



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 6:5-24

“The Christian’s Conflict” -- TRANSCRIPT

We are turning to the subject of the Christian’s conflict, and are attempting to conclude our study of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Many years ago, Ruth Paxon, a woman Bible teacher and missionary in China, wrote a book called *The Wealth, the Walk, and the Warfare of the Christian*. It was a very capable exposition of the English text of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and with those three words, wealth, walk and warfare, she sought to sum up the principal themes of the book. The first three chapters of the epistle give us the Christian’s wealth, in that they set forth the position that we have in Christ by virtue of our union with him, by virtue of what he has done for us.

Our standing in his merits is our wealth, and then beginning with chapter 4 and verse 1, the Apostle speaks of the walk that should flow out of this wealth we that have in Christ. He tells us in chapter 4 verse 1, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation to which ye are called.” And then from chapter 4 verse 1 on through chapter 6 verse 9, the Apostle deals with the question of the Christian’s walk: the way in which our salvation is to affect our daily life, in the midst of our experiences that we have as human beings, redeemed by grace.

Now with verse 10, the Apostle, through the 20th verse, will give us the Christian’s warfare, and it is a magnificent section in which the Apostle warns us of our foes, tells us regarding our resources, speaks also of the equipment of Christian warrior in some detail. And then he concludes with a brief final word to the Ephesians, or the recipients of the epistle, telling them through whom he is sending the letter, and asking in the salutation a particular blessing upon them.

It’s not unusual for individuals to have unseen enemies. In the Bible, we are told that we as believers have unseen enemies. For example, the Apostle Peter is told by the

Lord Jesus Christ, that he has an unseen enemy. In Matthew chapter 16 and verse 21-23 we read these words:

“From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how he must go into Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him and began to rebuke him saying, ‘Be it far from Thee, Lord, this shall not be unto Thee.’ But he turned and said unto Peter, ‘Get thee behind me Satan! Thou art an offense unto me, for thou savorest not the things that are of God, but those that are of men.’”

In verse 17, he had said of Peter, “blessed art thou, Simon bar-Jonah.” Here, he calls him by the term “Satan,” which of course was a reference to the fact that standing behind the comment of Peter that he should avoid the cross was the influence of Satan, the Lord Jesus recognizing the unseen enemy of the Apostle.

Many Bible students have also noticed the parallel between Ephesians chapter 6 and the Book of Joshua. The Children of Israel finally have made their way through the Promised Land, and they are ready to go into the land, and as they enter the land, they are to invade it, they are to conquer it, and they are to ultimately occupy it. In fact, many commentators have noticed a specific analysis and parallel between Joshua 1 and verse 3 and Ephesians 1 and verse 3. In Joshua 1 and verse 3, Joshua says, “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that shall I have given unto you as I said unto Moses.” So the task of Joshua was to enter into the land and possess the land that had been given to them.

Now, in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3 we are told that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, in Christ, and the responsibility that we have is to enter in to these blessings and possess them in a spiritual way just as Joshua and the Children of Israel were to enter the land of Canaan.

Occasionally, individuals thinking of the analogy between the land of Canaan and Israel’s possession of it have likened it to heaven. In fact, Samuel Stinnett has written a hymn which we often sing,

“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand, and cast a wishful eye,
to Canaan’s fair and happy land, and where my possessions lie,”

as if to suggest the analogy between Israel’s entrance into the land and their possession of it under Joshua, their captain, is the entrance of the church of Jesus Christ into heaven.

But Canaan involved conflict. And when the Children of Israel went into Canaan, they had to struggle and fight. The proper analogy between the entrance of Israel into the land of Canaan with New Testament truth is the entrance of the believer into the blessings that are his potentially and positionally through his own growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the midst of the conflicts that he must face. And so the conflicts that Israel faced in the land are paralleled by the conflicts that we have in the Christian life.

