

CHILDREN AND FATHERS
Ephesians 6:1-4

Intro: The most important human relationship is the relationship between a husband and his wife. That is the reason that Paul dealt with that first. The second is the relationship that parents have with their children. And so this comes next, as we have it in the first four verses of chapter 6.

If the first relationship is not right, it is doubtful if the second will be. This does not mean that if a man and his wife are doing what God wants them to do toward each other that they will have no trouble with their children. We sometimes see a very godly Christian couple who have all kinds of trouble with their children. The Devil will do all that he can to destroy our families. But parents need to make sure that their relationship is right, and then trust God to help and bless them as they raise their children.

But we need to take a step backward even from the marriage relationship.

Husbands and wives are not going to be right with each other unless they, first of all, are right with the Lord.

This, of course, means that they need to be saved. And this, hopefully, will take place for both of them before marriage. The Bible makes it very clear that a Christian should not marry a non-Christian. But sometimes that happens. Or it may be that a man and woman are married, and neither of them knows the Lord. Perhaps one or the other is saved later. Both parties need to understand that the marriage relationship can never reach the goal of happiness that God intended for marriage to have until both know the Lord. If you see a Christian couple who are having trouble with each other, it always means that something is wrong in their fellowship with the Lord. So parents need to be faithful in reading the Word privately, and together. They need to be careful about their own obedience to the Lord. They need to pray privately, and together, and then with their children (when they come along). Church is also important. Husbands and wives need to growing under the teaching of the Word of God.

I am saying all of this so that if any of you are inclined to think that raising children is just a matter of telling them to do what you want them to do, you will see that much more is involved in that. Above all, parents need to be an example to their children. There is more of a spiritual impact to godly lives than most of us realize.

But having said all of that (which I think most of you understand), let us go on now to see what Paul said to:

I. THE CHILDREN (Eph. 6:1-3).

Again, as with wives and husbands, Paul started with those who are second as far as the relationship is concerned. Parents have authority over their children, but Paul mentioned the children first.

A. Two words for children.

1. "Obey" (V. 1).

Children are to be brought into this world knowing that they are lit. to listen to their parents, and then do what they say. This is the meaning of the word, "obey."

Therefore, it means that the parents need to know the right and wrong things of behavior that is pleasing to the Lord.

But Paul used another word for children, and this he took out of the OT Law of Moses. It is the word, "honor."

2. "Honor" (V. 2a).

This word suggests that the obedience is not just to be outward, but it is to be inward and genuine. The word "honor" carries with it also the idea of value, of worth.

Every child has struggled with the problem of obedience. We all have in us the desire to do what we want to do, not to do what someone else tells us to do. But children are to learn-- sometimes by their own mistakes, sometimes by the rewards that follow doing things the right way, sometimes from the example of their parents, or others that stand for the same things that their parents do-- that parents are very, very valuable people, and parents who care enough for their children to teach them what is right and what is wrong, and who encourage them to do the right and to avoid the wrong, are worth more than money can ever buy. Such parents are actually without price. Parents make mistakes--we all do--but children are to be taught to "honor" their parents by obeying them. This is the way God has planned that children should be raised.

But notice those three important words that I intentionally passed over in verse 1, the words, "in the Lord."

Although some MSS do not include them, it seems perfectly consistent with what Paul had been teaching in this Epistle for him to include them here. It describes the only way in which children can obey their parents with honor. And that is when they do it "in the Lord." What does this mean?

It means they do it in dependence upon the Lord. They do it looking to the Lord for His help. We cannot begin too soon teaching our children that if they are going to please the Lord, they must ask the Lord to help them. Even with little children, the Lord does not ask anything but what He stands ready to help us to do what He wants us to do, and to do it with willing hearts. It is part of our task as parents to teach our children that they cannot please the Lord without the Lord's help. Do not wait until you feel that your child is saved. Start right away, and when he or she is saved, then this truth will really come to life. Children need to be taught to do the right thing with the right attitude.

Now here is a very interesting point of spiritual truth, and we all need to recognize this. It is this: WHAT WE DO IS DETERMINING WHAT WE SHALL BECOME. However, even children, as well as adults, need to realize that if what we do is to have a positive influence on our lives, IT HAS TO COME FROM OUR HEARTS. That, it appears to me, is the main reason that Paul did not simply say, "Obey," but he also added the word, "Honor."

The child who follows what these words indicate, is a child who will have blessing, and who will carry a minimum of regrets with him (or her) throughout life. And the chief advantage of having children learn to "obey" and "honor" their parents, both of them, is that it is a normal thing for them to learn to treat the Lord in the same way--and this is the object of home training.

Paul followed this with:

B. The promise (vv. 2b, 3).

Note that when Paul said for children to "obey," and

then followed that with the command to "honor," in both instances he included both parents: not only the father, but also the mother. And the second ("Honor") is really given to support and clarify the first ("obey").

Where did the second exhortation, found in verse 2, come from? It came from the Mosaic Law. It is the fifth commandment. And Paul said that it "is the first commandment with promise."

If you read the Law, found in the first part of Exodus 20, you will find that the second commandment also has a promise. Why did Paul say that this "is the first commandment with promise," referring to the fifth commandment?

That is not an easy question to answer, but let me tell you what I think he meant. I think there could have been two ideas that Paul had in mind:

- 1) That this was the first really specific commandment for an individual. The second commandment is followed with a more general promise.

But this second reason is probably the right one.

- 2) This was the first commandment having to do with our relationship with people. The first four commandments had to do with God; the last six, with men.

So it is still true that one way to assure that your life will be long and happy and profitable is by obeying and honoring your parents when you are young.

God rewards obedience; He punishes rebellion. The promises of Scripture are always given to encourage us to do that which is pleasing in the sight of the Lord.

And so, children, and young people, and all of you who still have your parents with you, I hope that you have been listening to what the Word says. Rebellion will only make you miserable. It makes hard things harder. God has sovereignly given you the parents you have. If He had wanted you to have others, He would have given them to you. But He gave you the parents you have, and you will live to praise the Lord from the depths of your souls for your parents because they loved you and cared enough for you to teach you to do that which is "right" and righteous in God's sight. Not all children are as blessed as you are.

But now let me go on to the last verse in my text: verse 4.
It is addressed to:

II. FATHERS (Eph. 6:4).

Children are to obey and honor both parents in order to please the Lord, but there are two things that fathers are to do to complete the picture.

I have said that you children are to obey and honor your parents even though there may be times when you are not sure they are right. You do your part; the Lord will correct your parents if they are wrong. Your responsibility is not to correct your parents (after all, they may be right). Your responsibility is to do what your parents are teaching you to do.

But now to the fathers.

The fathers are mentioned because they are the heads of the families. But the wives share this responsibility with them because, as we have learned, the husband and wife are "one." So the father takes the lead; the wife follows and helps.

Paul told the fathers to do two things. One is negative; the other is positive, and it is twofold.

A. The negative: "Provoke not your children to anger."

"Provoke . . . to anger" is one word in the Greek. We all have a natural, sinful tendency to get mad. And with this is a desire to get even. We all have had this feeling.

Fathers are to be careful NOT to arouse this in their children. Sometimes it happens anyway, but Paul was saying that fathers are not to try intentionally to do this, as a kind of fun thing to do. What Paul said about "all men," applies also to your children:
If it be possible, as much as lieth in you,
live peaceably with all men (Rom. 12:18).

So fathers are not to take a foolish delight in making their children angry; they are to seek to avoid this. Sometimes it cannot be avoided, but the fault must never be on the father or mother's side.

B. The positive: "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Let us look at those two words, "nurture and

admonition," and then link them with the phrase, "of the Lord."

1. "The nurture."

Do you remember that I pointed out last week that the expression "**to bring them up** in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" and the word "nourisheth" in 5:29 are related in meaning? The husband is to bring his wife up to maturity-- spiritually, and in every other way.

I told you that this speaks of a husband's provision for his wife. Now we learn that he is to provide for his children also. This is to continue until they reach maturity. And it not only includes a home, food, clothing, and training in what it means to be ladies and gentlemen, but it primarily includes the provision of spiritual instruction and guidance and example! A father, assisted by the mother, is to teach and train children in the Word of God. The father is the primary teacher.

Let me clarify the point I made last week. "Nourisheth" is to bring up. "Nurture" is the teaching and training that a father does with his child. So we could translate the statement, "But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," in this way: But nourish them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

But now let us add the second word:

2. "The admonition."

This is the practical instruction that follows the doctrinal teaching. The father and mother are not only to be concerned about what their children know, but they are to be concerned about how their children live.

And all of this is to be:

3. "The nurture and admonition of the Lord."

So what does this require?

It means that the father and the mother must be diligent to know the Word of God and to live a life of obedience to that Word so they will be able to raise their children to know the Lord and

to live the way the Lord wants them to live.

Concl: Parents, do not turn your responsibility over to anyone else to do what God has appointed you to do.

It is right that you should have them in a church like Trinity Bible Church where they can be taught the Word of God. But you, father, and you, mother, are the main teachers. You make sure that your children are learning the truth of God's Word, and then show them by your example, encourage them with your words, help them to read the Bible for themselves, pray for them, take them to Sunday School and to Church where they can hear the Word. You have a tremendous responsibility, but one that holds the greatest rewards because there is no joy like the joy of seeing your own flesh and blood walking each day in the truth of the Word of God.

SERVANTS AND MASTERS
Ephesians 6:5-9

Intro: In this Epistle to the Ephesian believers the Apostle Paul discussed three human relationships that are common to all people, but which are unique for the Lord's people. We have considered two of them, and are now ready for the third:

- 1) Wives and husbands.
- 2) Children and father (including the mothers).
- 3) Servants and masters.

