer, seeking that I might have the fragrance'. Do you have the fragrance? Are you even like Him? - but, oh, to have the fragrance, to be seen to be with the Lord, to come down from the mount of meeting like Moses with our faces shining - that men and women, and boys and girls, and all that come into contact with us, can see that we have been with Jesus. Oh, it takes patience, it doesn't come to a busy life, a life that is laden down with service, that is just carnal, of the flesh - but it will take patience till our hearts are tuned to prayer, till we know that we are heard with God, and till we receive the answer. It'll take practice.

Fourthly, scripture. I feel we're not going to get through all of this tonight, but I don't want to rush over anything. You know, the Bible is our prayer book. The Bible is the book of prayer that we have, and it is the only place that we are taught to pray, and it is the time, when we pray to God, that the word of God will become part of us. You know that, don't you? That when you hear message like this tonight, or on a Sunday, or you read a spiritual book or something like that, or listen to a tape, that will not change your life unless you actually put that into your life by prayer. For you recognise before God, confess your need, and ask Him for the grace, through the Spirit, to do what He has told you to do. That's quite simple, it's spiritual basics, Romans 10 and verse 17, listen: 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'. Now, reading books on prayer is good - do it! But reading books on prayer will only stir you to pray, hearing messages on prayer may stir you, but the word of God gives us faith - for faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word.

If we get into the word of God we will get faith to pray to God. George Mueller, that great man of faith, opened the Bible every day, and would never pray to God unless his Bible was open. He said that the secret of receiving answers to prayer lay in how the Christian applied the word of God in prayer. Spurgeon said: 'Every promise of Scripture is a writing of God which may be pleaded before God with the reasonable request: 'Do as Thou hast said'. The Creator will not cheat the creature who depends upon His truth, and far more the heavenly Father will not break His word to His own child. Wasn't it Spurgeon who wrote that book: 'The Cheque Book of the Bank of Faith'? To write the cheques from the promises of God's word, and to cash them in in heaven's bank, and God says He will supply - He will supply! There's a guarantee on that cheque, on that note, that God will give us what He has promised. We must use prayer in Scripture. Take a Psalm, that's what I often do, a Psalm during the morning, and go through verse by verse and just praise God through it.

Then fifthly: intercession. To put it bluntly, intercession is praying on behalf of others. It means to intercede, to mediate, to come in between. It's more than that, it's earnestly appealing for another. It's a good occupation, because it's our Lord's present occupation. It was His occupation in that great high prayer that we find in the book of John 17, where He prayed for His own. It is always Christ's occupation, and it ought to be ours, to intercede for others. We were all prayed for at some time, weren't we? Indeed, prayer was a part of bringing us to Christ - God saved us, but prayer was part of the mechanism that brought us to saving faith. All of us cannot preach, all of us cannot be missionaries or evangelists, but all of us can pray and intercede for others. As E.M. Bounds said: 'This is the soul of a man stirred to plead with God for men'. He said, didn't he: 'It's a good thing to talk to men about God, but it's a better thing to talk to God about men'. That's the key of freedom, it's the key of freeing others from bondage of sin - and if you want someone saved, my friend, and you're not praying, you may forget about it! Get on your knees! Pray, claim the promises of God.

Remember what God said to Abimelech about Abraham? 'He', Abraham, 'is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live'. A.J. Gordon said about this praying and interceding in the battle: 'We have authority to take from the enemy everything he is holding back' - isn't that wonderful? We are on the victory ground, he's not! We have authority in prayer, and through the Lord Jesus Christ and His blood, to claim

back what is His. He says: 'The chief way of taking is by prayer'. Four times in his epistles Paul says: 'making mention of you in prayer' - now that's making mention, not just saying: 'Lord, bless all the churches'. Making mention of them as, indeed, he made mention within his epistles.

In the battle, intercession will bring victory to your life. You know, sometimes we're selfish, and I think this way: 'You know, I've so much to pray about me. I've so many problems and things to be done, and sometimes I never get time to pray for anybody else' - that's wrong! Do you know why? Because Job, you think of the situations that Job found himself in, health-wise, spiritually, and even his friends and his wife turning against him - but in Job 42 verse 10 it says this: 'The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before' - when he prayed for others.

Sixthly, singing. This is a strange one, perhaps you think - but singing is a gift from God. As Luther said: 'The gift of language with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the word of God through music'. Now here's the question: do you praise the Lord in singing? Do you? 'Oh, we did it tonight' - I'm not talking about tonight, I'm talking about at home. Do you praise the Lord in song at home? The Psalmist said in 100: 'Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing'. Remember Mary Slessor, that missionary to China? Do you know what she said? 'I sing the doxology, and I dismiss the devil'. Huh! That's the battle! Sing the doxology and dismiss the devil! Amy Carmichael, a missionary too, concerning song said: 'I believe truly that Satan cannot endure it, and so slips out of the room more or less when there is true song. Prayer rises more easily, more spontaneously, after one has let those wings, words and music carry one out of oneself into the upper air'. Do you sing in the presence of the Lord? In this book in chapter 5 and verse 19 we are told to admonish one another, and indeed praise, in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We find in 2 Chronicles chapter 20, King Jehoshaphat faced with all his enemies prayed to God, and brought the people together in prayer and fasting as the nation of Judah. They went to the front line of the battle and they found that the enemy was defeated - why? Verse 22: 'And when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon'. It works, you know - Paul and Silas sang praises to God in jail, and there was an earthquake.

Finally, and with this we will finish: listening. We're all good at talking, aren't we? And I'm the best one! We all love to be heard, but the Lord gave us two ears - didn't He? - and one mouth. You know, this is part of prayer - Ecclesiastes 5:2: 'Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few'. Sometimes our prayers can be all one-way traffic, can't they? It's a speech, it's not a conversation, it's not a dialogue! But God, through Paul to Timothy, said: 'Study to be silent'. Can I ask you to do something? See the next time you pray - and I hope it'll be tonight - don't make it too noisy for God to speak, but be like Elijah and in the stillness, without uttering a word, listen for the still small voice of God, the voice of God in your spirit. The price will be silence and self, and maybe time to sit there for a while - but if F.W. Faber, the great poet, said this, listen as we close:

'Whenever the sounds of the world die out in the soul,
Then we hear the whispers of God.

He is always whispering to us, only we don't always hear because of the noise, hurried distractions, which life causes as it rushes on. Do we praise Him? Do we confess our sin? Do we thank Him, and wait upon Him, and take the word of God to Him and claim it, and intercede for others? Do we sing and praise Him? And do we be still and know that He is God? The next time I see you we'll look at 'Specific Prayer', and the rest that the Lord has for us.

The Holy War - Chapter 7

"Spirit-Led Supplication"

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Ephesians 6:18c

- 1. *What Is Supplication?***
- 2. *What Is Praying In The Spirit?***

Now let me welcome you to our Bible Reading tonight in the Iron Hall. It's great to see you all with us, I think this is one of the biggest turnouts that I've ever seen. Perhaps it's a fallout from me being away, and all the good speakers that you've been having - maybe you didn't think it was me tonight. Well, I'm back, I'm sorry about that, but it's good to see you all with us this evening. Do come, maybe it's not your practice to come regularly to the Bible Reading, perhaps this is a one-off for you - but please do take our welcome, and come along and hear the word of God. We trust that you will be blessed and built up in your most holy faith through the word of God.

