

The Call to Spiritual Warfare
Ephesians 6:10-20

Intro: This passage does not stand by itself, and so it should not be considered by itself. It comes at the end of Ephesians and, therefore, is based upon the teaching of the whole Epistle. But more than that, the use of the word, "Finally," suggests that this is the point toward which the Apostle Paul has been moving. The word means, Henceforth, or As to the rest, or For that which remains.

The Christian life is not an easy life, and it is never presented in Scripture as being easy. It is a battle. We are continually facing opposition. And the opposition comes from three sources:

- 1) From the world around us.
- 2) From the flesh within us.
- 3) From the devil, who is above us.

Paul had touched on all three of these in Ephesians 4:

- 1) The world -- in verses 17-19. You can see the pressure that the world exercises against everybody, but also against the Christian. Cf. Rom. 12:2.
- 2) The flesh -- in verses 20-24.
- 3) The devil (which means accuser, the one who is determined to throw us over) -- in verse 27 (with its context).

But of all of these three, the devil is the chief. He is the one who drew our first parents into sin where they became sinners by nature, and he is called in Scripture "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4).

Notice how all three are mentioned also in Ephesians 2, only this reference has to do with our relationship to our three enemies before we were saved.

Now, with all that Paul has had to say throughout the Epistle as to who we are, what we should know, how we should live, and even the burdens that he carried on his heart for them which he expressed continually in prayer, you would think that all of that would be enough. But it was not enough. This last passage comes as a clarion call to prepare for war!

Tonight I want us to consider this text in a general way. In the weeks ahead we will look more at the details. What can be said with reference to this call?

I. The Call Is Issued to Every Christian (Eph. 6:10).

No would is exempt. No one can be deferred. Every believer is called to arms. We all must go to war against the enemy.

Paul was writing to his "Brethren," which includes all believers of all ages and of both sexes.

II. The Call Is Issued to be On The Alert -- Always!

We must be in a continual state of readiness. Sooner or later everyone gets involved with the devil and his forces, but we never know when the evil day (or days) will come.

III. The Call Recognizes the Superiority of the Enemy.

Believers themselves are too weak, too fearful, too ignorant and foolish to be able to stand up against such an enemy. Therefore, they need to find their courage and their strength elsewhere -- "in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

The Christian who faces such an enemy in his own strength is doomed to defeat from the very beginning. We fight and we wrestle, but with a strength that is not our own!

IV. The Call Includes the Provision of An Armour.

Note that the armour is given because it is the only way in which we can stand. And this is the whole object which the devil has in opposing us -- to knock us down.

The Bible is full of examples of those who were not able to stand as well as those who did. Some stood at one time, but lost the battle at other times.

The Apostle indicated that "the whole armour of God" was necessary, and then to emphasize that fact he mentioned every part specifically.

V. The Call Emphasizes Two Weapons in Particular.

A. The Word of God -- not only mentioned as "the sword of the Spirit," but as being vitally related to every other part of the armour.

B. Prayer.

Both of these are spoken of in connection with the Holy Spirit since neither can be effective without the work of the Spirit.

VI. Finally, The Call Is to the Proclamation of the Gospel

Note what Paul wrote in verses 19 and 20. Remember 2 Cor. 4:4. All of the forces of the enemy are directed toward stopping the Gospel. To do that he will seek to corrupt the

lives of the people of God, or to corrupt their doctrine -- or both! He wants to knock us out of the battle. We will be considering his devices, but let us note tonight his real objective.

- Concl: This brings me to the point that I want to make. This is my, "Finally, my brethren, . . ."

We are engaged in this warfare. Sometimes the battle is worse than at other times. The devil works on us individually. He will seek to keep us from understanding the Gospel. That is why we need to pray, and why we need to be concerned about our knowledge of the truth. He will discourage us. He will seek to get us occupied with other things that will dampen or kill our zeal for the truth.

Or he will work on us as a group -- appealing to our pride, seeking to stir up disunity, or doing many, many other things. He will set temptations before us to discredit our testimony with sin. He may even try to infiltrate our ranks with those who do not know the Lord.