Some would fit into all three. A husband could also be a father, and then he could be either a servant or a master. A wife could also be a mother and a servant. Children growing up in a home would look forward to marriage, and to continuing as their parents were, either bond or free.

So Paul was not addressing three groups that were exclusive of each other, but three groups in which most of the people were involved in more than one.

The Roman Empire was a society in which there were many slaves. The word translated "servants" is the familiar Greek word for bondslaves. They were not free, but they were under obligation to do the will of their masters. Not all servants were assigned lowly, menial tasks, but were give great responsibilities, even over other servants. But the very fact that they were bondservants meant that they were not free to do as they pleased; it was their duty to do the will of their masters.

It is interesting that our Lord never sought to change this Roman system of masters and slaves. Christians were never encouraged to try to overthrow the system. Instead they were given specific teaching, as in this passage, as to how they were to conduct themselves in whatever place they might have, either as slaves or masters.

The instructions given here would indicate that in the providence of God there were masters who had been saved, and there were slaves who had been saved. Philemon and Onesimus are examples we can cite to show that this was true. And so it was important for each of them to know how they were to live in a pagan society where there were many unjust circumstances. But it was not the system that Paul was trying to change; it was the people.

Our situation today is altogether different.

We do not have masters and slaves like they had them in the Roman Empire. But we do have employers and employees.

Employees are not slaves, but it is their responsibility to be obedient to those who are over them. Our society is a society in which freedom seems to be defined as every person being able to do what he or she wants to do. Of course, this is impossible. Sooner or later, and it is usually sooner, there is conflict. One of the biggest problems that our country faces today is the problem between employers and employees. This is an area where there can often be racial or minority problems. And with women working in greater numbers, there are greater and greater demands for equal opportunities for everyone.

Undoubtedly there are many faults in the American way, and we are probably going to have more and more problems. I stand with our Lord and the writers of the NT in what they did. The church is not to be an instrument for social change through political lobbying. The church can be a mighty instrument in the hand of God for social change, but the emphasis of the church is to be upon change lives, people who have come to the knowledge of Christ as Savior, and who then seek above everything else to please God in meeting the responsibilities that are placed upon them. So it is not to be a matter of an employer making as much as he can even though it might mean taking advantage of his employees. Nor is it a matter of an employee getting all that he would like to have in wages and benefits. The child of God who is in either position is to be primarily concerned about that which is pleasing to God!

Therefore, as this passage relates to you, I hope that the Lord will open your heart to respond favorably to the teaching of the Apostle Paul on this crucial issue. If only the Lord's people would take what Paul said seriously, and live accordingly, what a different it would make in the tensions that we now face in this area of life. Christians should not only obey what Paul said, but they should encourage others to see the great wisdom that is to be found in verses 5 through 9 of Ephesians 6.

First Paul addressed:

I. THE SERVANTS (Eph. 6:5-8).

It will help us to get everything into perspective if we notice one emphasis that Paul made throughout these verses in which he was addressing himself to the bondservants. It had to do with:

A. The bondservant's relationship with the Lord.

Paul reminded those who were bondservants of some Roman master that they were also bondservants in a

much higher, a really exalted sense. They were the bondservants of the Lord! See verse 6.

This gave real glory to their position.

And so Paul said in verse 5 that the servants were to be "obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh . . . as unto the Lord."

In verse 6 he indicated that in serving their masters they were "doing the will of God . . ."

In verse 7 he told them that they were to do their service "as unto the Lord."

And he reminded them in verse 8 that whether a man is a bondservant or a master, he is going to be rewarded by the Lord for being a faithful, obedient servant.

So Paul centered everything that he had to say around the Lord.

Now let me make a point right here to all of you who are working for someone else. Paul expressed it beautifully for the bondservants when he wrote to the Colossian church, and said practically the same thing to them that he said to the Ephesian church. He said this: ". . . for ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24b). Will you remember this as you go to work tomorrow morning, or whenever it is that you go to work? What a difference it will make for you to remind yourself that you work for such and such a company, and that so-and-so is your boss, but actually you are there to "serve the Lord Christ." What a marvelous place to see the sovereignty of God in your life! This does not mean that you do not take orders from your boss, but it does mean that the Lord is the One Who is really in control of your life on the job, and you are to work faithfully as serving your boss because over him is the Lord Christ!

When you see this, it changes the most difficult job into an opportunity to glorify the Lord. The Lord is not just your Lord at church, nor just at home, nor just of your free time; **THE LORD IS YOUR LORD "ON THE JOB," TOO!** Believe it, and act upon it, and you will be a different person on the job.

But let us look a little closer at what Paul said. This may be harder, but it is just as important as anything that I have already said because you cannot really serve the Lord Christ unless you are serving the Lord in the

ways that Paul pointed out. Let's call this:

B. The bondservant's relationship with his human master, his boss (Eph. 6:5-8).

1. The main command (Eph. 6:5a).

Paul stated it very clearly: **"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh . . ."**

One commentator has translated it this way: "Keep obeying." This is what you are to be doing every day. Do what your boss wants you to do.

Paul was not talking about something dishonest or immoral, and neither am I. He was speaking of those things the masters told the servants to do to get the work done that they were supposed to do. And that is what it means to us.

Make sure that you are obeying your boss every day--and don't make it necessary for him to tell you twice!

2. The manner of a servant's obedience (Eph. 6:5-8).

This is just as important as being obedient. It is possible for us to obey, but to do it reluctantly, or rebelliously. How is a servant to obey his master?

a. Verse 5: "With fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart."

These two go together. The "fear and trembling" do not suggest dread or even terror, but the kind of fear that makes you careful to do all that your boss has told you to do it (so he will be pleased with you), and doing it "in singleness of heart," with no other thought in mind but getting the job done.

b. Verse 6: "Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but ... doing the will of God from the heart."

You are not to work hard just when you are being watched, but you are to serve your boss just like the business were yours, and the success of the business depended upon you.

c. Verse 7: "With good will doing service."

This is closely related to what is mentioned in verse 6, but it probably also carries with it the idea of taking on new assignments with eagerness and a desire to please.

I am sure that the Roman masters were amazed when a Christian bonds slave worked like this. And the same will be true if an employee works like this today. The real joy in working is found when we are more concerned about giving than we are about receiving. Remember the Lord's words in Acts 20:35b. When we do our work in this way because we not only want to please our employer, but, in pleasing him to please the Lord, the lowliest job can be the greatest delight. May the Lord help all of us to do our work like this.

This all leads to the last point regarding the servant:

C. The servant's bonus (Eph. 6:8).

This also applies to the master, as the verse indicates.

The servant who does the right thing with the right spirit and the right motive is going to get his bonus from the Lord. And the Lord's bonuses are given here and hereafter. Think of the bonuses Joseph got everywhere he worked: for Potiphar, for the jailer, and for Pharaoh. He had every right to be bitter against people, but instead he faithfully pleased God in all that he did--and the bonuses in his case were most amazing.

Since the Lord is our Master, He will not let us work in vain. And it is better to have bonuses from Him than from any other source.

One thing remains--very brief, but very clear. It concerns:

II. THE MASTERS (Eph. 6:9).

Paul told the masters:

- 1) What to do.
- 2) What not to do.
- 3) What to remember.

A. What to do: "Do the same things unto the them."

The masters were to treat their servants the same way

that the servants were to treat them. The masters were to be as concerned for their servants as they expected their servants to be concerned for them. And the graces that were to be displayed by the servants were to be displayed by the masters.

B. What not to do: "Forbearing threatening."

Threatening included punishments, and were used by masters to make their servants work. Paul said that there was a better way, and that was through the exercise of the grace of Christ. It did not exclude the possibility of punishment for poor service, but they were not to use threatening to try to produce good service.

C. What to remember--two things:

1. You have a Master in heaven.

A man may be a master on earth, but he is a bondservant to his Master in heaven.

2. He is no respecter of persons.

The masters do not get preferential treatment because they are masters. Every child of God, regardless of his social status, is ultimately responsible to God for the way he lives his life, and the way he treats others, especially those who in the family of God are his brothers and sisters.

Concl: Our Lord held both positions while He was here on earth. He was a Servant of Jehovah, but He also came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. And yet He was the Master--the Master of all masters, and the Master of all servants.

Concerning masters, we have no greater word for them than Paul's letter to Philemon about Onesimus. Cf. Ph. 8-21.

SPIRITUAL CONFLICT
Ephesians 6:10-12

Intro: When we view the Epistle to the Ephesians as a whole, we can see that Paul was concerned about three things:

- 1) Their understanding of the truth.
- 2) Their obedience to the truth.
- 3) Their conflict because of the truth.

To state it another way, we can say that he was concerned about:

- 1) Their doctrine.
- 2) Their practice.
- 3) Their opposition.

Or, we could express it this way: He was concerned about:

- 1) The Word.
- 2) Their walk.
- 3) Their warfare.

The first of these three divisions is found in chapters 1 through 3. The second, in chapters 4, 5, and down through 6:9. The third begins where we are today in 6:10, and continues down through verse 20. The rest of chapter 6 is really Paul's conclusion.

Looking at verses 10 through 20, we have, first of all, Paul's exhortation regarding the armor of God. In verses 13 through 17 we are told what the armor is. In verse 18 we are told that the armor is to be used with prayer. And then in verses 19 and 20 Paul gave a personal request regarding his testimony while he was a prisoner of Rome.

Today I want us to focus our attention on verses 10, 11, and 12 of chapter 6. (Read.)

In these three verses we have:

- 1) Paul's exhortation concerning what the Ephesians needed to do. This is found in vv. 10, 11a.
- 2) In the latter part of v. 11 we are given the purpose of the armor.
- 3) In verse 12 we see who our enemies are.