We turn to Ephesians again, and chapter 6 - Ephesians chapter 6 and we'll just read verse 18. I think you're familiar enough with the whole passage, we've spent that long on it - but if you haven't read it before please do read it. It is an account of the armour of God that we have learnt - and this is a very important thing to remember - that it is God's armour, it's not something the Christian works into, or the Christian makes himself. It is God's armour, and we've seen from the prophet Isaiah that God literally wore that armour - and we have been given it to fight the good fight of faith ourselves. This is so important to realise, that every single thing in the Christian life is of grace. The sooner we learn that, the richer we will be.

Everything is from the hand of God, and here tonight we find something else that is from the hand of God. We've been looking at prayer, and in our first study we looked at the first phrase of verse 18: 'Praying always'. We looked at constant prayer, we looked at how constant prayer is a way of life, praying daily, praying throughout the day. Then we looked at how constant prayer is a continual communion, it's something that you can do all the time - it doesn't mean that you're having your quiet time every moment of the day, but you can have your spirit in contact with God every moment of your life. We learnt of how prayerlessness hinders the church.

Then we looked at the second phrase: 'With all prayer'. We spent some time looking at the many facets of prayer, I can't recall them off the top of my head but you know what they are: intercession, confession, singing, listening, praising, adoring, worshipping - all those things: waiting on God, praying scripture, that we learnt about in our last study. Now we come to the next part of this verse: 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints'.

The reason why we're taking so much time over this verse is because it's packed full of wealth that God wants us to know. It would be wrong of me to skip over it and miss out everything that God would have us know. What we are looking at this evening is this: supplication in the Spirit. We're looking at 'Spirit-Led Supplication'. It is a part of the armour of God that we all need. We sang in our first hymn: 'I often say my prayers, but do I ever pray?'. Now, that conjures up a wealth of questions in our mind that we need to answer as believers. It's so true, isn't it: we often say prayers, but do we really actively pray? Are we engaged in what the Bible reveals as true prayer? That begs the question: what is prayer? I've been attempting to answer

that in weeks gone by, and I believe that verse 18 is a very important part of the whole of God's revelation to define for us what is true prayer.

Now, if the truth were told, our prayers are often simply expressions of what we want. Perhaps, if you want to go onto another plain, a better motive of our prayers may be even desires that are good, and maybe we could push it far enough to say they may even be desires that are spiritual. But if we are honest, many Christians are disillusioned with the subject of prayer. I've heard many people say: 'Why are my prayers never answered? I pray for good things, I pray for things that I think God would have me possess, and it seems that they're never answered. My prayer life is probably a failure. If anything in my Christian life is a failure, my prayer life is a failure'. That sense of failure and defeat is further cemented by some of the books that we read, and some of the teachers that we hear, that make prayer look like some kind of a magic spell whereby, when you pray to God, you get anything that you want.



To address these very real questions we must learn what true asking is, and what it is to pray in the Spirit. For those two things that we'll look at tonight are part of the great mechanics of what prayer is. So, let's look at our first question on your sheet this evening: 'Supplication in the Spirit' - what is supplication? What does this word literally mean? The Greek word is 'daiases' (sp?), and it simply means - one of many Greek words defining prayer within the New Testament, but it simply means: 'to pray requesting, beseeching, begging, supplicating'. To pray requesting, beseeching, begging, supplicating - primarily it is a prayer for a wanting need. You need something from God, so you come to God and you 'daiases', you plead God to give you what you need.

But we need to define it further than that, we need to go into the Old Testament - and you will know that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, not Greek, but there is a translation of the Old Testament from the Hebrew to the Greek for Greek speakers, so that they could understand the Old Testament, and we get a little bit of light about Greek words from that Old Testament Greek translation - the way that some of the words are used. In that translation, in the book of Esther, if you were to turn to it, and chapter 8 and verse 3 you find that word 'beseech', the word 'to supplicate', with regards to Esther beseeching the King. You read in that verse: 'And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews'. Haman wanted to exterminate - another holocaust of the Jews - and Esther came in before the King, and it says 'besought him with tears'. That is this word 'to supplicate'.

If you go to Hosea and chapter 12 and verse 4 you find the word used, again in the Old Testament, of Jacob the father of Israel. It's used in relation to his wrestling with the angel, and it says this of him: 'Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed' - listen - 'he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us'. The nation of Israel is saying: 'The reason that God has come to us, the reason that Jehovah has spoken to us, is because our father Jacob, in the desert, wrestled with God - he wept and made supplication unto Him, and he found Him in Bethel'. That's this word 'supplication'.

Now, if you go into the New Testament, you find that in the Revised Version it's always rendered 'supplication', or 'supplications'. In the Authorised Version that we have it's translated 'supplication', and also 'prayer', and 'prayers' - a general translation. There are two ways in which it is defined in the New Testament. The first way is requesting and beseeching for oneself, for your needs - if you like, your petitions, the things that you need in your life. In Luke 1 and verse 13 we find that in the life of Zacharias, we read this: 'But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer', thy supplication, 'is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John' - John the Baptist. A specific petition that Zacharias had, Elisabeth conceived, the angel said: 'Thy supplication is heard, thy wife shall bear a son'.

Then there is a definition within the New Testament - the second - that is not petition for oneself, but petition on behalf, or in the behalf, of others. If you turn to Luke chapter 2 and verse 37 this time, Anna, we read of her: 'And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers', supplications, 'night and day'. For others, for the nation of Israel, for Messiah, for salvation to be seen in the nation, she supplicated the throne of grace. Then, perhaps one of the greatest and most poignant in the New Testament - and I want you to turn to this one, Romans chapter 10, the apostle Paul. Romans 10 and verse 1, the hearts cry of Paul for the nation he loved: 'Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer', supplication, 'to God for Israel is, that they might be saved'. On behalf of Israel he was supplicating God, in fact in chapter 9 you can see on behalf of Israel he was willing - verse 1 - to go through hell that they might be saved!

Now what can we say about this word 'supplication'? Well we can say, as we've seen, that it is begging, beseeching, even at times with tears, for oneself and can be on behalf or in behalf of others - but also it is always addressed to God. This word is always addressed to God, it's not in the sense of coming before a King and beseeching, it's the sense of coming before God and crying unto God that your prayers may be answered. Now I hope that you can see, already, the importance of such a phrase as this in the great battle that we are in. The importance of a piece of armour like this, of being able to come into the very presence of God, before God's throne of grace and getting what we need because we ask of Him.

Now generally the word is used for any prayer, but you see specifically this word 'supplication', in the Greek whenever the verb isn't used it always seems to mean prayer for others. So all that illustration about prayers for yourself, push that away, that's not what this word means now in the verse where Paul is speaking. He is specifically talking about prayer for others, so he's talking of begging God, beseeching God in the Spirit, for other people. You find the word used in that sense in 2 Corinthians 9:14 where Paul says: 'And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you' - 'That is my prayer for you, longing after you that God's grace would be seen in your life'. In 2 Timothy 1 verse 3 he says: 'I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day' - that's the sense. Coming before God incessantly, persistently, continually, supplicating, begging, beseeching God for other people.

Paul and the other apostles, if you read the New Testament, highly valued such prayer. They expected great things of such prayer. James tells us that there is great gain when such beseeching God takes place, especially when such beseeching and supplicating is combined and entwined with a life of dynamic faith and holiness. Isn't that what he said in [James] 5 and 16? 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much'. If this type of prayer, supplication, is combined with a holy, righteous life, God will hear you and mighty things are possible! The proof of that is in verse 17, he uses the illustration of Elijah who 'was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed', supplicated, 'earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months'. In the same vein the apostle Peter, in his first epistle chapter 3 and verse 12, quoting Psalm 34:16 says the prayer of the righteous is always heard of God - always. He says: 'The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers'.