Now let me summarize verses 5 through 9 before we look at verse 10 and following, particularly. The Apostle has spoken of husbands and wives, and spent a rather lengthy period in part of the sixth [sic] chapter expounding the particular relationships that they have one to another. And then in chapter 6 verse 1 through verse 4, he has spoken about children and their parents, under the terms in verse 1 “children obey your parents” and then verse 4 “ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath.”

And in verse 5 through verse 9 he turns to a relationship that was very common in those days, the relationship of slavery. The things that he says about slavery are rather interesting in the light of the history of race, and the race in the West since the days of the Apostolic writings. You might’ve expected the Apostle, if you’d listened to a great deal of the sociology of the last centuries or so, to launch into some lengthy diatribe about the evils of slavery. Now the Apostle writes about slavery in a number of places; never does he do that. In fact, never does the Apostle, in a number of references to slavery – some in detail – ever say that slavery is wrong. He never says that. It’s a rather remarkable thing. And I’m not suggesting by this, and I hope you won’t think that I am, that slavery is right. But the Apostle regarded this, evidently, as part of the society in which he lived, and therefore, he felt that believers should rather be interested in how they as Christian slaves should obey, as Christians, and how masters, as masters of slaves – and owners of slaves no doubt – should obey toward their servants.

In fact, in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 he speaks to the servants, and he tells them to abide in the calling in which they were called. He says, if you’re a slave, stay a slave. On the other hand, he said, if you are given your freedom, then use your freedom.

In Philemon, he says the essentially the same thing, although there may be hint of a suggestion in Philemon that he anticipated the time when slavery would become a practice that would be recognized as wrong by society. But the Apostle was very

interested in maintaining the society as it stood, regardless of the kind of government a particular nation might have. Now, whenever the word of God conflicted, specifically, of course, then the Apostle says we must obey God rather than men.

But in the light of that, listen to what he says to the servants:

“Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ.”

One of the reasons the Apostle speaks in this way is that in those days Masters had the power of life and death over their servants. And, as I say, Paul evidently did not feel it his duty to attack the basis of the society of which he was apart. He said,

“Not with eye service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”

In other words, it should be looked upon as an opportunity for obedience, for the service of Jesus Christ. They should look upon this as an opportunity to be a servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with good will, doing service as to the Lord and not to men.

“Knowing that whatever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond (that is, a slave) or free.”

So, the Apostle’s admonition to the servants is to be obedient. Consider their masters as standing for Christ and for the Lord God, and do your service seeking to please them. That, I think, is the characteristic of the Apostle’s teaching. Verse 6, “as the servants of Christ.” Verse 7, “as to the Lord.” Verse 8, “the same shall he receive *of the Lord*, whether he be bond or free.”

Now, he also has a word for the masters, or the owners of the slaves:

“And you masters, do the same thing unto them, forbearing threatening, knowing that your master is also in heaven, neither is there any respect of persons with him.”

The great pattern of all of this: children, parents, servants, masters, is the Lord Jesus Christ who though the Creator of this universe nevertheless was subject unto his parents, Joseph and Mary. “Men heed Thee, love Thee, praise Thee not; the Master praises, what are men?” So even in this relationship, which no doubt was a difficult one for many servants, the Apostle said this is an opportunity in which you can demonstrate your service of the Lord.

Now with that, let’s move on to the subject of the Christian’s conflict. And he begins in the 10th verse by speaking of the warrior’s resources. “Finally, my brethren”—like a good preacher he’s nearing the end, and so “finally” is his word. This time, he’s going to finish up in a relatively short time. As you know, when you read Paul, he frequently does this, in Philippians he says “finally” as he begins the third chapter and writes two more chapters. That “finally” doesn’t mean anything more than the time when the preacher put his watch by the side of the pulpit and the little boy said, noting everything since this was his first time in the big service, “What does he mean by that?” The father said, “Son, absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing.” Well Paul’s finallys are not always to be regarded as finals, but nevertheless this one seems to be properly “finally.”