I. WHAT THE EPHESIANS NEEDED TO DO (Eph. 6:10, 11a).

Paul had spent the last two and a half chapters telling the Ephesians many things that they needed to do, and some things that they were not to do. But this exhortation has to do especially with the warfare every Christian is engaged in. It is really a twofold exhortation: "Be strong," and "put on."

- A. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10).

We can say that this was Paul's conclusion to the practical section of the Epistle, and so he said, "Finally." But he was looking ahead, anticipating what was in store for each one of them. While the future would be different in many respects for each of them, yet one thing was certain for all of them: They would all be involved in spiritual conflict. And so this word "finally" would serve to place special emphasis on what they were about to read, indicating that he had saved this to the last because he wanted them to pay particular attention to what he had to say.

Paul had mentioned the power of God earlier in his prayer in chapter 1. (See 1:19 ff.) What he had to say here would explain part of the reason as to why he was praying for them as he was. They needed strength in their lives, strength greater than any of them possessed by nature, strength and power which only God could provide for them.

This has always been true of the Lord's people regarding their need. When Moses led the children of Israel in singing after they had crossed the Red Sea, this is what they sang:

The Lord is my strength and song,
and he is become my salvation (Ex. 15:2a).

We have the wonderful statement at the beginning of Psalm 46 which we have all claimed as our very own:

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

And then, who does not love those words of Isaiah in Isaiah 40:31?

But they that wait upon the Lord
shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings as eagles;
they shall run, and not be weary;
and they shall walk, and not faint.

Paul said in his Philippian Epistle,

I can do all thing through Christ
which strengtheneth me (Phil. 4:13).

If you want real encouragement for your soul in times of testing and conflict, take your Bible, and go from passage to passage to see how God has pledged to give us His strength to be our strength in times of need.

No child of God can do without this supernatural, divine power of God, especially when we learn the

nature of the conflict which we are all involved in. And this is power which we have through the intimate union which we enjoy with our Lord—as the life of the vine goes out into the branches.

Such an exhortation calls for faith. It calls for fellowship with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He alone can enable us to be victorious in this battle. If we are depending upon our own limited resources, we will fail. But we can be "more than conquerors" (Rom. 8:37) through Christ.

So this battle is not something in which we are attempting to do something for the Lord, but it is a battle in which we are trusting Him to strengthen us for the victory!

And again, as in 1:19, Paul used a combination of words having to do with spiritual power. To "be strong" means to be made strong. It is not what we do for ourselves, but what the Lord does for us. And "the power of his might" is a combination of two words which suggest that the power that the Lord gives is sufficient for the need that we may face at any time. Without the Lord, we can do nothing. But with the Lord, no enemy can defeat us!

Now, having said that, Paul wanted the Ephesians (and us) to know that this power of the Lord is not something that does not involved us in any way. We have a responsibility in this, and, if we fail to meet the responsibility, we will not be given the mighty power of God which we so desperately need. We may not always be involved in actual combat, but we must be in a state of readiness because we have no idea as to when or where or how the Enemy will strike.

And so we have the responsibility not only to see that we are actually trusting in the Lord, but we must also:

B. "Put on the whole armour of God."

We are going to find out later about the armour, but I want you to note that Paul said that "the whole armour" is what we need. He said it again in verse 13.

The word that Paul used in these verses has been transliterated into the English in the word, panoply. And that word means "a full suit of armor" (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, p. 716). And that is exactly what it means in the English: a full armor. Nothing

is to be lacking. If any part is lacking, defeat may be inevitable. Without anticipating in any great detail what is coming in this passage, let me explain what this means, to go into battle with part of the armor left behind.

Some Christians are very careful about reading their Bibles, but not too careful about obeying their Bibles. Or some can be very scrupulous about some of the commandments of Scripture, but completely ignore other commandments. Some Christians are strong in prayer, but weak in their knowledge of the truth. Some Christians have a lot of zeal, but they are serious lacking in their understanding of the doctrines of Scripture.

What I am trying to say is that all of us have an inclination to be partially ready for battle, but not fully prepared, not fully armed. That is what makes it very important for us to understand what we are given in verses 13 through 18. There Paul tells us what the armor is, and not any part of it can be left off!

So we are to draw our strength by faith from our union with our Lord, and we are to make sure that we have all of the armor continually in place and ready for conflict.

Now the big question is, WHY? And our answer is given in the rest of our text for today. But let us note next,

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE ARMOR (Eph. 6:11b).

It is to be seen in these words: " ... that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

Here we need to review what Paul had written in Eph. 2:1-3, especially verse 2. There was a day when we were all a part of the Devil's kingdom. We lived like he wanted us to live. He was continually provoking us to disobey God. We may not have been conscious of all that he was doing, but Eph. 2:2 tells us that even now he is working "in the children of disobedience," i.e., in those who are not saved, those who are not the children of God.

But, as Paul told the Colossians in Col. 1:13, we have been "delivered ... from the power of darkness, and ... translated ... into the kingdom of" God's "dear Son."
And therefore we are the special objects of Satan's hatred, and of his attacks!

And he has "wiles."

This is the Greek word from which we get our English word, methods. The Devil has methods. He is systematic, sly and deceptive, in what he does. Paul, using another word, said in 2 Cor. 2:11 that he was not ignorant of Satan's "devices." Are you? Do you know what the Devil is up to, and how he seeks to accomplish what he wants to do. "His devices" are his purposes, his projects, his objectives. We are up against an Enemy we cannot see, one who is wiser than we are, stronger than we are, and tireless in seeking to carry out his plans. He did not even hesitate to attack the Lord Jesus Christ!

So for this we need the power of our Lord, and we need to lay hold of that power by putting on the whole armor of God. It would be impossible to overstate the importance of this passage for every one of us who is a child of God. I trust that the Lord is enabling you to see how important these verses really are.

And note that the object we are to have in mind is that of simply standing. See not only verse 11, but verses 13 and 14. (Read.) To stand is to be victorious; to fall is to be defeated. Our goal is to stand; let the Devil be the one to fall.

But I have one more point to take up before I close.

III. OUR ENEMIES IDENTIFIED (Eph. 6:12).

People are involved in the conflict with us, but people are not our primary enemies. We need to look behind the false teachers, the wicked sinners, the blasphemers, those who ridicule our testimony for Christ. We need to look behind the Christ-hating governmental leaders and their followers. The real enemies we have are not blood and flesh (the order in the Greek), but

- 1) "Principalities."
- 2) "Powers."
- 3) "The rulers of the darkness of this world," or the world-rulers of this darkness.
- 4) "Spiritual wickedness in high places," or against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.

What does all of this mean? What was Paul saying here?

Well, they mean that the forces of the Devil, demonic forces of fallen angels, constitute the best organized, the best equipped, the best trained forces in the whole universe. These four terms probably do not indicate different groups in every instances, but the "principalities" would correspond to our commanding generals and admirals. The "powers" would be those

delegated with special authority under them--like captains and colonels and all other officers. Those "rulers of the darkness of this world" have their assignments throughout the world, running the governments of the world. But instead of being blood and flesh, they are all "spiritual wickedness in high," or heavenly, "places."

If all of the armies of all of the nations of the earth were to join together as one great army, they would be less than that one Chinese student standing in front of the tanks of the Chinese Communist army.

Concl: If all of this does not disturb you, it should!

It is called wrestling because this conflict is not just all of the forces of the Devil against all of the people of God in one great army, but the Devil singles us out, one by one, as he did Job, and brings his forces against us individually, seeking our ruin by whatever means he shall choose. This is what makes this information all the more ominous.

Do you see why Paul said that we need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, putting on the whole armor of God? There is no way in which we could all defeat the forces of evil; how do we think that we would fare to be singled out one by one?

Let me give you one encouraging word before I let you go. It is found in the Apostle John's First Epistle, chapter 4, verse 4. He was referring to the false prophets who are a part of Satan's strategy, and this is what he said:

**Ye are of God, little children,
and have overcome them:
because greater is he that is in you,
than he that is in the world.**

What does this mean?

It means that, as great as the Devil is, with all of his mighty forces, able to crush the whole world of people, yet when just one Christian is really depending upon the Lord for his strength, clothed with the whole armor of God, that one Christian is able to stand against all that the Devil can bring against him. Why? Because that Christian is so great? No! But because He has a mighty Saviour, and that one Christian is more than a conqueror through that mighty, sovereign, glorified Son of God.

May the Lord open our eyes to these great truths, and enable us to see great victories in our lives in the coming days, all to the glory of His wonderful Name!

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOR -- Part 1
Ephesians 6:13, 14

Intro: It is interesting that, when Paul was a prisoner of Rome, he wrote no letter of accusation against the Roman government, seeking his own release, nor denouncing the treatment of Christians. But he did write a number of letters encouraging believers in other places to be faithful in their battle with the unseen forces of the Evil One. As he wrote in verse 12 which we considered last week, he knew that his battle was not with the Roman government at any level; his battle was

. . . against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this world,
against spiritual wickedness in high places.

And it is really quite an evidence of God's blessing that he was able to write. As William Gurnall said in his book, The Christian in Complete Armour, "Paul was Nero's prisoner, but Nero was much more God's" (prisoner) (p. 9). We have another illustration here of what Solomon wrote in Proverbs 21:1,

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord,
as the rivers of water:
he turneth it whithersoever he will.

So it was not by chance that Paul was able to write as he did to the Ephesian church.

My text for today is Ephesians 6, verses 13 and 14.

And the first thing that we note is:

I. THE REPEATED EXHORTATION (Eph. 6:13).

Why would he repeat himself after having said the same thing in verse 11?

There are two answers to that question--at least two:

- 1) He wanted the Ephesians to know how very important it was for all of them to be clothed with the whole armor of God.
- 2) He wanted them to know that it was urgent!