I think prayer is the most important weapon in the holy warfare that we have been studying. If we neglect it, we neglect everything. But you know I believe something more than its importance in the warfare, I believe that it is one of the most important evidences of true Christian faith in the life of a human being. Now, we were studying last evening of the marks of the sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ - it's not just believing, but there has to be a changed, repentant life that hears His voice, that follows Him and that knows that it has eternal life. But, you know, the word of God also testifies that if you are to be sure that you're saved there must be a life of prayer within your soul. Paul said that to Timothy, 1 Timothy 2:1: 'I exhort therefore, that,

first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men' - first of all! Before you think about anything else you've got to be doing this!

Ultimately the supplicant, what is it? I mean, let's think about this for a moment: the Lord Jesus Christ died, was buried, rose again, went to heaven, sits at the right hand of God - why? To intercede. That is why the word of God says there's one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Now this supplication is almost identical, but it is we who are the mediators, we who are interceding between men and God! If you think about that, that's an awesome responsibility - to be there for God for the needs of others, to express a deep desire that God would take action on the behalf and in the lives of other people. We have been given that responsibility to pray. If you think about it, all of the subject of prayer - whether it is personal prayer, or prayer for others - all the types of prayer, adoration, confession, every single one of them is an act of declaration and confession of dependence upon God. Do you notice that? Everything in prayer expresses: 'Of myself I can do nothing, and I need Thee - and with God I can do everything'. It is again bringing us to that brick wall of realising that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing.

That is why we need to come, as Paul said in Philippians 4: 'Be careful', anxious, worried, 'for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus'. Isn't it wonderful to know that there is no difficulty, there is no problem in your life that is too small, that is too insignificant, that you can't bring before God? God will never say: 'Take that away from Me, I'm running a universe you know, I haven't time for little things like that' - that is not the God that we have! The God that we have is concerned for the sparrow, the God that we have knows the hairs of our head, and they are numbered. I heard someone saying recently that they thought that verse meant that every single hair was numbered, and they thought to themselves: 'What would God want to number my hairs for? I mean, I don't know how many are there, and I don't really care how many are there until there are so few that I can't see them any more!'. What does that verse mean? Do you know what it means? You can't tell how many hairs are numbered there, and God knows more about you than you know about yourself. God cares so much about you, that things that don't even concern you He knows inside out.

Is that not an inspiration to pray? I don't know, I tell you what it is practically - let me apply this practically to you: what can we do when we are supposed to supplicate in this way? It means this: that definite needs are meant to be requested. You're meant to come to God with definite, specific needs - and when you do that definite, specific benefits will be granted! Pray specifically and God will answer specifically. Now, if you're going to pray specifically, you're going to have to get acquainted with facts. It's no use coming before God and saying: 'Lord, bless the missionaries, bless the pastors, bless every Christian that there is in every country of the world, bless every church today'. We need to pray specifically! We need to get the needs that there are within our fellowship, within our lives, within the lives of others, and we need to spread them before God and supplicate God for concrete situations.

It might be - and I would say that you would have to do this: set aside specific time in your life, in the life of a church, to supplicate God for specific needs. Perhaps today is to stress prayer for your family, tomorrow for the fellowship, tomorrow for the preachers of the Gospel, the next day for missionaries - whatever it may be, to supplicate God. To supplicate Him one: for the universal needs - to pray, as the Lord Jesus instructed us, that He might send labourers into the harvest. We need to pray for that! We need to pray for our national needs, for kings and for all those who are in authority over us. And of course there are our personal needs, and we haven't even time to list all of them - you know them, and I know my own. Look: if our prayers are not being answered, and we are not adhering to the mechanics of prayer, the theology of prayer within the New Testament, what do we expect? We need to do what God tells us to do and put these things into action. As one author said: 'Some things God will not give until we want them enough to ask'.

Do you remember in the Gospels that the Lord Jesus came and faced the blind man in Mark 10 - do you remember what He said to him? 'What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?' - that's supplication. The Lord Jesus Christ who is omnipotent, for He is God, says to us today as believers: 'Look, here I am, I am at your disposal - what would you have that I do for you?' - and we don't come. That's what supplication is, I hope it's been made clear enough for you. But it's not just supplication, if you supplicate the throne of grace that's not enough because look at what it says, verse 18: 'supplication in the Spirit'. It's a specific supplication.

So, what is praying or supplicating in the Spirit? You will know, if you have read and are familiar with the New Testament, that we are instructed to pray to the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son, in the Holy Spirit. To the Father, our Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ the intercessor, the great intercessor of all men - but it's in the Spirit. We find through Paul's epistles and the whole of the word of God that there is a great stress and emphasis, a special importance to that fact: that true prayer, like all of true Christian life, is wrought in the Spirit of God. But what does that mean? Well, to put it in antithesis: it is the opposite of praying in the flesh. Sometimes it's good to define something by what it is not - it's not praying in the flesh. To pray in the flesh, therefore, has the inference to pray without power. So, if to pray in the Spirit is the opposite of praying in the flesh without power, to pray in the Spirit is to pray with power.

We have learnt that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but spiritual - therefore in this supplication, and in all prayer, we must rely on the Spirit of God - why? 'For we know not what we should ask', isn't that what Paul says in Romans? We don't know what to ask for, and we don't know how to pray as we ought to pray. Now, I want you to turn with me to Romans chapter 8, because this is the defining chapter, if you like, concerning what praying in the Spirit really is. If you look at verse 26 you'll see that verse that I've just quoted: 'We know not what we should pray for as we ought'. Now, the implication of everything that we're laying down here as a foundation is this: that if we are not praying in the Spirit, we might as well not be praying at all! Now that's so important, I hear people say: 'Well, as long as you pray, that's all that matters' - that is not all that matters! There are only certain types of prayer that God answers, and if I can define it further: there are only certain types of intercourse and communication with God that are prayer!

Therefore we see within the word of God that prayer is not our 'wish list'. When you come into the presence of God with a shopping list of things that you would like, or things that you think would be good for you, or good for the church of Christ, or good for the glory of God - that's not prayer. In the Old Testament, in the book of Exodus and chapter 30, there is the picture of God's tabernacle, the place where God dwelt upon the earth in the desert with Israel. If you went into the tabernacle you would find there a small golden altar standing before the veil into the Holy of Holies. There there would be burnt incense rising up to God - do you know what that is? In the book of Hebrews it's a picture of worship and prayer - that incense burning up to God was to show us that God's prayer is God's prayer, it's not instrumented by man, it doesn't start in man, but it must be according to God's plan. It can't be counterfeited by man - you remember in the book of Numbers what happened to men who tried to counterfeit the incense of God. God struck them down, God opened the ground and swallowed them up - it had to be God's way, or no way at all.

There is the incense as a picture of prayer, but what had to happen to the incense? Well, fire had to come into contact with the incense, didn't it? Fire is a picture of the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Spirit of God is the One who takes our prayers and sets them alight. We must not miss that. He is the one who ignites them with the will of Almighty God, and if we don't pray that way we don't pray at all! What is praying in the Spirit? Octavius Winslow, and I would encourage you to read his writings, said this: 'Prayer is the breathing of God's own Spirit in the heart'. Isn't that beautiful? The breathing of God's own Spirit in the heart - the Greek word for the Holy Spirit, spirit, is 'neuma', it is the same word for breath, and the same word for wind. It is God's breath, God's 'neuma', His Spirit in the heart of a man, for a man to come before God and pray.