- We live in a day when many who profess to know the Lord refuse to stand for all of the Word of God. Humanism has been integrated with Bible teaching until any talk about the sovereignty of God or the work of the Holy Spirit is looked upon with suspicion.

What do we need? We need to stand! We need to be so grounded in the Word and in the Lord that nothing can shake us.

Let me conclude by reading Paul's words to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:24-32 -- a stand that we need to take in our day, a stand which reflects the kind of a conflict which we have, for which we need to be prepared, and in which the Lord has promised us the victory.

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER'S STRENGTH
Ephesians 6:10

Intro: It is obvious from this last part of Ephesians that the Christian life is a warfare from which no child of God is exempted.

It is also apparent that no child of God is initially prepared for the conflicts that are ahead. The command is pointless unless we realize that in ourselves we are weak and totally unprepared and unable to face our foe. Cf. Psa. 46.

Isa. 40:28-31

So actually verses 11 through 18 are a commentary on verse 10. They tell us how we can be made strong. It is by putting on the whole armor of God.

In preparing men for war there are three things that have to be taken into consideration if soldiers are to be strong so that the whole army can be strong. They are:

- 1) A soldier who is strong physically and emotionally.
- 2) He must have good equipment.
- 3) He must be trained to obey orders.

The emphasis in Ephesians 6 is personal. It has to do with the preparation that each soldier needs to be strong against the enemy. So, in this case, it is the armor and prayer that are the strength of the soldier himself, and these are what make him strong so that he will be able to stand.

And so we have a command to obey: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

This is similar to the command that the Lord gave to Joshua when he began to lead the children of Israel. It is commanded no less than 4 times in Joshua's commissioning in Joshua 1 -- in vv. 6, 7, and 9.

Furthermore we notice in our text that the Christian soldier's strength is "in the Lord," and only "in the Lord." He may think that he has some strength of his own, but it is only when he sees that he has no strength for the battle that he will realize that he has to get strength somewhere outside of himself. The only place to find it is "in the Lord."

But this expression, "in the Lord," not only identifies the source of the Christian soldier's strength, but, if we are acquainted with the book of Ephesians, we know that it is an expression that is used in the book to indicate our union with the Lord. So it is not that I go to the Lord, get my strength, and then turn from Him and go into the conflict. No, it is an expression which means that the Lord and I go into the battle together. I am strong because He is with me and I am with Him.

We can never be separated from each other, but it is important that we as soldiers learn how to draw our strength from Him. Note the statement carefully: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

- So our strength is not something that we get, then go away and use it until it is exhausted, and some back to have it replenished (like we do with the gas in our cars), but this speaks of a continuing relationship, a daily fellowship between a Christian soldier and his Lord whereby the soldier is receiving strength constantly for the battle.

Another think that we notice about our text is that it contains three words which have to do with power:

- 1) "Be strong."
- 2) "In the power."
- 3) "Of his might."

Is there anything distinctive that I need to know about these words?

Yes, there is! All three words are different.

- The first, "be strong in the Lord," means that I need to be strengthened within myself by the power that comes from my union and communion with the Lord. It is not something external; it is internal. And the verb, being in the passive voice, means that I do not do it for myself, but the Lord is both the source of my strength and also the strength itself. In other words, it is the Lord who will strengthen me and you within!

"Power" is the Greek word which speaks of power in action, power that is sufficient for the battle that is to be fought. It is power enough to overcome the enemy.

Often armies are defeated because they do not have the right kind of equipment, or because they run out of ammunition. But this is never possible with the Lord. Perhaps the Apostle John had this in mind when he wrote in 1 John 4:4,

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.

The third word, "might," re-emphasizes that this strength is "in the Lord" in the sense that it is God's power.

- Paul used these last two words for power at the end of Eph. 1:19, ". . . his mighty power" -- the power inherent in God which is sufficient for that which needs to be done!