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.” Be strong. In the original text that’s in the present tense. The Apostle saying, in a sense, “Be being strong.” In other words, he’s talking about a constant appropriation of the strength of the Lord. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord”; it’s not something that we do once for all, but it is something that we do constantly as we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are constantly strengthening ourselves in the Lord and in the power of his might. He speaks of the constant appropriation of the strength of the Lord, derived, ultimately, out of the fact that not only is he the Lord, but we are united to him by virtue of his covenantal headship over the people of God. He is the covenantal head. He has gone into death, burial, resurrection for us, for his people. He has gone to the right hand of the Father for his people, and there he prays for his people – he doesn’t pray for the world – he says in John 17, he prays for those that shall believe on him, for his believers and those that shall believe. And by virtue of our covenantal union with him, we are able to draw upon his strength in the experience of life. It’s a magnificent relationship that we have; it’s a sad thing that we so frequently do not make available to ourselves the strength that he provides for us.

We do not, as believers, move to heaven on a flowery bed of ease, as it has been said. We are at war. And the war is a war that touches the most intimate parts of an

individual. In a moment the Apostle will say we wrestle with principalities and powers in heavenly places. So, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

I think it’s certainly proper to just make a brief application here. You notice the Apostle does not say, “be strong in human plans.” He does not say, “be strong in human methods.” He does not say, “be strong in the latest ideas” that sweep over the evangelical church, but “be strong in the Lord and the power of his might.”

It seems to me that there is involved in this an implicit conviction that everything that a believer needs is really in the Lord. And therefore, we do not need the Lord *and* something else, *and* some method. We need the Lord. We don’t need the Lord and certain plans. So be strong in the Lord and the power of his might.

I think that’s very important and particularly important in the Christian church today, when the general impression given, by the plans and methods and schemes that are sweeping over evangelicalism, a constant appeal to a seminar on this and a seminar on that, and a seminar on the other thing – and be sure and pay us for it; be sure and pay us for it – it seems to me that what that ultimately is, what it ultimately becomes, is an attack on the sufficiency of holy Scripture. And that is something that does not ring very true with me. Now I’m not mad at you if you don’t think that way, but I’d like for you to know how I think about it. I think that is an implicit attack upon the sufficiency of God.

I read a statement by C.S. Lewis today, which I thought was extremely good. He said, “It’s a rather strange thing, that the particular day in which we are living, is a day in which so little Bible reading is being done and so much Bible translation is being done.” Isn’t it amazing? We’ve had translation after translation after translation of the Bible made in the past 30 years. From the RSV, with a great deal of publicity, on through the translations, and the facts are the evangelical church today is not a church that constantly reads the word of God.

Now you can tell that if you have read the Bible. If you have become acquainted with the text of the Bible, you will discover, even in the regular attenders in the evangelical churches, such as this very church, the phrases that people use; the clauses that they use; the questions they ask are questions that could not be asked in the way they’re asked if they were constant readers of the word of God. So, be strong in the Lord and the power of his might. The sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way that we are strong in the Lord today is through his word. That’s how we learn about him. That’s how we know about him, in whom is our strength.

Now he explains why we need to be strong in the Lord. We have some rather difficult foes that confront us. Listen:

“Put on the whole armor 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 rules of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”

Well, now, the whole armor is needed because of these foes that we face. We need all of the armor that we can possibly put on us, by reason of the one that we face.

Emile Kaiyae, who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary for a while, said, “The neatest trick Satan has ever perpetrated is make so many think he does not exist.” Our enemy is the devil. And Paul speaks of him as possessing wiles, craft – crafty: “that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” We don’t wrestle against flesh and blood, we wrestle against these unseen powers of darkness that are about us.

Wonder what Paul was thinking when he wrote this; where did he get this idea? Well, of course, the idea is all through the Bible, from the beginning of the Book of Genesis, on through the Scripture. We have the great conflict between God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the Holy Trinity and what will ultimately unfold as an unholy trinity of Satan, the Beast and the False Prophet, but the warfare between God and Satan is a continuing warfare, predicted in Genesis chapter 3 and carried out through the chapters of the Bible as a result of the Fall of Man.