So what must we do to pray in the Spirit? Now these points are not down on your sheet, but I want you to write them down as we go through them. There are three ways in which we pray in the Spirit. To pray in the Spirit you must first of all be born of the Spirit. Look at Romans 8 and verse 15, Paul says: 'For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father'. Now if you keep your finger in Romans and turn to Galatians 4 and verse 6, you find a similar verse talking about adoption. Paul, again, says to the Galatians: 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father'.

Now in both verses Paul uses the Greek word 'cradso' (sp?), which means 'to cry', to express the relationship that we have as children and sons to our Father God. That cry 'Abba, Father', what is it expressing? It's expressing great freedom, great joy, great confidence, as we come to God - that we're not coming to some almighty despot, or angry, wrathful God that is going to strike us down, but we're coming to gracious, loving heavenly Father. Now why is that? Why does Paul use 'cradso', 'a cry', as we come to our Father? Why is there that freedom, joy, and confidence? What does it spring from? Do you know what it springs from? Our awareness that we are the sons of God - a realisation that I'm God's son! I belong to God! If I can put it in other words: such prayer doesn't originate in any power or any thought that's possessed in man, therefore prayer - the dear Roman Catholics, they think it's meritorious that the more they pray, the quicker they'll get into heaven - it's nothing to do with that! For prayer doesn't even come from you in a sense, prayer is from the grace of God because it's only through the grace of God that we become sons, and it's only as sons that we can 'cradso' to God: 'Abba, Father'!

To Paul prayer is ultimately the indwelling, the energising, Spirit of God. It is the Holy Spirit within us speaking to God by Himself. Now, it's important that you understand this: that God the Spirit in us, is speaking to God Himself, who is the Spirit. Second Corinthians 3 and verse 17, turn with me to that quickly for it's important that we understand these truths, 2 Corinthians 3:17: 'Now the Lord is that Spirit', now mark that, 'the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty'. Now, if you want liberty in prayer - and what greater liberty in prayer is there than to be able to cry 'Abba, Father!'. Now how do you get that? The Spirit of God! In John 4 and verse 23 it says this, the Lord Jesus said: 'The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth'. You see, John understood it, Paul understood it, James understood it, Timothy understood it through the mouth of Paul - that praying is nothing to do with you specifically, in a sense, and if it wasn't for the grace of God, and it wasn't for the Spirit of God implanted into your soul at conversion, you wouldn't be able to pray! The Lord Jesus acknowledged to that woman, in John 4, at the well that this is a new thing!

This is something that the Old Testament saints did not experience, this is a new creation in Christ Jesus, originating only in Christ and only from Christianity. Look at Romans 8, and this proves it, Romans 8 and verse 14 - if you want to pray in the Spirit, you've got to be born of the Spirit: 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God'. 'Abba, Father!', the Spirit of God leads them to say that - for no man confesses Jesus as Lord except by the Spirit of God. Thus prayer isn't dependent on your eloquence, on how many verses you can memorise, on how loud you can pray or how softly you can pray - but prayer is dependent upon the efficacy of our Lord Jesus Christ, upon the assurance that He has died, He has risen, He has ascended, He is there in glory for us interceding. Because He has sent His Spirit into our hearts, we have the spirit that cries: 'Abba, Father'. I believe that the assurance of our salvation is evidenced, and indeed increased, by the Spirit producing prayer within us. If you're saved, that means that your prayer life ought to be getting better. In Romans 8 verse 16 we see that: 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God'.

Secondly, to pray in the Spirit you must be born of the Spirit but also you must be living in the Spirit. I could put it like this: being in communion with the Spirit, living in the power of the Spirit. One man defined it like

this: 'Let the Spirit be the atmosphere in which you pray'. If you like, this is the 'where' of prayer, the 'place' of prayer. What I mean by that is that you don't pray in a certain temple, you don't need to pray any more in Jerusalem at the temple, or in a tabernacle, you don't need to pray on this mountain or the other mountain, you don't need to pray in church or in a chapel. The 'where' of prayer, the 'place' of prayer, the 'atmosphere' of prayer, is living in the Holy Spirit of God. That's what the Lord Jesus said in John 4 to that same woman, verses 20, 21 and 23. She said to Him: 'Lord, our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship' - now, He didn't say that - 'Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit' - that is with the Spirit's help. Your spirit with the Spirit's help, in harmony with the Spirit's will, as revealed in the Spirit's word in the Scriptures.

Now let's apply this, it's important that we lay this down in our lives. What does it mean, what are the implications of a verse like this? That we must be praying in the Spirit, and in order to pray in the Spirit we need to live in the Spirit - do you know what it means? A fleshly believer can't pray! Now, don't try and twist out of that, that's what the teaching of the word of God is. It means this: if you have a grudge against somebody your prayers will only hit the ceiling - they mightn't even hit the ceiling! If you don't love your brother and sister in Christ, if there's a problem between you and your wife or husband, your prayers are hindered! The word of God says it. It means if you have a grudge and can't forgive another person that you are not - and in fact cannot - pray in the Spirit. It means if you have a selfish motive as you come to God, whether it's for your own glory - this is a thing I grapple with! Am I wanting souls saved so that everybody thinks David Legge's great? For God will not answer that prayer! What is my motive, what is the reason? Is it for my glory? Is it for my luxury, so that my life will be better? The message is this: you cannot pray in the Spirit if you are not walking in the Spirit! Yes, prayer changes things, but the message of this verse is that - more than that - prayer changes the man who prays, because it's the Spirit who works within him!

Prayer, therefore, is more than a means for me to see God doing miracles on my behalf because I pray - but more than that, it's seeing God doing a miracle in me, wrought by the Spirit! Now let me tease that out a little bit as we look at the third thing it is to pray in the Spirit. Thirdly, to pray in the Spirit - one: you must be born of the Spirit; two: you must be living in the Spirit; three: you must be in agreement with the Spirit. Can two walk together except they be agreed? Now some commentators say that means praying from the heart, it doesn't. Neither does it mean praying inwardly, without using words. It means this: praying under the influence of the Holy Spirit, praying in agreement with Him. You remember in chapter 5 of Ephesians, you don't need to turn to it, verse 18: 'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled', in other words translated, 'be continually under the control [of the Spirit]'. You're under the control wine when you're intoxicated, aren't you? That's the comparison: as you're under control of wine, be under the continual control of the Holy Spirit.

That's what we're talking about here: to pray in the Holy Spirit is to be continually under His control in your prayers, with His assistance. In fact it is His office, revealed in the word of God, it's His role to reveal truth to us, to teach us and to show us how to pray day by day. Now here's the key, Romans 8 - turn to Romans 8. Now, that clock says ten to nine, and my watch says five to nine - so I'm going to believe the clock, if you don't mind! Romans chapter 8 (it'll probably be fixed by the next service!) and verse 26, now look at this: 'In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness: for we do not know how to pray as we should: but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words'. Isn't that beautiful? By the way, never call the Spirit 'it' - 'Himself', He is the Person of the Trinity. Now, that's important, for that verse tells you and I that it is the Spirit who prays. He is the one who prays, we do not pray alone, we pray connected with the Spirit of God. The Spirit prays for us, but more than that: the Spirit prays as He is joined to us - the Spirit is in us, and He therefore is praying in us for us! Literally He is infusing His prayers into our prayers, so that we pray in the Spirit.