They should all see that they needed to do this, and to do it NOW! They should not delay another day. The Enemy of their souls was at war with them, and they needed to be prepared. They needed to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might," instead of trusting in themselves. God had made provision for their victory, but not unless they had their armor on. It was not enough to know about it; they needed to be wearing it!

You will notice that Paul said, "Take unto you . . ."

This means that they were to put on the parts that they were to wear, and to take in hand the weapon that they were to use, and be prepared to use them. This was not an unnecessary order. The conflict was inevitable, and would be continuous.

In Moses' first message to the children of Israel, he spoke of how every man had "girded . . . on his weapons of war" (Deut. 1:41), and that is what Paul was taking about here: **TOTAL MOBILIZATION AGAINST THE ENEMY.**

The purpose, as we might expect, is brought out in the two words: "withstand" and "stand." "Withstand" speaks of the battle; "stand," of the victory after the battle is over. The outcome will never be in doubt IF we are prepared with the armor and weapons which God has provided for us!

As we come to verse 14 we have the beginning of Paul's description of the armor that is being issued to us.

We all are familiar with the initials, "G. I.," but perhaps there are some who do not know what the original meaning of those initials was--and still is! The stand for "government issue," and speak of the clothing and equipment that is issued to military personnel. As time went on it came to mean any member of the armed forces, but that was not the original meaning.

What Paul was talking about in this passage was the armor and the weapons which have been issued to us in the kingdom of God. To face the Enemy without them would be the greatest foolishness possible. This is not preparation for a dress parade. It is preparation for warfare. And this is brought out by the expression Paul used here, "the evil day." What is "the evil day"?

The Beatitude that we considered last Sunday night from Psalm 41:1 says this:

Blessed is he that considereth the poor:
the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

The Greek translation of the OT, called the Septuagint, translates the latter part of the verse this way: ". . . the Lord shall deliver him in an evil day."

"The evil day" is the day when we have to face the Enemy. Thank God, not every day is an "evil day." We have many good days. But we all have evil days, too--days when we are under attack. They are called "evil" because we are dealing with the Evil One! It means trouble. The outcome can be very bad if we are not prepared. John Eadie in his commentary on Ephesians said that the lack of being prepared can lead to

"damaged reputations, impaired usefulness, and the bitter regrets and memories of subsequent years" (p. 465).

We never know when those "evil days" will be upon us, and that is the reason we need to be in a constant state of readiness." The Devil attacks us when we least expect it, and so we need to be prepared.

So what are we to put on?

II. THE FIRST TWO PARTS OF THE ARMOR (Eph. 6:14).

What are they? They are:

- 1) The girdle of truth.
- 2) The breastplate of righteousness.

Let us see what Paul meant by these two expressions which probably are very strange to us.

- A. The girdle of truth: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth . . ." (Eph. 6:14a).

To gird up the loins is an expression which means getting prepared to do something that is difficult. It speaks of something that will require both strength and endurance. As far as the body is concerned, it has to do with that area between the ribs and the hips. It used to be said that weak loins meant a weak man.

When Moses was blessing the tribes of Israel, he said this about Levi:

Bless, Lord, his substance,
and accept the work of his hands:
**smite through the loins of them that rise
against him,** and of them that hate him,
that they rise not again (Deut. 33:11).

So this would mean that, if a man were smitten in his loins, he was defeated.

So to prevent defeat, Paul said, "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth . . ."

What did he have in mind when he spoke of "the truth"?

As we consider the various parts of the armor, we are going to find statements which refer to the Word of God, and other statements which refer to the Son of God. We are told, e.g., that "the sword of the Spirit . . . is the word of God." That is both descriptive of the Bible, and a Name of our Lord. The same is true of the word, "truth." The Bible is

the truth, but this is also a Name of our Lord. He said, "I am . . . the truth . . ." (John 14:6). So we have to try to determine what Paul had in mind.

An expression from the Apostle Peter may help us. He wrote 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.

And then he went on to speak of the necessity of being holy because the Lord is holy.

What can we learn from this?

Well, if girding up our loins has to do with our minds, it has to do with our understanding, and if this leads to holiness, then it has to do with the application of the Word of God in a practical way to our lives.

So I am going to suggest, and I believe that this is what Paul was speaking about, that if we are to have our "loins girt about with truth," this means at least three things:

- 1) That we need to have a growing knowledge of the Word of God.
- 2) There must be a growing conviction in our hearts that the Bible really is the unchanging truth of our unchanging God. We not only know it, but we really believe it.
- 3) We must be living in obedience to the truth that we know. We show that we understand the truth when we are experiencing the power of the Word in our lives. This is what holiness is.

The girdle was that band around the waist, sometimes leather, sometimes metal, which held the other pieces of the armor in place, and often held the sword of the soldier when the sword was not in use.

It is significant that this comes first. The soldier who did not have his girdle might just as well expect defeat. The girdle gave him strength where he needed it. To go without the girdle was to run the risk of a weak back, and a weak back meant a weak soldier.

This is where many of the Lord's people are very weak today. We should pity the professing Christian who is inclined to scorn the importance of the truth of the Word of God. Beware of those who question sections of the Word of God. And my fellow-believer, unless you are

growing "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," you have no right to expect anything but defeat in your conflict with the Enemy.

Parents, are you making sure that your children are being taught the Word, that they believe the Word, and that they are living according to the Word. Go back and review the things that we spoke about when we were dealing with husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, and you will see that the Word has to be taught and lived in our homes. That is where much of our training for the conflict is done.

But let me go on to the second and last part of the armor that we will take up today:

- B. The breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14b):
 ". . . and having on the breastplate of righteousness."

The Greek word for "breastplate" is a word which has been transliterated into English. It is our word, thorax. Your thorax is the part of your body between your neck and your abdomen. In other words, it is your chest. And that is what we would understand by a "breastplate": it is as protective plate (usually made of metal), worn over a soldier's chest, to protect his heart! Actually for a soldier, this extended from his neck to his waist, and covered his back as well as his front.

But what did Paul have in mind when he called it, "the breastplate of righteousness?"

This surely has to do with Christ. The Apostle John, in 1 John 2:1, called our Lord, "Jesus Christ, the righteous." Paul also said in 2 Corinthians 5:21,

For he hath made him to be sin for us,
 who knew no sin; that we might be made
 the righteousness of God in him.

And in 1 Corinthians 1:30 Paul said,

But of him are ye in Christ Jesus,
 who of God is made unto us ... righteousness ...

Therefore, Paul must have been speaking about the necessity of being saved, and knowing that we are saved. How important it is to be assured in our hearts that we belong to the Lord, that we are accepted with God because we are clothed in Christ, Who is our righteousness. We have none of our own (they are "filthy rags"), but it is perfect and complete in Christ.

Now I have to ask you about this?

Are you saved, and do you know that you are saved? This is where the Devil delights to attack us. He takes special joy in getting us to doubt our salvation--IF HE CAN! Are you right now trusting in Jesus Christ for your salvation, for your acceptance with God? Does the Spirit of God witness with your spirit that you are the Lord's child? Cf. Rom. 8:16. If you have questions about this, be like Naomi told Ruth that Boaz would do--that he would not rest until he had finished the matter in question that very day!

But is that all that there is to "the breastplate of righteousness"?

No! There is more.

Quoting from the Apostle John again, he wrote this in 1 John 2:29:

If ye know that he (Christ) is righteous,
ye know that every one that doeth righteousness
is born of him.

Do you see what he was saying? Righteousness is not only something which we must have; it is something that we must do!

And this is one great source of our assurance that we are really saved: We do that which is righteous.

The word righteousness is a word which suggests conformity, or agreement, with some standard. Since God is righteous, then being righteous and doing that which is righteous, means measuring up to the standard which is acceptable to God. It means that if through faith in Christ we are acceptable to God, then our lives will show that same pattern. We never do a perfect job, but the Lord accepts our obedience to His Word through Christ. This is what it means to do righteously. The true child of God is concerned about pleasing God in his life. And this practical righteousness is also very important in our armor.

Concl: Thus, in these first two pieces of the armor we are concerned about:

- 1) Our relationship to Christ.
- 2) Our relationship to the Word of God.
- 3) The practical effect that salvation through Christ has upon the lives we live day by day.

All of this is important for us in preparing to face the Enemy. Daily we need to be involved with the Word of God.

Daily we need to be walking in fellowship with the Lord. But this is impossible unless we are obeying the truth, manifesting that we are righteous before God by the righteousness of our lives before men. There is nothing more important than being saved, knowing that you are saved, and living the life of the saved. We need to be concerned about what we know, but we also need to make sure that the truth is in our hearts. If it is in our hearts, we will not be able to keep it out of our lives.

Solomon said,

Keep thy heart with all diligence;
for out of it are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23).

Nothing is more important than what I have been speaking about today. And nothing is more urgent than **THAT WE PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD, AND KEEP IT ON!** This is the only way of victory over the Evil One, but we need no other way because this way is absolutely certain!

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOR -- Part 2
Ephesians 6:15, 16

Intro: The first two pieces of the Christian's armor which Paul mentioned to the Ephesian church were:

- 1) The girdle of truth.
- 2) The breastplate of righteousness.

The first speaks of the importance of knowing the truth, understanding the truth, and living the truth. This is what binds all of the other parts of the armor to the Christian in his role as a soldier.

The second speaks of the importance of knowing the Lord, of being clad in the righteousness of God. Covering the heart would indicate that the righteousness is not just a profession, but that there is reality to claim.

Today we come to the third and fourth parts of the armor:

- 1) The Christian soldier's footwear: "the preparation of the Gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15).
- 2) "The shield of faith" (Eph. 6:16).

When we list the first four pieces of the armor, we have:

- 1) The girdle.
- 2) The breastplate.
- 3) The footwear.
- 4) The shield.