But Paul is in a Roman prison at this time. And we know that he was in chains, in verse 21 we read “for which I am an ambassador in bonds (or in chains).” So he was chained. And he had standing before him and around him a Roman soldier. I think Paul, having this vivid example of a Roman soldier before him, barks out his commands just like a military mind. That’s why he says, “Put on the whole armor of God.” He sees this Roman hoplite standing before him with his armor. And if it’s not on him, it’s standing over in the corner. And so the Apostle, thinking about the forces that oppose the Christian, and having the soldier before him, speaks in military fashion, and also conjures up, as we shall see, a picture of the Christian as a Christian warrior.

Now Luther was one of the Reformers who particularly understood the nature of the warfare that we face. And of course, in one of his greatest hymns he writes,

“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.”

In the Old Testament, Daniel, in the tenth chapter of the Book of Daniel, just before he is to receive the Scripture of Truth, the last great revelation of this book, in chapter 11 and chapter 12, has a vision of the glory of God, and an angelic being stands before him. And he speaks to Daniel in these ways. He said,

“O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright, for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days. But lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia.”

This is an angelic being speaking, speaking to Daniel the Prophet, and he says that the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood him after he was sent by God to minister to Daniel. In verse 20 we read, in that tenth chapter of Daniel:

“Then said he, knowest thou why I come unto thee? And now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia, and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come.”

So, if you put together the things the Bible says about the unseen world, what we have is a picture of Satan, who is over a great host of well-organized individual beings, angelic beings – fallen angelic beings – that are organized into principalities and powers and thrones and dominions, to use the expressions the Apostle Paul uses in a passage like this (and also in passages like Colossians chapter 1), and evidently territorially organized, so that the whole of the earthly territory is beautifully organized by the Satanic kingdom.

That’s not surprising. God’s kingdom is organized beautifully. It’s not surprising at all that the chief angel at one time, Satan, should have organized his territory beautifully. And we are part of the battle ground. So, we have a tremendous foe who is before us, seeking to destroy us. As Luther says, “He seeks to work us woe, and he’s armed with cruel hate.” His methods are not always the methods that we conjure up.

Sometimes he works deceitfully. At other times, he works in other ways. But nevertheless, he is a foe to be reckoned with.

One of the instances of the working of Satan that was brought to my mind again from our Sunday night meeting, the fact that in the 25th chapter of the Book of Numbers, Phinehas stood up in the midst of the sin, carnal sin, of the Children of Israel, following the prophecies of Balaam, and stood for the truth of God to the extent that he slew one of the members of the Children of Israel, and God spoke out and said that because Phinehas has been zealous, well I’m going to give him an everlasting priesthood. We might’ve said it was cruel – that’s not the kind of God we believe in – but Phinehas had that zealous zeal for truth that God honored because God is like that.

The interesting thing about that is that Balaam had made all of his prophecies, and in spite of the fact that Balak tried to get him to prophesy against Israel, all of his prophecies came out as great prophecies for Israel. Here is a man who is a false prophet, he stands up, he wants to prophesy against Israel, and the words that come out of his mouth are for Israel. God so controlled the tongue of the false prophet. So, the Children of Israel were impregnable against the prophecies of Balaam.

But, as soon as that passes, then, they look out on the women of Baal Peor, the heathen women, and they are attracted to them with a fleshly kind of lust, contrary to the word of God. And they married them. And then the next step is to worship their gods. And that’s why it’s necessary for Phinehas to rise up and be zealous for the word of God.

Satan, when he was unable to work through Balak, getting Balaam to prophesy against Israel, is able to cause their fall through other means. And this time, fleshly, carnal lust. So he works in different ways. He has wiles – notice verse 11 – “against the wiles of the devil.”

Now what kind of equipment do we have? Well Paul, I think – this is only the occasion of course, as I’m gonna point out – the occasion of what Paul says here is this Roman soldier, probably standing before him. This Roman soldier had a breastplate. He had a shield. He had a sword. He had certain kinds of sandals. He had a helmet.