Now folks, for that to happen there are two supernatural things that take place to make us pray in the Spirit. One: first of all He tells us how to pray, He tells us what to pray for. If He didn't assist us in prayer, do you know what we would be doing, perhaps what we are doing? Our prayers would be left to our own whims, our own desires, our human reason and our intuition. But when He is praying in us and for us, He moves us to a higher level. He leads us - how does He lead us? Through the sword of the Spirit! Through the word of God. He inspired it, didn't He? I mean how do we miss this sometimes? How do the charismatics miss it, and they have to have a revelation or a prophecy, or somebody speaking in tongues? He has inspired His will that we might pray by His will, and His will is found in His word. When we look into His word we find there how to pray, the Spirit leads us into all truth, we find the mind of God. Praying in the Spirit is according to the will of God, look at verse 27 of Romans 8. Now look: 'He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints' - look - 'according to the will of God'.

Now I think this is, perhaps, one of the greatest fruits that is in the life of a believer by grace. Do you know what it is? A sinful, depraved, sinful-willed man on his knees saying: 'Thy will be done'. If that's not a miracle, I don't know what is. That's praying in the Spirit, but the second thing that has to happen is this: it provides an energy, it provides a power for prayer, the Spirit provides a real sense of energy for tired bones and muscles, for a weak heart, for a depressed mind, because the Spirit elevates a person up to praying. Verse 26, look at it again: 'In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness: for we do not know how to pray' - you know those times when you can't pray? In fact, you know those times when you've run out of words because your heart is so broken, and you're maybe lying on the ground crying your heart out to God? Well, when that happens the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words - things too deep to be expressed in mortal language, the desires, the groans, the yearnings of our hearts. Even those unintelligible longings that may not be defined, can be understood by the Spirit because He has, perhaps, inspired them! He is winging those home to God as prayers, as motions of the Spirit.

In Genesis 21 and verse 17, you remember Ishmael was left by his mother sitting in the wilderness - and this isn't a direct equivalence, but I think it illustrates it. The word of God says that the Lord heard the voice of the lad. You notice it doesn't say He heard what he was saying, or He heard what he asked for - no. He probably didn't ask for anything, he probably was only crying - but the Lord heard the voice. In Psalm 28 and verse 2 it says this, the Psalmist cries: 'Hear the voice of my supplications' - the voice of my supplications, not just what I am saying in my supplication, but the Spirit is able to convey to the Father the very holy desire that, perhaps, we can't even put into words. Why? Because the Spirit of God is interacting with our spirit in prayer! As Guy King put it well: 'Praying in Him, praying in the Spirit, means having Him praying in us'. Do you get it? It's being born of the Spirit, living in the Spirit, and being in agreement with the Spirit - and that will lead, do you know what? To unselfish prayer, praying according to the will of God - not your will, but God's will.

There's a lot of selfish prayer, and it's very fervent and very spirited, but perhaps it's never answered - maybe it's not answered in your life. Is this answering the questions that we began with? Is it? Why our prayers, perhaps, are not answered? As James said: 'Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not' -why? 'Because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts'. Do you want to get your prayers answered? Pray in the will of God! Pray according to the Spirit of God! Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, you're born of the Spirit - and, if you want, you can pray in the Spirit!

Bunyan said this, and anybody who wants to take this quotation, I think this is a marvellous quotation of what true prayer is. Listen: 'Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate, pouring out of the heart or soul to God through Christ' - note that, one: 'through Christ'; two: 'in the strength and assurance, assistance, of the Holy Spirit'; three: 'for such things as God has promised, and according to the word of God'; four: 'for the good of the church'; five: 'with submission in faith to the will of God'. The Psalmist said in Psalm 37 and verse 4:

'Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart'. Do you know what that means? If you lose yourself in God, His desires will become your desires, and when you pray for His desires you'll get them.

Jude said, and I say to you in closing, build up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. Let us pray, and let me ask you: are you sure that you're born of the Spirit? Are you sure? Please be sure! Are you living by the Spirit, Christian? Forget about prayer if you're not! Are we in agreement, praying according to the word of God? Father, help us - oh, help us - to supplicate Your throne in the Holy Ghost, and thus to see Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

The Holy War - Chapter 8

"The Strategy For Prayer"

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Ephesians 6:18d

1. ***A Watchful Disposition***
2. ***A Persistent Determination***
3. ***A Sanctified Direction***

That was good singing, let me welcome you to our Bible Reading tonight. It's great to see you all gathered with us to meet around God's word. It's great to be in a place like this, isn't it, tonight? When the world is in turmoil, and our country is beside itself to know what to do. In the 21st century, such a thing as Foot and Mouth [disease] to stop them all in their paths and ask them: 'What is the meaning of all this?'. Isn't it wonderful for us to be able to gather around the word of God, the truth of God, and to have a hope within us - not to be like this world that has no hope, but to have hope in Christ. To know the way ahead, and to know the purpose of all things in this world.

Let me welcome you, and we pray that the Lord may speak to you through the word tonight as you gather with us. Let us turn to Ephesians chapter 6 again, Ephesians chapter 6, and I want you to turn also to Luke chapter 11 and Luke chapter 18 - so if you want to turn to those to get a head start. This is our last study in the armour of God, in the Christian warrior's armour, and indeed our last study on this subject of prayer that we have been taking as a sub-series these last four or so weeks from verse 18. It does say on your study sheet that we're looking at verse 18d, but we're looking at more than that tonight - hopefully, God willing, we want to get right through to verse 20. I apologise that that's not down on your study sheet, but let's read verse 18 together to refresh our memory of the mechanics of prayer that we find within the verse.

Paul says - remember this is a piece of the armour of God, it is the seventh, seven being the number of perfection, the seventh and most needed item of armour: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto", that's our subject tonight, "watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints". Now Paul speaks of himself: "And for me", pray for me, "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak".

Then Luke chapter 11, and we'll be referring to these passages to illustrate these truths in our message later on, verse 5. The Lord, first of all, in verses 1 to 4 has given us what is commonly known as the Lord's Prayer - more correctly the Disciples Prayer - 'In this way pray', He says. Then in verse 5 He gives a parable, as it were, an illustration to tell us what it means to really pray to God. "He said", verse 5, "unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?".

Then Luke again and chapter 18, Luke chapter 18, and the Lord gives another parable concerning prayer. Luke records: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint", now please keep that in your mind - that that is the purpose, the reason, why the Saviour was giving this parable. Not just to pray, but that men ought to pray and not faint. "Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?".

If you turn with me back to Ephesians chapter 6, we find within it in verse 18 - especially verse 18 part 'd', if you like, the fourth part of the verse - the strategy for prayer. I believe the saying is true: 'Power without control is chaos' - power without control is chaos. In other words, it's one thing to have something, but it's another thing to know how to use it. If I can illustrate it for you: if you can imagine in a war scenario, what use would a tank be if you allocated a Red Cross nurse to drive it? It would be idiotic! Or what purpose has an F-16 fighter jet if you assign a military cook to fly it? It's simply not the right strategy, and it strikes us as elementary - it seems like common sense not to make that mistake. It is not good strategy, generally, to have power and not know how to use it, or how to control it.



In a war scene, if you can imagine the first day of war and the first battle, it is not good strategy to expend and empty all your armour and all your armoury upon the enemy in that first hour, or that first day, of battle. There is to be a strategy, there is to be a plan. You ought to pace yourself, and you ought to think about how you're going to exercise and execute the power that you have. There needs to be planning, there needs to be strategy - so much so that military men, some of them coming on now, study to degree level and higher. They are called military strategists. It's not all about fighting, but it's about how you fight and about the strategy of it.