Let us consider, first of all:

I. THE FOOTWEAR (Eph. 6:15).

This expression is strange to us, "**the preparation** of the gospel of peace."

But let us deal now with:

A. "The gospel of peace."

Paul mentioned "the gospel" two times before this in this Epistle, and he mentioned it once later. Cf. Eph. 1:13, 3:6; 6:19.

We all should know that the word Gospel means good news. And in the Scriptures it has to do with the good news of salvation, salvation from the penalty of our sins, salvation from the judgment of God, salvation from sin's power, and salvation eventually from sin itself when we are with the Lord.

The Gospel is the good news of Christ, His death,

burial, and resurrection. And when we speak of Christ we are speaking of the Son of God Who became a Man in order to die for sinful human beings.

The Gospel is the expression of God's love for sinners in giving His Son. And, since man does not deserve to be saved, and, left to himself, does not even want to be saved, the only way God could provide salvation for sinners was by His grace.

That is what Paul had already said in Eph. 2:8, 9.

Salvation is the gift of eternal life. Salvation means being born again, becoming a new creature in Christ. Salvation is eternal because it is a work of God, and whatever God does is both perfect and permanent. Listen to what Solomon wrote in Ecc. 3:14. He said,

I know that, whatsoever God doeth,
it shall be for ever:
nothing can be added to it,
nor any thing taken from it:
and God doeth it,
that men should fear before him.

That statement applies to salvation as much as to anything that God has ever done.

But why did Paul call it, "the gospel of peace"?

For two reasons:

- 1) It is only through the Gospel of Christ that sinners can have peace with God. There is no other way.
- 2) To trust in Christ by believing the Gospel is the only way that sinners can have peace in their hearts. The person whose sins have been cleansed away by the blood of Christ is no longer at enmity with God; he has peace with God. But he also has the peace of God in his heart.

These are the reasons the Gospel is called, "the gospel of peace."

I hope everyone in this room knows what "the gospel of peace" is. And more than that, I hope that everyone in this room is trusting in "the gospel of peace" for salvation. If you are not, that may be the reason you are here today, to find out what the Gospel is so that you can trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Are we clear on what "the gospel of peace" is? I hope

so. But now let us seek to find out what Paul meant by

B. **"The preparation of the gospel of peace."**

Remember that we are now speaking about the Christian soldier's footwear. And in the preceding verses of this passage on the Christian's armor we have seen that Paul has been concerned about standing! Obviously we stand on our feet. Therefore, the footwear we have on is very essential to our being able to stand in our conflict with the Devil. And standing does not mean that we stand in one place. We move around in this warfare, but the object is for us to remain on our feet and for the enemy to fall.

So, what does this word preparation have to do with our ability to stand, to move, to advance, and ultimately, TO WIN?

The footwear is a vital part of our readiness for the conflict. To have that preparedness means that we have come to a certainty about our salvation. We can say with the Apostle Paul,

Therefore being justified by faith,
we **have** peace with God
through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

We can say also with Paul,

. . . for I know whom I have believed,
and am persuaded that he is able
to keep that which I have committed unto him
against that day (2 Tim. 1:12b).

A Christian who lacks the assurance of his salvation is not ready for battle. He is not prepared. One commentator has expressed our preparation with these words:

For the possession of peace with God creates blessed serenity of heart, and confers upon the mind peculiar and continuous preparedness of action and movement. There is nothing to disconcert or perplex it, or divide and retard its energies (Eadie, p. 469).

It is not only important to be saved, but it is important to know that we are saved. A doubting Christian makes a poor soldier.

Therefore, it is essential that you and I know that we are the children of God.

Cf. Rom. 8:14-18. Paul's language indicates no uncertainty, but readiness for the battle, as does

the rest of Romans 8.

But now let us go on to:

II. THE SHIELD OF FAITH (Eph. 6:16).

There is no question but that faith is a shield. Faith defends us against "the fiery darts of the wicked." Faith extinguishes those "fiery darts," and we are left unharmed.

The word that the Apostle Paul used here for "the shield" means a great shield. The Greek word is formed from the word, door, because it looked like a door. It was large, designed to protect the whole body. One writer gives the dimensions of the great shield as 2-1/2 feet wide, and 4 feet long—big, but easily maneuverable. It represents not only faith, but a great faith, a strong faith.

Prov. 30:5 says:

Every word of God is pure:

he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

Paul told the Roman believers,

So then faith cometh by hearing,

and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Can we really sing these words from our hearts?

'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,

Just to take Him at His word;

Just to rest upon his promise;

Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord."

Not only do we overcome the Evil One by faith, but the Apostle John also wrote these words:

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world:
and this is the victory that overcometh the world,
even our faith (1 John 4:4).

Why is faith such a powerful factor in our warfare here in this world, and why is it such a vital part in our victory? Because faith means that our hope for victory is in the Lord. Our faith lays hold of God's faithfulness. Hudson Taylor, who founded the old China Inland Mission, used to like to explain that expression of our Lord, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22), as meaning, Hold the faithfulness of God. Faith is not to be in ourselves, but to lay hold of God Who is always faithful to His Word and to His people.

Therefore, here is another step in our preparation for the battle we are all involved in: We need to be concerned about the strengthening of our faith.

How do we do this?

We spend much time in the Word. We learn all that we can about our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we exercise our faith day by day, trusting God to provide for us, to protect us, to guide us, to strengthen us, to keep us from temptation and sin, and to use us for His glory!

But what are "the fiery darts"?

In ancient warfare they were burning darts, capable of killing an enemy. But once they were extinguished, they were powerless to harm anyone.

In our spiritual battles those that are hurled at us belong to "the wicked," or, the Evil One. Up to this point the Apostle Paul had referred to our Enemy as "the devil" (v. 11). He is our Accuser, the one who is continually trying to drive a wedge between us and our God. He will do anything that he can to get us to distrust God, to act on our own, to seek our own glory. He places all kinds of temptations before us, but the result of what he does is always, without exception, EVIL! Whenever he attacks us, that is an "evil day" (v. 13). And his forces are called "spiritual wickedness (evil) in high (heavenly) places."

Peter said,

Be sober, be vigilant;
because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion,
walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:
Whom resist steadfast in the faith,
knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished
in your brethren that are in the world.
But the God of all grace,
who hath called us unto his eternal glory
by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while,
make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.
To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.
Amen (1 Pet. 5:8-11).

The Devil will sometimes appear as "an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14), but his object is always evil! It is only by faith that we can stand when he comes against us with his various temptations to turn us away from God. How quickly we can rise up in rebellion against God when things go wrong! We are inclined by nature to blame God first for things that we do not like. It is only when our faith is strong that we can extinguish those fiery darts, and our faith cannot be strong unless we are feeding upon the Word and learning more and more of the excellencies of our God, and His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The words, "Above all," do not mean that "the shield of faith" is more important than anything else. All of the armor is important! We have seen that in Paul's repeated instruction regarding "the whole armour of God." "Above all" lit. is in all, or in addition to all, i.e., all that has been mentioned before, "taking the shield of faith . . ." They are important, and needed greatly. But they are not sufficient without "the shield of faith," just as "the shield of faith" is not sufficient unless the Christian soldier has already put on the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the gospel of peace as the sandals of his feet!

Concl: I would be remiss in my role as a teacher if, after I have spoken about the Christian's footwear, and his shield, I did not ask you if your spiritual sandals are on, and if you have in hand your "shield of faith."

If I were to ask you if you are saved, would you say, "Yes"? And if I were to ask you if you know that you are saved, would you still say, "Yes"?

Many of you have heard me quote Dr. William Pettingill, one of the editors of the Scofield Bible, who used to say, "If you can get salvation and not know it, then you can lose it and never miss it." That is true, isn't it? To be saved is to be on your way to heaven. To know that you are saved is to enjoy the journey because you know that you are going to get there--BY HIS GRACE!

What about your faith--how strong is it? Are you seeking to strengthen it? Are you trusting the Lord more than you used to? I know we all fail, but each of us knows just how much we are really trusting the Lord. If we are really growing, we are not becoming more self-sufficient; we are trusting more in the sufficiency of Christ. That is faith. That is our shield.

Remember those great words of Martin Luther in his hymn, A Mighty Fortress. He obviously was learning very well what you and I need to know. Listen to what he wrote:

A mighty fortress is our God, A Bulwark never failing;
Our Helper he amid the flood Of mortal ills prevailing.
For still our ancient foe Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and pow'r are great;
And armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing.

Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is he,
Lord Sabaoth his Name, From age to age the same,
And he must win the battle.

—
May God alert us to the spiritual dangers we face every day,
and may we be diligent in making sure that we are constantly
clothed with the whole armor of God. That is the way of
victory. With our Lord we cannot fail and fall, but will be
"able to stand against all of the wiles of the devil."

THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOR -- Part 3
Ephesians 6:17

Intro: We have already considered four parts of the Christian's armor:

- 1) The girdle of truth.
- 2) "The breastplate of righteousness."
- 3) The footwear: "the preparation of the gospel of peace."
- 4) "The shield of faith."

We have seen that:

- 1) They all have to do with the Word of God.
- 2) They all have to do with the Son of God.
- 3) They all have to do with salvation.

And it is clear that Paul was not only concerned about the knowledge of the truth, but he was concerned about the application of the truth to the lives of the Lord's people. We need to know the Word. We need to know the great doctrines of Scripture. We need to know the Lord Who is revealed throughout Scripture. But all of this truth must find its place in our hearts for the transformation of our lives.

We are not saved just because we know what the Gospel is. We are saved when we believe the Gospel, when by faith we are trusting Jesus Christ as our Savior. The evidence that we know the Lord will be seen in a changed life. And the proof that we are growing in the Lord will be more and more changes as we are being conformed to the very likeness of Christ. And it is important, extremely important, that we are settled in our faith, assured that we belong to Christ, and that nothing can ever separate us from Him.