I say, I don’t know whether his helmet was hanging over on the wall or whether his spear was in the corner and his shield standing against the wall. Paul, being in chains – or whether he had them on – it was the custom for Roman soldiers to come and work all day long, just as they do here and go somewhere else and sleep, someone else taking his place. Paul was constantly with one of these Roman soldiers. So that was the occasion of what he had to say, but I don’t think that it was the source of what he was saying.

Some years ago, I made a study of these verses because I got a little clue from the study of the Old Testament in the New Testament, that caused me to realize that Paul was saying something just a little bit more, a little bit different from what I had ordinarily thought. I thought that probably Paul had just had this Roman soldier in mind, and that’s all he was thinking about. He was thinking of this Roman soldier and then he says, the Christian is a soldier, and so being a Christian soldier, he takes the particular pieces of the Roman soldier’s armor, and he makes spiritual application of them.

But I discovered a most interesting fact. This description in verse 13 through verse 17 of the Christian warrior, is a description that is derived from the Old Testament, from three passages particularly: Isaiah chapter 59, Isaiah chapter 11, and Isaiah chapter 49. Now if you’re a Bible reader, you’ll recognize immediately that Isaiah 59 is a Messianic chapter, it has to do with Christ. Isaiah 11 is the great chapter of the Messianic king, and how he’s going to come and establish his kingdom upon the earth. Isaiah 49 is one of the great servant of Jehovah songs. All three passages, then, are passages that speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as the warrior king of God.

Now Paul takes phrases from those descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ and says this is what we as believers today are to do. “Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand” – so I think that Paul – I know when sometimes I...I have visions. Mine are not inspired. Mine are the kind that I have when I’m taking a little nap, and I’m not yet asleep and I’m thinking about, perhaps, something spiritual, some biblical truth. And as I’m thinking about this my thoughts move from that particular thing into something that is an expansion of it, and maybe into something else, before I drop off into sleep. Sometimes I don’t drop off to sleep.

But my thoughts often move from what is before me to something that is farther out. I’m just suggesting to you that the Apostle is doing something like that. Here is this Roman soldier in front of him, and he’s thinking about the fact that these Ephesians, to whom he’s writing, they need to realize the kind of foe they face. And so as he sees the Roman soldier, what appears before him is the Christian, decked out in his armor. But what is back of even that, is the fact that the description is the description of the armor of the Lord Jesus Christ. So he looks and he sees the Roman soldier, and bigger than the Roman soldier becomes the figure of the Christian, like a warrior, and even bigger than that is the Warrior of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is him, in him, he is the warrior, in him, that we are strong.

So, my brethren, be strong in the Lord – be a Christian warrior. Fight the fight of faith, but fight in your warrior who is invincible. That’s what he’s thinking about. And the fact that he draws this description from the Old Testament Messianic passages suggests that he’s really thinking of Jesus Christ as *the* warrior, and we are in him. And therefore, we have strength, and his power, and his authority in the trials of life as we trust in him.

Now, he speaks in more detail of the parts of the armor. “Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God,” verse 13, “that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand”—“withstand” has to do with the battle, and then “stand” in victory—so withstand, “withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand”—in other words, if we are using the strength that is given us in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the midst of the struggles, we’ll have to withstand the enemy, but in the end, we’ll stand in victory.

“Stand, therefore,” verse 14, “having your loins girded about with truth.” That’s the first thing: the girdle. No soldier could fight without a girdle. If he had loose, flowing robes, he would be an easy victim in any kind of conflict. The first thing he must do is put on his belt. Tacitus writes of a girded warrior as a *miles achcinctus*, using a Latin expression, a girded soldier. This was the soldier who was one who could overcome. So again, the girdle, he begins with the girdle. That has to do with activity. And when he says here “having your loins girded about with truth” he means that in our activity it is truth that is to be governing thing. Human reason, human plans, human methods (that type of thing); tradition, whether church tradition or human tradition; theories, speculation; dead orthodoxy – Charles Hodge says they are a girdle of spider webs for the Christian warrior – the girdle with which we fight is the girdle of truth, and truth as it is in Jesus Christ as the Apostle says in chapter 4 verse 21.