So all of this adds up to mean that the Christian soldier needs strength, that the kind of strength he needs is only "in the Lord," and that the strength that the Lord has is sufficient

for anything that the enemy might do. But I must remember that this is not like filling my car with gas; instead, it is like running a power tool of some kind -- if the tool is disconnected from the power source, the tool will not work.

But remember, this is not a strengthening that we do for ourselves, but it is what the Lord does for us.

The question is, How? How does He do it?

We all should be familiar with the fact, by now, that the Lord uses means to accomplish His purposes. He has ordained the elect to be saved, but this does not mean that they are automatically saved so that there is nothing for us to do. He has also ordained that the Gospel should be preached to all men so that the elect will be reached and be saved.

So the Lord has ordained the means by which His people are to be strengthened for the battles of life, for the conflicts that we all have with the Devil and his demonic forces. So it is important to know how He strengthens us.

I mentioned a moment ago that the verb Paul used in our text is a passive verb, meaning that our strengthening is something that the Lord does for us as opposed to something that we do for ourselves. It is interesting that there are at least 4 other times in the Epistles where this same verb is used passively, and these help us to understand how we are going to be strengthened.

Turn first to

I. ACTS 9:22.

This is the verse:

But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.

Paul was strengthened -- how? What was he doing? He was using the Word of God. He was being strengthened by the Word so as to be able to use the Word.

Now this is the key to everything. The Lord strengthens us in Himself through the Word.

Let me cite an example from Scripture, from the life of Jeremiah. Cf. Jer. 20:9,

Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

Get a Christian away from his Bible, and it is like cutting

Samson's hair. But get the Word into him, and he is going to be strengthened by it. This calls for reading, for preaching and teaching (and shows the importance of being in church) -- and praying.

Every part of the armor has something to do with the Word of God. God does not work independently from His Word.

But there is a second passage that goes with this:

II. ROMANS 4:20.

This is more familiar -- concerning Abraham through a prolonged period of testing in his life:

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God.

The verse means that Abraham was strengthened by faith. His faith did not come from himself, but from God Who gave him promises, not once, but over and over again.

This is the work of the Word. Faith is impossible without the Word of God. Cf. Rom. 10:17,

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

The Lord never lets us get beyond the place where we need to trust Him, and our faith cannot fail when it is founded upon the Word.

So it is not just hearing the Word, but believing it.

But there is a third passage that I want you to see.

III. 2 TIMOTHY 2:1.

Paul was getting Timothy ready for the time when he would be fighting the battle without his father-in-the-faith. This is what he said:

Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Now "grace" is one of the words in the NT that is sometimes used for strength. Another example is 2 Cor. 12:9. (Remind them of the background.)

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Here grace clearly means power. But why is it called "grace" and not simply power? Why did Paul write to Timothy and use the word, "grace"?

Because he wanted to keep before Timothy (and before us) the fact that this strength which we need, and which we must have, is always given in grace. We read the Word. We believe the promises. We pray, and we are strengthened. But we do not merit it by anything that we do. It is all of grace.

One other verse:

IV. HEBREWS 11:34.

The passive is used here again.

The writer of Hebrews in this verse was summarizing what OT saints had done "by faith." And I will just take the phrase out of the verse that applies to the manner in which God strengthens us in Christ. It is this:

" . . . out of weakness were made strong, . . ."

This is what the Lord did with Paul. Often it is through being brought to face up to our insufficiency that we realize that our only strength is "in the Lord."

There is a wonderful OT story which illustrates this truth for us. It is found in 2 Chronicles 20. King Jehoshaphat was confronted with three mighty nations, and he knew that the forces of Israel were not sufficient to stand against them.

So what did he do, and what did the people do? Read 2 Chron. 20:3, 4. Perhaps this is what the writer of Hebrews had in mind.

And then what happened?

Jehoshaphat the king stood before his people and led them in prayer. It was a wonderful prayer, but I want you to notice in particular how it ended. Listen to the king's words:

O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee (2 Chron. 20:12).