Today we come to two more parts of the armor. Or we probably should say that one is a part of the armor; the other is one of our two weapons. They are:

- 1) "The helmet of salvation."
- 2) "The sword of the Spirit," which Paul explained as being, "the word of God."

I. "THE HELMET OF SALVATION" (Eph. 6:17a).

Everybody knows, or should know, that a helmet is worn on the head. It was not just an ornament, but its purpose was to protect the head from serious injury, or death. Even soldiers in modern warfare wear helmets. A blow to the head can be just as serious as being stabbed in the heart.

So we are concerned about the soldier's head, his mind, his brain. This is the control center for the body. We

think with our brains. We remember with our brains. Our brains affect our actions. It is probably call "the head" because it is the most important part of the body.

There are two other passages of Scripture that are related to this part of Eph. 6:17. One is in Isa. 59:17 where we read,

For he put on righteousness as a breastplate,
and an helmet of salvation upon his head . . .

The other is in 1 Thess. 5:8. There we read,
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.

It is true that a figure of speech, such as a helmet being related to salvation, could have more than one meaning. For example, Paul in 1 Thess. 5:8 spoke of "the breastplate of faith and love," whereas in the Isaiah passage, and in Eph. 6:14 we have "the breastplate of righteousness." However, since Paul called the helmet, "the hope of salvation," in 1 Thessalonians, but did not say what aspect of salvation he meant here in Eph. 6:17, I am inclined to think that he was thinking here also about "the hope of salvation."

We have been concerned with salvation in the parts of the armor that Paul mentioned before this, but never specifically with "the hope of salvation. So let us examine this part of the armor, the helmet, as representing, "the hope of salvation."

What is the meaning of the words, "the hope," when they are related to salvation?

LET ME SOUND A WORD OF WARNING HERE.

We must never assume that words in Scripture are used in exactly the same way that we use them in everyday speech. There are usually some similarities, but there may also be some distinctive differences.

If you will consult a dictionary, you will find that the word "hope" is used by us to express something that we want to happen, or expect to happen. It may be based on nothing more than some feeling that a person has. BUT THE SIGNIFICANT THING ABOUT THE THINGS THAT WE HOPE FOR IS THAT WE HAVE NO GUARANTEE THAT THEY WILL ACTUALLY COME TO PASS. WE HOPE THEY WILL, BUT WE ARE NOT SURE. WE CANNOT BE POSITIVE ABOUT IT.

A person may hope that he will get a certain job this week, but he is not sure. We may hope that we will be

able to purchase some item which we really need, but we may never be able to do it. We hope that it will not rain, or we hope that it will rain. But no one but God can control that. If a person is sick, we tell them that we hope they will feel better soon, but we cannot be positive that they will.

"Hope" is a word that is concerned with the future, but it is characterized by uncertainty. That is why we say, "We hope . . ."

But the word hope as it is used in connection with salvation in the Bible, while it has to do with the future, is certain, not uncertain. You never will see in the Bible where Paul said that he hoped that he was saved! You will never see that. But he did write this in Romans 8:24, 25:

For we are saved by hope:
but hope that is seen is not hope:
for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?
But if we hope for that we see not,
then do we with patience wait for it.

What is the difference in saying that you hope you are saved, or you hope you will be saved, as compared with what Paul said, that we are "saved by hope"?

That is an important question, and we need to know the answer.

To say that you hope you will be saved means that you want to be, but you are not sure. You have no assurance in your heart that you will be. But to say that you are "saved by hope" means that you are saved now, but you have not yet experienced the fullness of the salvation which you presently possess.

Listen to these words from the Apostle John. You will find them in 1 John 3:2, 3:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God,
and it doth not yet appear what we shall be:
but we know that, when he shall appear,
we shall be like him;
for we shall see him as he is.
And every man that hath this hope in him
purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

John's words ring with the greatest certainty. He was not in doubt about his salvation. He knew that he was saved! But he was looking forward to the goal of his salvation. What was it? He fully expected that when the Lord comes, He would become like the Lord. That was his

hope. That is what he wanted, but it was not just because he felt that way. It was because he knew that this was God's plan, God's purpose, for all who are saved.

Do you see the difference between our use of the word hope in ordinary conversation as compared with the way it is used in the Word of God?

Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:19),
 If in this life only we have hope in Christ,
 we are of all men most miserable
 (or, most to be pitied).

We need "the helmet of salvation," the helmet of our hope, guarding our minds, filling our thoughts, reminding us continually that while we are at war now with the powers of hell, yet the victory is ours. Some day the warfare will be over, and when it is, we will stand before God transformed into the very likeness of Christ!

Get your helmet on, and keep it on! The Lord is coming. The victory is ours. Remember Phil. 1:6.

But let me go on to:

II. "THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT" (Eph. 6:17).

Here there is no question at all about what the Apostle Paul had in mind. "The sword of the Spirit" is "the word of God."

It is called "the sword of the Spirit" because it belongs to Him. He is the One Who has provided it for us. He is the One Who teaches us what it means. And He is the One Who uses it to accomplish the purposes of God.

We are to "take" it. The word indicates that we are to "take" the helmet and the sword gladly as special gifts from God. The sword is our only weapon; verse 18. which we will come to next week, the Lord willing, will show us how it is to be used.

There are two words in the Greek New Testament that are translated, word. One is λόγος. Paul used it in verse 19 of this chapter, where it is translated, "utterance." It is also used of Christ in John 1:1. The other word (and this is the one used here) is ῥῆμα.

It is not easy to distinguish between them. Both are used of speeches or utterances, whether long or short. Either word used here would indicate that our Bibles are

the very Word of God. This is God's Book. It may have been written by different men, but the whole Book has come from God. It is the very Word of God--infallible, unchangeable, living. There are no errors, no departures from the truth, in what God has given us. It is 100% reliable!

Why did Paul use the word that he used?

I do not know that I can answer that question as fully and accurately as I would like to, but I am going to tell you what I think.

As I have said, either word would mean that this is a message from God. But it seems that λόγος would mean that Paul was talking about the Bible as a whole. But the word ῥῆμα which he did use placed special emphasis upon the various parts of the message: every letter, every word, every phrase, every verse, every chapter, every Book! Sometimes in our battles the Spirit of God will use one verse, or some part of a verse. At other times He will use something else. The point is that we are to be prepared to use it, but we are also to expect that the Holy Spirit will use it the way He pleases, and not necessarily the way we expect Him to use it.

Paul's emphasis here should remind us of those verses you have heard from me many times, found in Isa. 55:10, 11:

For as the rain cometh down,
and the snow from heaven,
and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth,
and maketh it bring forth and bud,
that it may give seed to the sower
and bread to the eater:

So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
it shall not return unto me void,
but it shall accomplish that which I please,
and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Last Sunday I read the first two verses of Luther's A Mighty Fortress. Let me read the third verse today. It goes like this, and fits right in with our text:

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,

**We will not fear, for God hath will
His truth to triumph through us.**

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.

So where do we go when we are assaulted by the Evil One?

We do exactly as our Lord did. He could have spoken any word that He wanted to, because He is the Lord. But what did He do? He quoted three times from the Book of Deuteronomy! He used the revealed and written Word of God.

How much Scripture have you committed to memory? How well do you know your Bible? We can all answer that question by saying that we do not know it as well as we should! Maybe we know a lot of verses, but have never put them together so as to get the message of the Bible. That is why we need to read it, and to be trusting the Spirit of God to teach us. We need to be under the teaching of those who can help us to understand the Word. We need to meditate on what we are learning, and we need to put the Word of God into practice in all of the circumstances of our lives.

It would be wonderful if we could all say, as the Psalmist said long ago,
 O how love I thy law,
 it is my meditation all the day (Psa. 119:97).

Concl: And so we have two great truths before us today, truths which we desperately need every day that we live: the truth of the hope of our salvation, and the truth that God works by His Spirit through His Word to defeat the Enemy, to strengthen us for the battle, and to meet the needs of others when we have the opportunity to minister to them. Turn to the Word when you are discouraged. Turn to the Word when you are tempted to sin. Turn to the Word when your heart grows cold. Turn to the Word when you need guidance. Turn to the Word when others need your help. Turn to the Word when you are seeking to win someone to the Lord. Turn to the Word every day and throughout the day. Only through the Word can we experience the victory that is ours in Christ.

Make sure you know that you are saved, and then always remember why you are saved. And in our service, in our desire to reach others with the Gospel, let others have their methods; what we need to do is to use the Word. There is life and power in the Word of God. God will use His Word to touch the hearts of people when nothing else can touch them.

We need:

- 1) The girdle of truth.
 - 2) The breastplate of righteousness.
 - 3) The soldier's footwear: the preparation of the gospel of peace.
 - 4) The shield of faith.
- But don't forget:

- 5) Your helmet: the hope of salvation.
- 6) The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Paul did not say we could pick and choose. He did not say that part of the armor would be sufficient. He said that we need it all! And he clearly implied that no one is going to put your armor on for you; YOU ARE TO DO IT! God has provided it for you, and God will give you all of the help that you need to get it on. Then you will be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil. And the glory will be God's.

THE CHRISTIAN AT WAR
Ephesians 6:18-20

Intro: When I speak of THE CHRISTIAN AT WAR, I am not thinking about the Vietnam War, or World War II. Nor am I thinking about the warfare that Christians often get involved in with each other--the troubles that hinder the blessing of the Church and the Church's ministry to the world. The troubles that Christians have with each other is a dishonor to God, and brings shame upon the testimony of the Gospel. No, I am not speaking of those kinds of warfare. I am speaking of our spiritual warfare, the conflict that we are all involved in with Satan and all of his evil forces. The drug lords of Columbia present a terrible threat, not only to that country, but to the whole world. But as evil and as terrible as they are, they are nothing compared with the Devil and his forces which Paul mentioned in verse 12. (Read.)