Again, I don’t think there’s any man in relatively modern times, the last four or five hundred years, who has ever fought more victoriously than Martin Luther. And Luther said, “And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us.” Now that’s a magnificent expression of the truth. God has willed that his truth triumph through us.

Do you know what that means, Christian? That means that if you stand for truth, you stand for that which will triumph for he has willed that his truth triumph. His truth is going to triumph, so stand for the truth. If you stand for the sovereignty of God, you will be vindicated for that is truth. If you stand for the grace of God, you will be vindicated, ultimately, for that is the truth. All kinds of instances in church history illustrate the fact

that when men seek to put down the truth, the truth rises up in another form. God has willed that his truth succeed.

So when men try to blot out the expression and preaching of the grace of God, he will raise up some figure over here, not in the established company of people, who will preach the truth and sovereignty of God. This is always the case. You cannot fight against God’s truth. Even Gamaliel recognized that. So the first thing that governs the activity of the Christian warrior is the truth of God.

Now the second thing is the breastplate. He says, “And having on the breastplate of righteousness.” I’m not sure whether he’s talking about the breastplate of practical righteousness, that is, a righteous life that should characterize a Christian – I certainly believe that’s biblical teaching – or whether he’s talking about imputed righteousness that comes to us by virtue of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; that which is the result of the merits of his saving work, that which is given to us, that which is reckoned to us when we believe in him. Some say it must be imputed righteousness and not imparted righteousness (our righteousness) because this is God’s armor, and if it were our armor, our righteousness, our armor would be pierced rather soon. Well, that’s a pretty good argument, and I’m perfectly happy taking this as the breastplate of righteousness that God gives to us when we believe in Christ. Do you have that righteousness? The breastplate was very important. The breastplate of righteousness.

Now, I don’t have time to turn to these passages in the Old Testament, but I would suggest to you that in the case of the girdle, the Apostle is referring to the passage in Isaiah chapter 11 verse 5, and then in the case of the breastplate he’s referring to Isaiah chapter 59 and verse 17.

The third thing that he brings before his readers is the sandals. “With your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.” What were sandals for? Well, they were for facility of motion. Preparation. Readiness for battle. “Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace,” that is, the readiness for battle that is derived from the sense of the fact that we have peace with God. Your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace.

Doubts paralyze a Christian. They paralyze the Christian’s response to the trials of life. One of the things that makes it so difficult for us to survive our temptations and trials is our doubts in the midst of them. We have someone right now who is very ill, and one of the problems that she has had is her doubt of her salvation. Been a professing Christian for some time, but still having doubts. Now, I’m not sure that I could honestly diagnose the reason, in her case, but often our reason is that we’ve not done that first

thing: become so acquainted with the word of God that those promises uphold us when we face the difficult times of life. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. So, Paul says, your feet should be shod with the preparation of the good news of peace made between God and men. So, the readiness for battle is derived from peace, which gives us the ability to cope without having doubts.

Roman soldiers, in order to have facility of motion, were in the habit of putting on shoes that were thickly studded with sharp nails. That’s one of the reasons for the success of Julius Caesar in his campaigns. His men were able to make marches much faster than his enemies, and his enemies were constantly fooled, thinking they had plenty of time to prepare, and then Caesar would be there. Very much like Stonewall Jackson, who, and one of the reasons for his success as a general was the speed with which he was able to move his armies. One of the reasons for the success of Patton was the speed with which he moved his armies. One of the reasons for the success of the Germans and the overthrow of the French was the speed of the Panzer, the Panzer Divisions, the *kampfwagen*, those tanks that the Germans used with such facility in World War II; they went through the Maginot line – we all thought in the West they would never be able to penetrate that; we read all of these long articles about how the French spend so much time building these things and how impregnable they were – I think the Germans went through them in about three days, maybe less in some places. They had speed and agility of motion; before the French put down their bottle of wine, the Germans were through.