Do you remember the outcome? The Spirit of God came upon a Levite by the name of Jahaziel and he told them that the battle was not theirs, but God's, that they would not even need to fight in the battle even though they would go out to meet the enemy, because the Lord was with them.

They went out to meet the enemy with the singers ahead of them, and to their amazement, the enemy got confused because of what the Lord did, and they started killing each other

until no one was left alive.

What else? It took Judah three days to carry off the spoil, it was so great!

Concl: We are in a position that is more dangerous than that which Jehoshaphat was in. And we need strength for the battle. Our strength is not sufficient. We need the strength of the Lord, and it is available to us. It is ours through Christ, through the Word, through faith, but it is all undeserved. And sometimes the Lord brings us to a place of weakness so that we will learn how much we need to trust Him to make us strong.

May the Lord enable us to learn this first lesson well, and then we will be prepared for the truth to come in the verses which follow.

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER'S STAND

EPH. 6:11

Intro: In understanding any verse of Scripture it is important to ask

- 1) What does it say? It often says much more than we realize when we first read it.
- 2) What connection does it have with the preceding verse, or verses?
- 3) What connection does it have with the verse, or verses, which follow?

Let us do this with our text.

I. WHAT DOES IT SAY?

A. We are engaged in a conflict. This is what the Christian life is -- a warfare.

B. The conflict is with the Devil, which means that he is a plunderer, or accuser.

Obviously, if I do not know any more about him than is stated here, I need to find out about him.

C. The word "wiles" tells me that his method is to deceive. He uses tricks; he is crafty, subtle. Gen. 3:1 teaches me that his object is to disturb, disrupt, and, if possible, to destroy the work of God.

D. My main purpose against him is to stand - meaning to be prepared, not to give ground, to resist and to overcome.

E. The Lord has an armour for me, the only way I can stand. There is only one provision for victory.

F. This armour needs to be "put on." It is an order, a command.

II. THE CONNECTION WITH VERSE TEN.

The command there is to "Be strong in the Lord and..." Verse 11 tells me how I can be strong.

III. THE CONNECTION WITH VERSE TWELVE AND FOLLOWING.

In these we are told more about our Enemy, as well as being given the description of the Armour.
(Read.)

Realizing that my need is to stand (see this repeated in verses 13 and 14), what is essential for such a stand?

IV. THE ARMOUR MUST BE "PUT ON."

How do we do this?

The answer is to be found by looking at the description of the armour. What ^{should} impress ^{us} ~~me~~ about the armour?

Well, the first thing is that it all

has something to do with the Word of God. Therefore, if I am to "put on the whole armour of God" I must give special attention to the Word of God.

What principles can I derive from this passage which will help me to know what it means to put it on?

A. We must be firmly convinced that the Bible is the Word of God -- all of it. Cf. v. 17.

Cf. the Devil's question in Gen. 3:1, and then his commentary which followed in ^{v.} 4, 5.

Remember that this is not just an accumulation of arguments, but a conviction resulting from the Spirit's work.

B. We must be well-grounded in the teaching of ^{all of} the great doctrines of Scripture: God, Christ, man, salvation, etc. The Devil attacks the Word of God -- Gen. 3
the Person of God -- Job
the will of God -- Mt. 4

C. We must be strong in our faith that God will stand behind his Word. Cf. 2 Tim. 2:13.

D. We must be assured of our own salvation. Cf. v. 17.

E. We must be diligent in our

~~obedience~~ to the Word of God
Cf. Eph. 4:27.

G. We must be prepared to use the Word of God -- as our Lord did in Matt. 4.

H. We must give ourselves to prayer.
Cf. Acts 6:4.

Cond: This is not something that is completed in a day! It is a work that never ends.

The question is: Are we putting it on so that we will be able to stand?

The problem in every generation has been because the Lord's people have buckled down because they were unable to stand.

Illus: Dan. 3:16-18.

David in Saul's armour - 1 Sam. 17:38, 39.
We cannot go to war with the armour of our friends, our church, our parents. It has to become ours.