To be prepared for this battle we need to be armed spiritually. God has provided an armor for us. We have been learning about that armor for the last three Sunday mornings. We have seen that we need:

- 1) The girdle of "truth."
- 2) "The breastplate of righteousness."
- 3) The footwear: "the preparation of the gospel of peace."
- 4) "The shield of faith."
- 5) "The helmet of salvation."
- 6) "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

We have learned that all of these have to do with:

- 1) The Word of God.
- 2) The Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3) The Gospel of the grace of God.

Our defense and our offense means that:

- 1) We must be saved, and be assured that we are saved.
- 2) We must be growing in our knowledge of Christ and in our fellowship with Him.
- 3) And in order to do that we must be growing in our knowledge and the practical influence of the truths of the Word of God in our lives.

So, in three Sundays we have covered a lot of truth, and I trust that the Lord has made it very profitable to all of us.

But, as we come to verse 18 today, we can see that having on the whole armor of God, as important and essential as that is, is not all that we need to do. We find that we also need to be praying! (Read verse 18.)

George Duffield expressed this truth about prayer in the

third verse of his hymn, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus." It goes like this:

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
 Stand in his strength along;
 The arm of flesh will fail you,
 Ye dare not trust your own:
Put on the gospel armor,
Each piece put on with pray'r;
 Where duty calls, or danger,
 Be never wanting there.

I would make two additions to this verse. The Gospel armor needs not only to be "put on" with prayer, but it needs to be worn with prayer, and used with prayer. The Word and prayer always go together. One is not enough without the other. The Word alone makes us hard and critical. Prayer alone leaves us open to all kinds of error. But the Christian who knows the Word and lives the Word, and who gives himself to prayer, is the Christian who will be, in the words of 2 Corinthians 10:4b, ". . . mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds." That is what our armor becomes when it is put on with prayer, worn with prayer, and used with prayer.

Now let us see what Paul had to say about prayer. Prayer is the theme of the verses we are considering today: verses 18-20.

Let me consider these three verses under two headings:

- 1) Paul's teaching about prayer (v. 18).
- 2) Paul's request for prayer (vv. 19, 20).

I. PAUL'S TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER (Eph. 6:18).

This Epistle to the Ephesians is very important for many reasons, but one of those reasons has to do with prayer. Paul began this Epistle with prayer; he concluded it with prayer. He gave us two of the prayers that he had been praying for the Ephesians believers. One is in chapter 1; the other is in chapter 3. We can see from Paul's prayers that prayer held a major place of importance in his life. Whatever else he might have had to do in his busy and dangerous life, it never made him neglect prayer. His life was a life of prayer. So, when we read what he wrote here in verse 18, we know that he practiced what he preached. He was a man of prayer.

Verse 18 does not give us the complete teaching regarding prayer, but many of the essential parts are given there. Let us look at the details given in this verse. Paul pressed a great deal into a few words.

A. The word "praying" speaks of language addressed to

God.

While this certainly seems to be something that is to be taken for granted when we pray, that we pray to God, yet probably most of us are guilty at times of forgetting this. When we pray, we are coming to God! We are coming to the Creator of the universe. We are coming to our almighty, sovereign, eternal God! He is the One we need. It is His wisdom and power and blessing that we are seeking. If we enter into this spiritual warfare without prayer, it means that we have only our own strength to rely upon--and that is not enough, ever! We need to bring God into our conflicts. He is the only One Who can give us the victory.

B. The times of prayer.

And besides the fact that we are to pray to God, the participle that Paul used here, the present tense, indicates that we are always to be praying.

And Paul added the word, "always," at all seasons, on every occasion. Regardless of what the circumstances may be, or how strong or weak the opposition appears to be, we are to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (v. 10). And that requires two things:

- 1) Having the whole armor of God on, and
- 2) Praying.

So with regard to time, prayer is all-inclusive.

C. The kinds of prayer.

This takes us to the words, "with all prayer and supplication."

"All prayer" means all kinds of prayer, of which the Scriptures seem to indicate that there are five:

- 1) Confession.
- 2) Worship.
- 3) Thanksgiving.
- 4) Intercession.
- 5) Personal requests.

The word "supplication" means, according to Calvin, "prayer for particular benefits" (Quoted by Trench, p. 189). This means that we are to pray for specific things and to expect specific answers. When an army is at war, details become very important. Specific objectives must be reached if there is to be victory.

Our Lord seems to have had specific, particular requests in mind when He spoke about prayer during His time here on earth. One example is in John 15:7:
If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you,
ye shall ask what ye will,
and it shall be done unto you.

So we are to pray about particular needs and we are to present explicit requests. God is concerned about every detail of our needs. Nothing that concerns us is unimportant to Him. It is really true that He cares for us. Cf. 1 Pet. 5:7.

Next Paul spoke of:

D. How we are to pray.

Here he stressed three things:

1. "In the Spirit."

This is the twelfth time that Paul has referred to the Holy Spirit in this Epistle. The Word of God is "the sword of the Spirit" (v. 17), and now we see that we are to pray "in the Spirit."

Before we seek to determine what this means, notice how important the Holy Spirit is in our warfare. He is the One Who teaches us what the Word means, and He is the One Who shows us how to use it in our lives, and in our conflicts. But He is also the One Who teaches us to pray, Who burdens us to pray, and who guides us in our praying. There can be no true prayer apart from the Holy Spirit.

We cannot do without the Holy Spirit! Look to Him to make your praying effective to God's glory and a delight to yourself. Depend upon Him to guide you in your praying. And in all that He does you can be sure that the Word of God will play a large part.

The second thing that Paul said about how we are to pray is to be seen in the word,

2. "Watching."

Remember we are speaking about a warfare, spiritual warfare. All of our life here on earth is warfare. And we are to be like soldiers standing guard. We are to be on the alert,

intent on seeing every need, staying awake even when others are asleep. We watch and we pray.

But there is a third expression which speaks of how we are to pray. It is:

3. "With all perseverance."

This means that we are to continue on. We do not give up. We may not see the answers immediately, but we keep on praying anyway. The apostles used the verb of this word when then said, "But **we will give ourselves** to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

So how are we to pray?

- 1) In dependence upon the Spirit.
- 2) Like soldiers standing guard.
- 3) Perseveringly, never giving up.

What a difference there would be in the work of the Lord today if we had more people who have their armor on, and who are praying like Paul has indicated here.

But there is one other point that Paul made in his **TEACHING ABOUT PRAYER**. It was this:

E. For whom should we pray?

The answer: "For all saints."

Who is a saint? A saint is a child of God. A saint is one who has trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as his, or her, Savior. There are many saints here this morning. There are saints throughout this Portland area where we live. There are saints all over the United States. There are saints throughout the world. There are saints in Poland, in Columbia, in China. They are everywhere!

Obviously we cannot pray in depth for every saint in every country throughout the world, but we are especially responsible to pray for the saints we know. This does not mean that we cannot pray for those who are not saints, but we have a special responsibility to pray for the saints. You see, we are not in this battle alone. We often fight our battles alone, but we are members of God's great army of saints. And we help each other in this great warfare by prayer!

How many saints do you pray for?

But now I have just a few minutes with the last two verses:

II. PAUL'S REQUEST FOR PRAYER (Eph. 6:19, 20).

This was a request for Paul himself.

Where was he? He was a prisoner of war! He was "an ambassador in bonds."

What was his request--that he might be released soon? No. His request was that he would not succumb to the fears that were in his heart, but that he might be bold in telling others the Gospel message of salvation through Christ. And to be bold meant that:

- 1) He would keep nothing back.
- 2) He would speak with confidence that the Lord would use him even there.

In other words he wanted to witness, to do it clearly and fully, and to do it with confidence that the Lord would not let His Word fail.

This was not an idle request. This was a great burden on Paul's heart. And is it not strange that after all of the time he had given to ministering the Word all over the Empire, and experiencing the opposition he had faced, and seeing the victories that he had won, that he was still in need of prayer, and especially that he would get his mouth open to speak about the Lord Jesus Christ?

If "saint" Paul needed such prayer, then I need it, you need it, every saint needs it. The Devil will do everything that he can to close our mouths and keep them closed. And he had done a very good job of it. What we need is prayer for boldness. And that is one request you can pray for every saint you know.

May the Lord give us that boldness, that fullness of the Spirit, so that we will be like the early Christians who could not keep themselves from telling others about Christ.

Concl: Paul believed in the sovereignty of God. He made that clear in Ephesians 1. But he also believed in human responsibility. He made that clear here at the end of this Epistle. He may have been "an ambassador in bonds," but he was a soldier in God's army on active duty. He knew that he was where he was by the will of God, and that there was a strong possibility that he would meet some who were appointed for salvation, and who must hear the Gospel. So he enlisted the help of his fellow-soldiers in Ephesus to pray for him in Rome that he might be faithful and victorious in his battle.

A FOND FAREWELL
Ephesians 6:21-24

Intro: As we come to these verses, we are suddenly aware of the fact that Paul has come to the end of this Epistle. In these last four verses Paul was saying, "Good-by." Approximately four years before, Paul had said farewell to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus. That was a tearful time for both Paul and the Ephesian elders, especially because they knew that he would not be back.

But now Paul was saying "good-by" again. He said that he was sending Tychicus to them. (He must have delivered the Epistle to them.) He said that Tychicus would tell them about his "affairs" (which meant the things relating to him). The expression in verse 22 translated "affairs" is slightly differing, but it means practically the same thing: the things concerning him. And then he wrote out, or had Tychicus write out, his final prayers for them. This was probably the last letter Paul wrote until he completed his NT Epistles with 1 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Timothy--in that order.