Now, he says, their feet should be shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace; those things that come as a result of the conviction of the truth of God give us protection, facility of motion, activity. Well, let’s go on.

The Apostle goes on to say, “Above all, taking the shield of faith, with which ye shall be able to quench all of the fiery darts of the wicked one.” Now this can be the Faith, the faith as a body of doctrine, or it can be the trust, the subject trust wrought by the Holy Spirit of God. In other words, faith that the Holy Spirit brings to us that enables us to trust in what Christ has done. Or, it can be the body of Christian truth – probably the former, since the Apostle uses the other much more commonly than he does the body of Christian truth as the Faith.

So, Paul says, take the shield of faith, with which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. That shield, well Paul uses a term that refers to the Roman *scutum*, four feet long, two-and-a-half feet broad, an oblong sword that was designed to stop the arrows that were fired at the Roman soldiers that were often tipped with burning cotton and pitch. So Paul says the shield of faith, it’s that with which the

fiery darts of the wicked one are stopped – all of those little things that disturb us in our experiences of life – in your business, in your home, among your friends, in your Christian church, in your trials, in your troubles, in your questions, all of these things are involved. The Apostle says, you may have protection from moveable objects, by faith.

Then he speaks of the helmet. He says, “And take the helmet of salvation.” Now, the helmet was the protection of the vital spot, so I gather that the reference is to salvation. The helmet of salvation, which is life, life itself, spiritual life itself; therefore, the ultimate safety. Take the helmet which is salvation. Again, salvation taken from Isaiah chapter 59. By the way, in the Greek text, at this point, “take the helmet of salvation” is not the word he used above for take, but it’s the word that means essentially to receive. So, receive the helmet of salvation, because salvation’s not something we take, it’s something we receive. So he uses the Greek expression *dexesthae* and not *analambatae*, or *lambatae*.

And finally, he says, the sword. “And take the helmet of salvation and the Sword of the Spirit” – the sword that comes from the Spirit, for the sword, the word of God, has it’s origin in the Holy Spirit who is the inspirer of God’s word – “the Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

You know, Paul’s sitting there in that Roman prison, sees this great Messianic figure standing before him of the Lord Jesus Christ. He sees his helmet. He sees his breastplate. He sees his shield. He looks at his feet. He notices the sword that he has in his hand, the Sword of the Spirit, and reflecting upon the fact that we are identified with him, he says, like our Lord who is the Warrior, take up the armor of God. It’s really the armor of Jesus Christ.

By the way, when he says here the Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, he uses a term here for the word which is probably a reference to an individual text. It’s probably a reference to a particular word. *Rema* is distinguished from *logos* in that way. So that, you are inclined to think of particular utterances, particular texts, particular words, even; words for a particular situation. So what he may have in mind, here, is the particular word that God will bring deliverance in a particular situation in which you need some expression of the mind of God; so, the Sword of the Spirit which is the word of God – God’s utterance in the applied sense.

Now if we don’t store up the word of God in our minds, how can we have a word from God? God does not bring to our mind words that we have not come across in the word of God. That’s one of the reasons we fail. The reason our Lord succeeded when Satan tested him three times, the reason he was able to call up three texts from

Deuteronomy – how many could you call up? Suppose the answer to your problem were to lie in a text from Deuteronomy expressing a certain principle? Well, I dare say most of us, well, we’d have to pass that one by. But our Lord was able to cite three texts from Deuteronomy, because he was familiar with the word of God. It wasn’t simply because he was the *divine* Son. It was because he was the divine *Son*, the God-man. He had studied the Scriptures, as the text says of the Servant of the Lord in Isaiah chapter 50.

Most of us have a broken sword, and therefore we’re not able to fight. Eve’s failure in the Garden of Eden lies in the fact that she did not cite and believe accurately the word of God. The Lord’s success is related to “it is written.” Luther again is right. He says,

“The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him,
his rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure.
One little word shall fell him.”