THE WILES OF THE DEVIL
Ephesians 6:11

Intro: Concerning our enemy, it is his "wiles" that we must be concerned about. This is the Greek word from which we get our English word, methods. But it has an evil significance. It suggests trickery, deceit, a lying in wait. According to Peter, it is best illustrated by a lion waiting for his prey. Cf. 1 Pet. 5:8,

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. He may do this as an angel of light, but he is still like a roaring lion. Cf. 2 Cor. 11:13, 14,

For such are false apostles, deceitful works, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.

A key to what we are up against is to be found in 2 Cor. 2:11 where Paul wrote the following:

Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

This word means his purposes, his thoughts, his mind. Paul did not always know when and how the devil was going to attack, but he always knew what he had in mind. If we know this, we will be able to recognize his works.

What does he have in mind?

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE DEVIL.

It is nowhere made clearer than in the case of Job. The devil was out to drive a permanent wedge between the heart of Job and his God.

This is always his purpose!

With the unsaved, he does it concerning the Gospel. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. And he has done an excellent job here. He does all within his power to keep the people of the world from being saved, and, when a person is saved in spite of all that he can do, he does everything he can to ruin their fellowship with the Lord and their trust in Him.

The devil hates God. He hates the work of God. He hates the people of God. He hates the Word of God. Listen to these words from Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:

There is nothing that I know of that is more appalling than the bitter reaction of people to certain aspects of plain Christian truth in the New Testament. They are not content with saying that they cannot accept that truth, that they cannot believe it; they become bitter and display a deep hatred and animosity.

Whether they realize it or not, that is the result of the operation of the devil within them. Why the hatred, the passion, the bitterness, the antagonism? It is all indicative of the influence of the devil and his bitter hatred of God. He does not want God to have any glory. And it is always at the points where God has given the greatest indications of His glory in the Scriptures that people are generally most antagonistic. They want to hold on to man and his power, and they therefore hate the thought that God is sovereign in His power over man. There, then, are some indications of the way in which the devil "blinds" the minds of men and infuriates their spirits (The Christian Warfare, p. 85).

So the devil is out to destroy anything that has to do with God!

How does he attempt to do it? What methods does he employ?

Before answering those questions, let me interject something here that is extremely important. It is this: One reason that the devil hates the Scriptures is because it is the only place in the world that you can learn the truth about him. If it were not for what God has told us in His Word about the devil, we would be in a lot more trouble than we are! Therefore, if you want to know his "devices," go the Bible.

So we turn to the Word of God to find out what his "wiles" are. Let us call them

II. THE WAYS OF THE DEVIL.

A study of the passages in the Bible which have to do with the devil, or Satan, reveals that Satan's attacks are primarily directed to the minds, the thoughts, of men.

And another thing the Scriptures reveal about the work of the devil is that he will come to you. The more intimately you are related to God, the more you can expect trouble from him. We can play into his hands, but he does not wait for that. He came to Eve. He came even to our Lord. When the Lord asked him where he had been in Job's day, he said, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it." Cf. Job 1:7. He obviously was looking for those who were for God so he could do something against them. That is obvious, too, from what the Lord said to him about Job.

Let us cite some examples of his work from Scripture.

A. His ways with Eve. Cf. Gen. 3:1-6.

The first thing that he did was

1. To question the Word of God.

This is where he usually begins. He has done such a good job with the unregenerate that they usually dismiss it without a serious thought!

But has he ever done this with you? Have you ever felt that it might be true for some people, or for you in other circumstances, but not in the particular place where you happen to be just now?

Do you ever wonder about the promises of answered prayer when your prayers are not being answered?

Does it bother you when people take advantage of you and seem to get away with it? Are there times when it is hard for you to read the Scriptures because you seem to have hoped in vain?

If any of these are true of you, this is the work of the enemy!

But he cannot do this without also doing another thing which he loves to do. It is this:

2. To attack the very character of God.

The point in his question to Eve was this: A good God would never keep anything good from you, would He? Surely He would not say such a thing!

You believe in the righteousness of God, but does it ever seem to you that God has done the wrong thing, or that He has failed to do the right thing?