Paul had just asked prayer for his ministry in Rome. See 6:19, 20. And he had referred to his "bonds" in 6:20. He had mentioned his "tribulations" in 3:13. But he had not answered the questions that the Ephesian believers would have been very interested in, e.g., how was Paul, how was he getting along, what was he doing? From the standpoint of learning anything about Paul, how he was, and what he was doing, this would have been a very disappointing letter. But perhaps this is the very place where we can learn a most important lesson about letter-writing.

But, first of all, let us get acquainted with Tychicus.

I. TYCHICUS.

Tychicus is mentioned five times in the NT: once in the Book of Acts (20:4), and four times in Paul's Epistles (Eph. 6:21; Col. 4:7; Tit. 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:12).

The passage in Acts indicates that he was from Asia (and Ephesus was in Asia--the Roman province which is now occupied by the country of Turkey). This means that he was a Gentile, as his name would also indicate.

We know that he was with Paul when he wrote to the Ephesians, and to the Colossians. Therefore, he was with Paul in his first imprisonment in Rome. In 2 Timothy Paul mentioned that he had sent Tychicus to Ephesus. So Tychicus must have been with Paul shortly before his final imprisonment and execution since 2 Timothy was

Paul's final Epistle.

Paul's references to Tychicus in Ephesians and Colossians are practically identical. In Col. 4:7, 8 we read,

All my state shall Tychicus declare to you,
who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister
and fellowservant in the Lord.

Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose,
that he might know your estate,
and comfort your hearts.

(Read Eph. 6:21, 22.) Here he called Tychicus "a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord." Many believe that Tychicus may have been Paul's writer, and that the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians were dictated by Paul to Tychicus.

Tychicus seems to have been ready at all times to help Paul in any way that he could. Paul obviously loved him very much, and had no doubt about his salvation. Tychicus was "a beloved brother." He had endeared himself to Paul in many ways.

But he was also a "faithful minister in the Lord."

The word "minister" does not mean that he was a preacher and teacher (although he may have preached and taught). It means that he was one who was very active in doing what Paul wanted because he believed that Paul was doing the will of God. And so Paul added the words, "in the Lord." The main idea in the word (from which we get our word, deacon, is one who renders service to another (Bullinger, p. 205).

But it is important to note that, in his work, he was "faithful."

This means that he could be trusted. You could give Tychicus a job to do, and he would do it, do it the way Paul wanted it done, and he would do it whether or not Paul was watching him to see that he did it. This kind of a servant is invaluable.

How important it is for us to be like Tychicus!

II. THE MISSION WHICH TYCHICUS HAD.

He had three things to do:

- 1) To go to Ephesus.
- 2) To deliver the Ephesian letter. He probably also carried the Colossian Epistle and the Epistle to Philemon. In addition, he was the one who probably took Onesimus back to Philemon. So he had a very,

very important mission. He carried the only copies of three important NT Epistles with him; his success was, therefore, very significant with respect to the completion of the NT.

- 3) To tell the Ephesians all about Paul--how he was, how he was getting along, what he was doing, etc.

And we should have no question in our mind but what he did all three.

But an interesting thing to consider is, Why did Paul not tell about himself in his Epistle? When we write to people, that is what they want to know--how we are, what we are doing, perhaps what needs we have, etc. But Paul practically ignored all of that. Why?

I do not know that I have the answer, or answers, to that question, but I have some ideas as to why.

First, he was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit did not lead him that way.

Second, Paul was more concerned about them than he was about himself. Paul was interested in their spiritual knowledge than he was in their knowledge about himself. To Paul, letter-writing was a ministry. He sought to edify, to make his letter a permanent blessing. He not only wanted the people to know the truth, but he wanted them to "walk" in the truth.

Also, it would have taken valuable space, and then he might not answer all of the questions they had. Tychicus could tell them all that they wanted to know.

We may not want to change our way of writing letters, but this much needs to be said from Paul's Epistles. When you and I write to our loved ones and friends, let us always include something in our letters that will be a spiritual blessing and help to those to whom you are writing. Paul teaches us that letter-writing is not just a way to communicate information about ourselves; it is a ministry! This is one of the greatest avenues of blessing open to us today. Let us use it for the glory of the Lord.

Even in what Tychicus would tell them about Paul, his purpose was to "comfort" their hearts. This means that his report to the Ephesians would not be discouraging, but encouraging!

But let us go on to verses 23 and 24. And here we find that Paul concluded with another reference to his own praying. As

we have noted before in this Epistle (as well as in others), Paul not only told the people to whom he was writing that he was praying for them, but he told them what his petitions were.

III. PAUL'S FINAL PRAYER (Eph. 6:23, 24).

He was concerned about four things:

- 1) Peace.
- 2) Love.
- 3) Faith.
- 4) Grace.

The first and last of these were his prayer at the beginning. See 1:2. Only here he reverses their order.

Gary spoke on two of these at our Family Camp this past week: peace and love. His theme was "the fruit of the Spirit." And he spoke on four of them: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering." I hope that those of you who were there will remember much of what he said. Let us briefly consider the four that Paul mentioned here.

A. "Peace be to the brethren."

This, you will remember, was the Jewish greeting, Shalom!

Unmistakably "peace" comes from God, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, or Paul would not have been praying about it.

Paul mentioned "peace" in this Epistle in 1:2; 2:14, 15, 17; 4:3; 6:15; and here--seven times!

It speaks of wholeness, completeness, harmony. Where there is peace, there is not only a lack of strife, but there is oneness. Without peace there is turmoil; with peace there is rest. With this expression Paul was praying for God's richest blessing upon their fellowship as brothers in the family of God. Nothing stands closer to the heart of God than this. Nothing brings greater joy to the hearts of believers than this. Peace is the forerunner of great blessing among the people of God.

B. "Love with faith."

Paul mentioned "love" in the following verses here in Ephesians: 1:4, 15; 2:4; 3:18, 19; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2; and here. Sometimes it is God's love for us. Sometimes the love that we are to manifest in our

lives. This is the Greek word, ἀγάπη.

By this word Paul means that we are to deliberately choose to love each other as the people of God--and the ability to do this comes from God.

You know, often when we look at each other, especially day after day, or week after week from one year to another, we become aware of things in each other's lives that we do not like. And when we dwell on these, they become bigger and bigger! And then we become critical, first in our hearts, and it becomes easier to tell others what we do not like about certain people. Paul's prayer was that God would so work in their hearts, making their love so great, that they could overlook each other's faults, and concentrate on the good things that God had done in the hearts of their fellow-believers.

But to this word "love" Paul added:

C. "Faith"--"love with faith."

Paul mentioned faith in 1:15; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13; 6:16, and here.

What did he have in mind?

If we not only "love," but "love with faith," this means that we will always be trusting the Lord that the needs which we see in each other's lives can be met by the Lord so that they will become more like our dear Savior.

It is easy to feel that "so-and-so" will never be any different. He will always be hard to love. Or she will always rub me the wrong way. That is not loving "with faith." To "love with faith" is to be able to thank the Lord for what He has done in the hearts of my brethren (and sisters), but to be able to love them more and more because you know that the Lord has not finished His work in their lives, and that some day all of the unloveliness that you see in them will be gone. In fact, you know that when you look closer at their lives, you can see that they are a lot better now than they used to be.

And hopefully the same thing applies to me. One reason I need to "love with faith" is because I want others to "love" me "with faith."

But what does all of that call for?

D. "Grace."

Paul not only began and ended this Epistle with prayer, but in those prayers he began and ended them with "grace." See 1:2.

He mentioned grace in 1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8; 3:2, 7, 8; 4:7, 29; and here.

What is "grace"?

"Grace" is the undeserved favor of God upon our lives, but the result of it is strengthening!
 "Grace" does not just mean that the Lord is kind to us when we deserve severe treatment of some kind. It does mean that. But it means that the Lord is strengthening us so that we will be able to do what He wants us to do, and so we will not do what He does not want us to do.

So God by His "grace" enables us to live at peace with each other. He enables us to love each other. He enables us to trust Him whatever the circumstances might be. You and I stand in desperate need of the grace of God every day we live. Without His grace we would utterly fail in all that we do. Always pray for grace for yourself, and for every other believer that you know.

Concl: But Paul's prayer was directed to God for "all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

What did he mean by "in sincerity"?

The NASB translates it, "with a love incorruptible." The NIV renders it, "with an undying love." The Williams translation has the same:

Spiritual blessing be with all
 who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

"In sincerity" conveys a part of the truth, but the picture here is of a person who starts out claiming to love the Lord Jesus Christ, but as time goes on that love for Him grows less and less until it dies altogether. It is like a candle whose flame gets dimmer and dimmer, then flickers, and finally goes out.

What can we understand about such a person? We must understand that he was never saved. One who really knows Christ, and loves Christ, will not love Him less and less, but will love Him more and more. What is a Christian? A Christian is a person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ. And

that love is manifested in a desire to please Him, to obey Him. A person who loves the Lord Jesus will love all of the people who also love the Lord Jesus. He will want to be in fellowship with them, at peace with them. And his love for the Lord will be manifested also by a growing faith--not only faith for what he needs, but faith that God will continue to meet the needs of all of the others who love Him. And it is to those who really love Him, who continually love Him, and who increasingly love Him, that the strengthening grace of God is given day by day.

How do you love the Lord--with a dying love, or with an undying love? One who truly is saved may have times when his love for the fluctuates, but it will never go out!

When Gary was speaking to us about "love" out at Camp, he referred to our Lord's questions for Peter in John 21. The Lord would ask us the same question. There are many who profess to be saved by Christ who do not really love Him. Paul's concluding statement in this Epistle is a call for all of us to make sure that we really love the Lord.