In one sense, what is important is not the power that you have, not the skill that you have been gifted in, that specifically gives you the victory that you seek - but it is how you use it. It's important that we have all gifts and all blessings in spiritual places with Christ, it's important that we are blessed with all these things - and we have been realising in Ephesians what we are really blessed with in Christ. But if we do not know how to use them they're useless! So you can see in one sense, it's not the power that we have that is important, but what gives us victory is the execution of that power - how we use it to the glory of God. What is our control of it? It is the discipline of the faculties that God has given us - powerful they may be - we must know how to use that power that God has given to us.

It's very simple isn't it? I mean, what use is electricity to a man who doesn't realise that unless he puts the plug in the socket he'll not get any of the power? The power is sitting there, but it must be used. The thought within our passage tonight is exactly that: what good is prayer if you don't know how to use it? What good is

prayer if you don't follow the blueprint for prayer, God's divinely given strategy within verse 18? We must follow it if prayer is to do us any good! What flows from that is the implication that if you have all prayer, look at verse 18, all kinds of prayer; if you always pray, you're constantly praying; if you're praying in the Spirit of God (and we learnt last week what it means to do that), the implication is: that is not enough! We may have thought last week: 'Well, if I could do that I'd be flying!' - well, you wouldn't! Not according to this verse, because after that - that's the equipment, that is the armoury of prayer: all prayer, constant prayer, praying in the Spirit and all that that means from the word of God, taking the promises, walking in the Spirit, being born of the Spirit, having the spirit of adoption and crying: 'Abba, Father', all of that - if you have it and don't have the plan, or the strategy, it's useless!

Now, let's cement that into our minds now: the equipment without the strategy will not do anything! Therefore, for that reason, in verse 18 you have that little word 'and' - "'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and...'. I believe that could be better translated, because what it really means is 'and with this in view'. Look at it again: 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and with this in view', or 'in regard to this', or 'to the end that you may watch thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints'. In other words, get these three things: all kinds of prayer, constant prayer, learn to pray in the Spirit - and when you do that, then do this! Connect this equipment with God's given plan and then the dynamite will go off!

Now what is the strategy that Paul gives us for prayer? Well, it's outlined on your sheet. First of all there is a watchful disposition: 'and watching thereunto' - secondly, a persistent determination: 'with all perseverance' - and thirdly, a sanctified direction: 'praying for all the saints'. Now let's look at the first step of strategy: a watchful disposition. Watching, watching thereunto! Now, the Greek word for 'watching' literally means 'to be sleepless', to not sleep, to keep awake! Now, that's what it literally means, but spiritually in this particular verse it means 'a watchful attention to spiritual matters'. It means an alertness, a sober alertness giving heed and taking heed to what is going on around you, turning your attention to things spiritual within the world, within the church, and beware of the things that are going on - a spiritual sleeplessness, a spiritual alertness. Vines says: 'It is not mere wakefulness, but the watchfulness of those intent upon a thing'.

OK, so you want to pray, you want to pray about something? It's not just getting on your knees and lifting your eyes to God and asking God for the thing, but there is a watchfulness, there is a spiritual sleeplessness, where you come before God and you take heed, you give great attention, you're sober, you're absolutely alert, you're taking heed of everything around you, you're giving attention to all spiritual things, you're beware of the attack of the devil, and you're coming before the throne of grace and supplicating His throne. Now I want to flesh this out a little for our understanding this evening. In the Old Testament Scriptures - and I told you last week that there is a translation of the Old Testament in Greek and that embellishes for us a little bit some of the meanings of the Greek words that we find in the New Testament, how they were used in the Old Testament Greek translation. We find that in Psalm 127 and verse 1, a very well known verse: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain'.

That's a wonderful illustration of this watchfulness. There is a city, and the walls around the city, and there's a tower beside the gate. There is the watchman, you read about it extensively in the book of Ezekiel, he's standing on the watchtower looking for the enemy. Here you have it in the Psalm: 'Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city', so the picture is the Lord standing in the watchtower, 'the watchman waketh but in vain'. Unless the Lord's in the watchtower with the watchman, it doesn't matter whether he's asleep or awake. Isn't that right? But you can see the use of the word, it's a sleeplessness, it's staying sober - what good is a watchman if he dozes off on duty?

We turn to the New Testament and look at Mark 13, if you wish to turn to it, Mark chapter 13 and verse 33. The Lord Jesus is speaking of the end times, ultimately of the time of His return, and in Mark 13 and verse 33 He says this: 'Take ye heed', take heed, be alert, 'watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is'. Isn't that what we're meant to do? It is a watchfulness, not to be asleep for the coming of the Lord. Then in Luke 21, in a similar passage, and verse 36 He says again concerning His coming: 'Watch ye therefore, and pray always', watch and pray always, 'that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man'. Watch and pray! Keep awake! Be alert! Take account of the times around you, the signs of the times, what is going on, look for My coming, wait and watch for it. That's the sense of the word: an alertness!

If you turn to Hebrews chapter 13, quickly, and verse 17 - you find there a depiction of accountability within the church. You have the oversight and you have the members, members who are accountable. Let me just say quickly that accountability doesn't come from above, it's not the elders saying to you: 'You have to do what we say', accountability comes the other way when the members put themselves underneath the authority of the oversight: 'We want to do what you say'. Now, there is a difference, for it makes life a lot easier. In Hebrews 13:17 the word is used: 'Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you'. They watch! Do you realise what it entails to be an overseer and watching? Watching that false doctrine does not enter in, watching that wolves do not come in, watching for the conversation and manner of life of the believers, that they are walking in the ways of the Lord. If you're sleeping you can't do that! There has to be this alertness.

Now, that is a verb used there, but the noun, the word used as a noun occurs in 2 Corinthians 6:5, and you read this - Paul: 'In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings'. In chapter 11 and verse 27 of 2 Corinthians, again a description of Paul's life: 'In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness'. What's it talking about? It's talking about the great apostle Paul in sleeplessness, sleepless nights, midnight watchings - why? For the church of Jesus Christ he endured watchings, sleeplessness, for the sake of Christ and for the sake of the Gospel. If you go to Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 14, Paul has already given us this sentiment in the epistle: 'Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light'. Waken up! Do you remember the Lord in Gethsemane? Do you remember Him seeing the cup? Do you remember the account that is given? The Lord says to the disciples: 'Watch with me', He goes, He confronts what He must confront. He comes back, He finds His disciples asleep. He goes again, He comes back, they're asleep. He goes a third time, and comes back, and what does He say? 'Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation, for the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak' - watch!

We read of Anna, there was a perpetual watch in the temple because God orders us to watch - and there that widow of 84 years of age never departed from the temple, watching day and night, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. Why? Because this is what is required. This is the first strategy for prayer, and if we exempt ourselves out of it we're going to lose out. It's a must, this watchfulness, this perpetual prayer, this spiritual keenness, alertness and concentration on the thing at hand. I believe that's what James means when he says: 'The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much'. I hope I didn't mislead you last week, that if you use all prayer, and that if you constantly pray, and if you learn what it is to pray in the Spirit, that that's all that matters and your prayers will be answered - it is not! There is a strategy, and that is watchfulness - fervent prayer is effectual!

Is that not in keeping with our passage - verse 13 - where we are told to stand firm? It's in keeping with the whole - I don't know why people can't see that verse 18 is part of the armour of God! There is that war-like expression of watchfulness, vigilance, stand firm in the strength of the Lord! You can't doze off in battle, you can't have forty-winks in the midst of a full-scale war! There has to be a watchful disposition, it's needed,

you can't afford to be off guard for one moment. Therefore in our prayer life, you know as well as I do, that when you get down on your knees you have to watch against drowsiness. You'll doze off if you're tired, or if the room is too warm - all kinds of circumstances come in, and we're all human. I believe, incidentally, that one of the reasons the Lord may have went up a Mount was because of the cool air. Don't forget that He was a man, and He became tired - that's why His head was down in the boat when the storm came. We are all affected with these things, but we have to be on alert toward them - our mind wandering onto unsavoury things. Because we are in a battle it seems that prayer is the very time when those arrows from the devil come, and when we think upon things that we wouldn't even dream of thinking about normally, and we would never ever savour to commit.