But the one little word that fells him must be the word that the Holy Spirit has for a particular situation in our lives. That, incidentally, is the only offensive weapon I can find in the passage. Everything else is defensive, but the Sword of the Spirit is offensive.

Now, Paul, concludes with some words about the activity of the warrior, verse 18:

“Praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

This is the only aggressive feature of this picture. And here, incidentally in the Greek text, stress on the present tenses. This is something that is constant, over and against stress on the aorist tense, suggestive of decisive action above: “Praying always, with all prayer and supplication.” So, the activity of the warrior is to pray for the church collectively.

“Praying all prayer with supplication in the Spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication, for all saints”; you can just include in your prayer life a reference to the whole body of Christ at all times and have Apostolic authority for it. That’s praying in the will of God.

Someone has said, the best defense is a good offense, and that pertains in spiritual things, too. Here is the offense, the offense of prayer. And Paul has the church for the *una sancta*: the one holy body of believers, because the picture in the word of God is one army against another army. The army of Satan and his hosts against the Lord, the

Warrior, and those who are his warriors – his little warriors – and perseverance is important. Abraham failed to deliver Sodom because of his lack of perseverance. Elijah brought rain, humanly speaking, because he persevered. Abraham prayed six times, didn’t pray that last time. Elijah prayed the seventh. Illustratively, all of this, to illustrate the perseverance of prayer that brings success. Elijah was almost drowned in the answer that God gave him.

Dr. Northcourt Deck was a great missionary to the Solomon Islands. He used to come to Dallas. He would come and we would hear him both at Theological Seminary and over at Believer’s Chapel over on...I’ve forgotten even the name of the street on the spur of the moment...but anyway over in Believer’s Chapel – not this church; we took the name for Believer’s Chapel from that church which later changed its name – and Dr. Deck used to tell us some interesting stories about the Solomon Islands where his whole family had carried on a missionary work for several generations.

And in one of his studies he made reference to a Solomon Islander that had been brought to the Lord, and who was in a prayer meeting and prayed, “O God, make us bulldogs in prayer!” Well, that’s kind of what Paul is talking about here; “praying always with all prayer and supplication.” And then individually, Paul says, and for me, verse 19:

“Let evidence 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 in this I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak”

An ambassador in bonds? Why, an ambassador in bonds is an insult to the government that he represents. If our ambassador were put in prison by a government, that would be an insult to our government. But here is an ambassador of the Kingdom of God imprisoned – an insult to God – surely he’s going to write that.

Now Paul concludes by saying, “That you may also know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister of the Lord shall make known to you all things, whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose (he was the bearer of the epistle), whom I have sent unto to you for the same purpose that ye might know our affairs and that he might comfort your hearts.” Now, the final words, “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith”—notice that. Augustine made a point of this. Augustine said we know that faith is a gift, he said for many reasons, but this is one of his reasons, he [Paul] said, “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” In other words, peace, love and faith are from God the Father and the

Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is a gift of God. If we believe, it’s because we’ve been given that faith in wonderful grace. Isn’t that something to praise God about? That is something to be eternally grateful for; that I have faith, for it has come as a gift of God. “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility.” What a sublime epistle this is.

If you’re here tonight, and you’ve never believed in Christ, we invite you by the grace of God, to trust him who is the warrior of God, who has won the victory on the cross of Calvary. He has taken the enemy and thrown the enemy to destruction himself, the giant’s head in his hand, he ascended to the right hand of the throne of God and has sat down there as the Victor over sin, death and hell itself. Coming to Christ, receiving salvation, is a free gift from him. We are delivered from the penalty of sin and have eternal life.

Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust him. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for this magnificent treatment of the Christian conflict and the resources that we have in our great Christian Warrior, to whom we are united in the bonds of the New Covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. O God, enable us in grace to put on the whole armor of God, to wield the Sword of the Spirit, in the Spirit, for the glory of God.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.