You believe in the love of God, but are there not times when you feel that your love would not let you see a friend go through troubles which God is taking you through, or someone dear to you?

You believe in the faithfulness of God, but are there not times when it seems that He has forgotten His Word?

Read the Psalms and you will see how the various writers of the Psalms had times when they questioned practically every attribute of God!

Then Eve was ready for the third attack. The devil then proceeded

3. To deny the Word of God.

He may not deny it all, but just some parts. He did this with our Lord, attempting to use the Word as God never intended that it should be used.

He may tell us that there are some things in the Bible which we cannot accept because we know more now than the writer of a particular passage knew.

That is the way some people get around the passages that have to do with creation.

In the quotation from Dr. Lloyd-Jones he mentioned how violently people can object to truths that are plainly taught in the Word of God just because they do not fit into their way of thinking -- so they deny them!

But, on a more personal basis, think of how your soul can be tried with thoughts of unbelief about the Word of God. If doubt is entertained, it will soon be turned into a denial!

All of these things were designed to turn Eve against God -- and they succeeded! And this turned her against her husband with the result that we have in the world today all of the sin, the heartache, the tragedy, that is traceable to that first sin of Adam!

What a lesson in the wiles of the devil!

Let me cite another example:

B. The devil's ways with Peter.

Cf. Luke 22:31-62.

The Lord had done with Peter as He had done with Job -- He had built a hedge about him. Satan sought to get behind that hedge, and was given permission by the Lord. How thankful we ought to be for the limits God puts on the devil at all times!

But what do we see in Peter? The devil was going to take advantage of things that were already in Peter's heart -- mainly, three things:

1. His pride.
2. His prayerlessness.
3. His humanism.

Where do we see his pride? Let me show you from

Matthew's Gospel: Matt. 26:33, 35.

Pride is with all of us, and sometimes it manifests itself in the way we feel about our relationship with God, and our love for Him. But as long as our confidence is in ourselves, and not in the Lord, trouble is ahead. Cf. Prov. 16:18, "Pride goeth before . . ."

How wonderful that Peter wrote later,
Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty
hand of God, that he may exalt you in due
time.

That is in 1 Pet. 5:6, just two verses before the
verse about the devil, "Be sober, be vigilant; . . ."

*** Where do you see Peter's prayerlessness? In the
garden of Gethsemane. What did that experience
mean? It probably meant that Peter had either grown
careless about his praying, or possibly that he never
had prayed as he should have prayed!

Sometimes it takes a shocking experience to wake us
up to our need to pray. The devil knows when we are
not praying, or when prayer has become only a for-
mality -- and he attacks. Perhaps the Lord said
at this point that He was praying for Peter because
He knew that Peter was not praying for himself!

*** What do I mean by Peter's humanism? Actually, all
that I have said about him was humanistic. But here
I am referring to the way he sought to prove his
love for the Lord. He took out his sword! Can you
imagine an apostle doing this?

Some time before the Lord had warned Peter about
this very thing, but Peter evidently did not learn
very much by it. I refer to what the Lord said to
him up in Caesarea Philippi. Cf. Matt. 16:21-23.

How the church today is affected with humanism! It
affects all of us in one way or another -- and some-
times the Lord uses the devil to root it out of us.
Again -- how precious it is to see how Peter began
his first Epistle, in chapter 1 verse 2, where he
wrote about the "sprinkling of the blood of Jesus
Christ."

I mention all of these to show weaknesses which invite
the attacks of the devil.

But let me cite one other example:

C. The devil's ways with the church at Corinth.

Sometimes the devil is able to take advantage of us because we do the right thing in the wrong way.

Cf. 2 Cor. 2:5-11.

The rule of Scripture about forgiveness is this, found in Eph. 4:30-32:

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

A failure to forgive opens the door for Satan to get an advantage -- an advantage with the offender, and an advantage with the church.

Concl: Much more could be said about THE WILES OF THE DEVIL.

But this gives us enough to warn us about some of the danger areas in our lives which Satan either makes or which he takes advantage of when he finds them.