Therefore in this exercise of prayer we must be aware of a preoccupation on other things, we cannot let those enter in to that moment of holiness. How do we apply this practically? That's the negative sense: not letting wandering thoughts come in, but in a positive sense: what can we actually do to cultivate a watchfulness in prayer? Well, one thing we can do is be alert to things that are going on around us. Not to have our eyes closed to what's going on in the church, not to be naive and novices and ignorant of the influences that are coming in, the false doctrines, the threats - not see the world being poured, bit by bit, by the devil into the bowels of the church. We're not to be ignorant of what's going on in the world, and being ignorant - as the word of God says - of his devices; of his wiles; 'methodias', his methods - we can't be ignorant! That is what it is to be watchful, to be in the battle, to have your eyes open and go in caring - knowing that you can see what's going on.

If you going to do that you've got to be aware of problems around you, you've got to be aware of the problems of the saints in your assembly. You've got to realise the needs of the assembly, the things that we don't have, because we don't have everything! There's great need, but to be watchful is to realise the need, but also to realise the promises of God. You can be very negative at times, and I can fall into that trap, and not see the promises of God. For it's not watchfulness if you only see the negative things, it's only watchfulness when you see the negative and you see that God counteracts the negative with His positive word - and if you put the two together, get on your knees and pray, then things happen! You need a watchful disposition.

Secondly: you need a persistent determination. 'Watching thereunto with all perseverance', the two are connected. The watching cannot go on without perseverance, the perseverance cannot take place without the watching. Watching in perseverance. Now what does that word 'perseverance' mean? It means 'persistence', it means keeping on, an earnestness toward a thing. If it's toward a place it's an earnest attendance. If the word is used towards a person it's an earnest and continual, persistent adherence closely to that person. If it's a thing it's to wait continually, to endure, to give yourself to that thing. Used as a verb it means 'to be steadfast towards, to continue giving unremitting care to that particular item'.

Paul uses it in Romans 13 and verse 6 - and people in Ulster would do well to read that passage and study it. I don't agree with everything that goes on in our government, but we are told that the government is ordained of God - never forget that. In verse 6 of that passage, Paul says, using the word for perseverance: 'For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing'. He's talking about taxes - what an illustration! Your tax, do you like paying it? You pay it, you have to pay it, and you pay it often - you maybe think you pay it too often. Paul is saying: 'The government is appointed by God, therefore you pay tax to the government because the government is the servant of God and they are attending continually upon that very thing'. You're always doing it, that thing is continual - that's the word 'perseverance', continually doing.

In Mark chapter 3 and verse 9 you find: '[the Lord Jesus] spake to his disciples, that a small ship should wait on him because of the multitude, lest they should throng him'. He's saying to His disciples: 'Do you see that

wee boat? Keep that boat for me, keep it there' - that's the exact same word as Paul uses in Ephesians. To wait on that boat, let that boat wait on me! Persevere: to draw it out, to continue, to be earnest towards, that persistency, to be there constantly for the Master's use. It's used in Acts 10 and verse 7 of Cornelius' soldiers who waited on him continually. Now, the question is: is our prayer like that? Waiting on God continually? Waiting on God for the Master's use, continually day by day? Paul talks of it in Romans 12 and verse 12: 'Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer', Colossians 4:2: 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving'. What is it doing? Paul is echoing the teaching of the Lord Jesus: 'If you come to your heavenly Father, and you pray, ask, seek, knock, and you shall find'.

The wicked judge didn't fear God, didn't fear men, but because of this little woman annoying him to the point of distraction, he comes and he answers her. Why? Because of her insistency. Is that the way we pray? Do we pray like the stranger coming to the door and knocking, and knocking, and knocking - and because of our importunity God comes down and answers us. But the Lord Jesus says it's not negative like that: 'How much more shall your heavenly Father avenge the cry of the elect, who cry unto him day and night without ceasing', there it is. There must be a persistent determination - oh, I wish we had time to look at it tonight.

It's all through the book of Acts, in Acts chapter 1 and verse 14 you find the disciples on their knees waiting for the promise from on high of the Holy Spirit - the word is used there: they are continually seeking, seeking. You see after Pentecost, after the Holy Ghost comes in chapter 2 and verse 42? They're still seeking! The Holy Ghost has come, and this is why it's persistent: before He came they were seeking, after He came they were still seeking - they're persisting - then in verse 46 you find them continuing steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers - continuing steadfastly! It's a personal thing, it's a corporate thing, you must be at the assembly prayer meeting! That's why the apostles, in chapter 6 of Acts and verse 4, devoted themselves to the ministry of the word and prayer - devoted themselves. A persistence, a continuance toward that specific thing. The Lord Jesus said it in Luke 11:9 that we read: 'Ask, seek, knock and you will find', He ended His Sermon on the Mount with that, Matthew 7 verse 7: 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'. All those statements are in what is called 'the present imperative', which means this: keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking, and you will have!

There is an increasing intensity, an increasing seeking, and it's very difficult to apply this to our lives - do you know why? Because it seems, I don't know about you, but it seems for me that I give up - and I wonder if there was a video played in eternity of my prayer life, and of the Lord with His answer just there ready to give me on a certain date, how many times I've just given up a few days too soon? That's our make-up, isn't it? The spirit is willing, you're listening - I know you're listening - to everything tonight, as I am, and you're thinking: 'That's what I want!'. It's a different thing doing it, isn't it? It's a different thing continuing when it seems that the answer's not coming, there's no sign that the answer's coming - and the flesh gets weak, we get tired, we get bored with the same old petition, so we give up and we lose out on the blessing!

We must, when we look at this, we must see what the Lord is saying: if we do that, if we give up, if our prayers are listless and indifferent to what is happening in our home, to the needs that are there, if we're not seeing the things that are going on in the district, if we're not watchful in our perseverance, seeing what's going on in the nation and in the church - we will have a restricted prayer life! If you don't study the word of God you'll never be a persistent prayer, you'll not know the will of God, you'll not know what God wants, you'll not be enthused enough to seek persistently and continually for what God would have.

There is a watchful disposition and a persistent determination, and thirdly there is a sanctified direction: 'for all the saints'. Do you know that every day is 'all saints day'? Every day. In Luke 11, if we read the first few verses, when the Lord taught the disciples to pray, as you well know He said: 'Our Father', not 'My Father' -

for we are all a body. The Lord Jesus, in all of His teaching upon prayer, impressed the importance of praying for others - and He showed it in His own life, that He did pray for others. The miracle of the Gospel is that He came, He died, He was buried, He rose, He ascended, and the very ministry that He has now - the word of God says - He is living to intercede for others. You remember Samuel, after the people cried for a King and he gave them a King - Saul. The old prophet came to the people and he said: 'Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you'.