We never can tell when an attack will be made. That is the reason that we must be in a constant state of readiness. And it is the Word that will prepare us. How important to learn the lessons of Scripture before we are confronted with a Satanic attack which God has allowed to teach us lessons which we have not learned in other ways.

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER'S ENEMY
Ephesians 6:12

Intro: Verse 12 gives the reason for the exhortations found in verses 10 and 11. The enemy which we face is so formidable that it requires such equipment, and only this equipment will suffice. The enemy is far worse than any human being can possibly imagine.

In describing our enemy, Paul does three things to bring home to our hearts the extreme danger which we face:

- 1) He tells us the nature of the conflict; it is wrestling.
- 2) He tells us what our enemy is not.
- 3) He tells us what our enemy is.

I. THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT: "we wrestle."

As the word suggests, it is generally a contest between two opponents in which each one seeks to overthrow the other.

The devil loves to single us out -- as he did with Job,
with our Lord,
with Peter.

This does not exclude the possibility of other types of warfare, but this is the chief measure which the devil employs.

II. WHAT OUR ENEMY IS NOT.

He is not "flesh and blood."

This means two things:

- 1) He is not a human being, or they are not human beings.
- 2) Therefore, they are not physical and cannot be seen.

On "flesh and blood," cf. Heb. 2:14; 1 Cor. 15:50.

The devil obviously uses "flesh and blood," but our warfare is not primarily against people. See two examples of how people were used by the devil in Scripture -- one, a believer; the other, not. Matt. 16:23; John 13:2, 21-30.

III. WHO, OR WHAT, OUR ENEMY IS.

Paul now is prepared to discuss the hierarchy of hell.

- A. So far we have heard only about the devil, our accuser. Cf. v. 11.

In v. 16 he is called "the wicked," or the wicked one. This means one whose nature is evil, and whose work is always evil.

He is so-called in John 17:15;
 1 John 2:13, 14;
 1 John 3:12;
 1 John 5:18, 19.

But it is obvious that the devil is assisted by many similar beings who are in full accord with what he is doing. Cf. Matt. 25:41. He is the chief Enemy, the one who heads all the forces of evil.

B. The forces of the devil.

The use of the word, "against," in the English and in the Greek, suggests that there are times when we may be engaged with any of these. But there definitely is a well-organized army which believers must face. Just to what extent these are angels who were given such authority by God, or whether the devil has reorganized them, we have no way of telling, but it is very likely that their power had been designated by God before they rebelled against Him.

These are not words to describe the power of the devil alone, but demonic, angelic powers which are the forces of the evil one.

1. "Principalities." These are princes, rulers, evidently the generals in Satan's forces. These may be many who God assigned with various, ruling powers throughout the universe, angels who are over other angels.
2. "Powers." These are demons with delegated powers, assignments, which enable them to do what they seek to do.
3. "The rulers of the darkness of this world," or probably better translated, the world-rulers of this darkness. These obviously have authority in the world to keep the world in darkness. Their power is equal to their job.
4. "Spiritual wickedness in high places," or wicked spirits in the heavenly realm. The use of "in heavenly places" in Ephesians must have some connection. Cf. 1:3. "Wickedness" has the same root as the evil one.

Concl: How ominous our foe! How helpless we would be against our enemies if it were not for the gracious provision which God has made for us.

What is our hope of victory?

Here are some verses which will be an encouragement to us in addition to what we have in Eph. 6:10-20.

Note:

- 1) John 14:30.
- 2) 1 John 4:1-4, esp. v. 4.
- 3) John 16:11.
- 4) 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; Jas. 4, 6, 7. An illustration: 1 John 2:13, 14.
- 5) Rom. 8:31-39.

ARMED FOR CONFLICT AND VICTORY
Ephesians 6:13

Intro: Let us keep reading and re-reading this whole section from verse 10 of chapter 6 to verse 20. And pray as you read that these truths will get into your heart and out into your life.

The first thing that should impress us with our text is that "we have heard that before."