A gentleman said to me this week: 'It's a sin to say the wrong thing, isn't it? It's also a sin not to say the right thing'. There is a sin of silence, and it is no greater a sin than in the very presence of God, when we do not pray for all the saints. The Jews had a saying that went: 'Let a man unite himself with the community in his prayers' - unite yourself with your community in your prayers. Grip onto the church, onto all the saints - and we said last week that often our prayers are too much for ourselves, and too little for others - they're introspective, they're selfish. But what the Lord Jesus wants us to do, and what Paul is teaching here, it is that we would become world-class Christians. We take in the world: do you pray for Africa? Do you pray for Asia and Europe, the Americas and India? Do you pray for them? Do you pray for missionaries specifically, and have a world vision of what God can do and what your prayers can do if you seek God with watchfulness, taking account of what's going on in our world, and persevering with God and not letting go - like Jacob - until He blesses you? Your prayers are instrumental in the lives other believers - that's an awesome responsibility. To realise that there are yet 7000 that have not bowed the knee to Baal, and we're not the only ones left, and we need to pray for all the saints.

Verses 19 and 20 are, perhaps, some of the most beautiful verses in the book of Ephesians, because here you have Paul's private request, his personal request. Just as he started the epistle in chapter 1 with praying for the saints of Ephesus, and praying for the believers and all their needs, he now requests prayers of them - he's asking them now to pray for him. 'For me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel'. Now, there are other letters if you had a moment - we don't - if you looked at his other epistles you find that he asks them to remember him in prayer. He does it at the end of Romans, he does it at the end of Colossians, at the end of first and second Thessalonians. He asks them, personally, for prayer - and every single occasion, except perhaps for one, he asks that he may be prayed for - not for his needs, not for his personal benefits, but for the advancement and the spread of the Gospel and the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

I think the chief element within those truths is simply this: the great apostle Paul recognised his total and absolute dependence upon God. Paul needed his friends, and we need each other. Paul wasn't a great priest who had all the grace in his fingertips to lay hands on someone and give them all they needed, for Paul was coming to the people of God and pleading with the people of God that they pray for him. Paul didn't have a store of endless grace for the Ephesians, he needed their prayers. There was only one store of grace that Paul recognised, and that is the throne of grace! He knew, as an apostle, that it was only through what God Himself supplied to him that he would be enabled to fulfil his role as the apostle to the Gentiles.

Now this staggers me, because if you remember our introductory message, many moons ago, on Ephesians chapter 1: Paul is in prison! I mean, what would your prayer request be if you were in prison? 'Get me out of here! Or if I can't get out of here, at least get me a mattress or something, or a pillow I can put my head on, or a decent meal!' - but not Paul! He didn't ask that God would free him, or make him more comfortable, or make him safe, but what does he ask for? Look at it: rather that utterance, boldness, may be given to him, and faithfulness in opening his mouth to declare the mystery of the Gospel - no matter what the cost! 'Whatever happens to me this is the chief prayer, this is the request that I have: that I may be given the strength to open my mouth, and to preach what God wants me to preach! It literally is translated: 'that the words may be given to me' - what a prayer! If you're a preacher, you pray that prayer: that the words may be given to me - it reflects, literally in the Greek, a formal language of diplomatic procedure - and you're going

to see in verse 20 that he speaks of himself as an ambassador. This is a formal language that he wants to be given, it means that he wants permission to speak, and when he is given permission to speak he wants the right words to speak.

You see it in Acts 26 and verse 1 when Agrippa said to Paul: 'Thou art permitted to speak for thyself'. That's what Paul is saying: 'I want to be permitted to speak for myself, and when I'm given that opportunity to speak, that I may speak faithfully to the Gospel, that I may be bold and not miss the mark'. Look at it, he says, literally, 'that I may open the mouth and fearlessly make known the Gospel'. That was a favourite expression of Paul's: 'to make known, to reveal' - do you know what it is? It speaks of frankness, it speaks of being uninhibited - in other words, he's saying it's like being a free man: 'Look, I'm in prison, I'm chained to a Roman soldier, I'm under execution possibly - but when I go into whoever I'm going into for trial, I want to make sure that I speak like a free man who's under no threat'. That's what he's saying. In reality, spiritually speaking, that's the kind of man he was - he was under no threat until God said so.

He said, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, that he did it - in the book of Acts - with all confidence, no man forbidding him. Is that not what the sentiment was behind his great statement in Romans? 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel! I am uninhibited!' - this is this great man, not ashamed, whether it be by death upon his head, he will preach the Gospel! I believe he was possibly looking for an opportunity to speak in the Imperial Court, or perhaps to the Emperor himself, or maybe to a Roman tribunal that was going to try him - or it may have only been those Roman soldiers that would change night after night to be chained to him. He wanted, while he was in prison - if he could do nothing else - to faithfully present the Gospel, why? Because he was a chosen vessel onto God to bring the Gospel before the Gentiles and their kings.

This was the great man Paul on his knees praying that he'll do it right - that's the thing that staggers me. He asks in verse 20, he says that he is an ambassador - and you know that an ambassador is a diplomat and they're granted diplomatic immunity, they're not allowed to be arrested, they're are not allowed to be imprisoned. This is the paradox here, in fact in the Greek it's a title given to the Legate of the Emperor - an ambassador and diplomat of the Roman Emperor, he's using these words! They're not allowed to be imprisoned, they're not allowed to be harmed - but the irony is that the great ambassador of the King of the universe is in chains! There seems to be a bit of a play on words on that word 'chained', because an ambassador in those days would have worn a big gold chain, and I believe Paul is saying: 'And look at the chain I have'.

This great man who was an ambassador for Christ, as though Paul were pleading these people in Christ's behalf to be reconciled to God - and there he is, with his long beard; with his back scarred from those whips, those beatings; with his feet bleeding; bearing on his body the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. A man who stood before Agrippa, a man who stood before Felix, the great apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles and to kings, the representative of Jesus Christ upon the earth as an apostle - and he is praying for faithfulness! He is! He is praying that he'll not buckle down, that he'll not bottle it when the chance is given, that he'll give it and tell it as it is, that he'll not accentuate the preaching of the cross and confuse it with wisdom of words - but that he will preach it plainly that men may understand.

He was depending on the prayer of the saints to enable him to preach the Gospel - and do you know what the inference is? That he couldn't do it without them! Can I just say that there are none of us who have got it all, none of us. There are none of us who have reached it, there are none of us who have achieved - Paul even says: 'Not as if I have attained'. None of us! Not even the great apostle, there he is - can you see him in the armour of God? Can you see him? Can you see him with the helmet of salvation on his head, dented and scraped from all the battles he was in? Can you see him with the shield of faith, with all the fiery darts in it at the end of his life? - and look how many there are! Can you see him with the breastplate of righteousness that

the devil has tried to pull and strip off him many times, reminding him of the Christians that he chased and fed to the lions, and of Stephen the martyr? Can you see the girdle of truth that the false prophets, the Judaisers, tried to rip off him and let all the rest of the armour fall down? Can you see the shoes of the Gospel of peace that are worn out as he goes to and fro around all of Europe with the Gospel? Can you see it all? Yet that great warrior needed prayer, and I need your prayer, and you need my prayer - and we all need each other's prayer. We need to pray for everything, we need to pray for the right thing, we need to pray at the right time, and we must have this great strategy - we must have it!

So, let me ask you: do you have a watchful disposition? Do you have a persevering determination? Do you pray for the saints? I leave you with the words of Paul the apostle in the book of Romans, listen: 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light'.

Let us pray: Our Father, we have heard You teaching us to pray, but who is sufficient for these things? But yet, we must submit that this is the truth of God, and the God who commands also enables. We pray that, by Thy Spirit, we will have a watchful disposition, that we will persevere, and that we will pray for one another - for oh Lord we need it. So Lord help us, as we conclude, to put on all of this armour, and in the days that lie ahead to taste that sweet victory that the Lord Jesus Christ has purchased through His blood. Bless us now, we pray in His lovely name. Amen.

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