That is the one thing that turns a lot of people away from messages they hear. They feel that, if they have heard a truth once, that is all that they need to hear it. But our Lord, the prophets of the OT as well as the Apostles of the NT, all teach us what we might call the ministry of repetition.

Cf. Paul in Phil. 3:1; 4:4. And Peter in 2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1, 2.

Even the Holy Spirit is engaged in this ministry. Cf. John 14:26.

So no teacher of the Word should be afraid to repeat. We all have very short memories. Of course, our repetition should not be because of our slothfulness. Every time we go over a truth that we have covered before we should make it fresh until it burns like a fire again in our hearts!

What was the repetition? Well, it is very similar to verse 11. But they are somewhat different. (Point out the differences.) Actually, though, they say the same thing.

Verse 13 follows very pointedly from verse 12. Verse 12 gives us a great reason for doing what Paul commands of us in verse 13.

Let us see what the verse means?

"Take unto you" could be translated, take it up. Westcott pictures it as lying at the Christian's feet. It has been provided, but every Christian must pick it up and get ready to use it. There is no question but that it will be needed; the only uncertainty is when.

The order means that they were to be fully occupied with the armor, getting it on, and learning how to use each part.

Illus: David could not use Saul's armor because he had not proved it. Cf. 1 Sam. 17:38, 39.

"The whole armour of God" is what Paul said in verse 11. No part can be neglected without giving a distinct advantage to the enemy.

The two verses that are used here are related, but they point to different aspects of the battle. Withstanding means to oppose, to resist. It speaks of that which we do while the battle is going on. This is the word which both James and Peter used when they wrote that we are to "resist the devil." Cf. Jas. 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9.

This is what Paul was doing with Peter in Gal. 2:11.

This is what men did with Paul -- see 2 Tim. 3:8; 4:15.

This is what the Jews could not do with Stephen. Cf. Acts 6:10.

"The evil day" is interpreted by Gurnall as meaning the day of our death. This undoubtedly is an evil day, and one in which the devil often attacks the people of God, but this certainly is not the only evil day. "The evil day" has to be any day when we are under assault from the powers of hell. The Bible tells us about Job's evil day. It also tells us about Peter's evil day. Our Lord had two evil days which are spoken of in Scripture: His temptation (Luke 4:13), and at the Cross (Luke 22:53). Undoubtedly each of these had more evil days than are referred to in Scripture, but these were recorded for us.

"To stand" here pictures the enemy as defeated and the Christian as having held his ground in victory. So, withstanding is the conflict; standing is the victory.

And so I trust that the meaning of the verse is clear.

Now I want to spend the rest of the time tonight on:

- 1) The lessons of the passage.
- 2) Some illustrations of our evil days.

I. THE LESSONS OF THE PASSAGE, OR VERSE: Eph. 6:13.

- A. This is our individual responsibility.
- B. This is also descriptive of the work of the church. We need to be preparing the people of God for their days of conflict with the enemy.
- C. The preparation needs to be made before the battle.
- D. The preparation needs to be thorough.

And since the armor has to do with the Word of God, this means that we must teach all of the Word. No part can be neglected without, as I have said, jeopardizing the safety of the people of God.

- E. We must be always on the alert. This is implied by the

repetition of this command, and by its intensity.

Our object is to be standing where we were when the battle began. We do not seek out the enemy. We have a job to do, and we must be about that job. This is where many Christians make a mistake. But we do need to be ready for the enemy when he makes an attack.

II. THE CONFLICTS WHICH WE CAN EXPECT.

It would be a good exercise for every one of you to sit down and make a list of the ways in which you have been tempted. The list that I am going to give you is not directly from the text, but it is from the Word of God, and they are conflicts which I have experienced in my life.

A. The battle for the truth.

This is more than a battle for the Bible. It is a battle for the doctrines of the Bible -- a battle in which we have been, and still are, engaged. People can be engaged in the battle for inerrancy, but not for the truth!

Cf. Paul vs. Peter in Gal. 2:11.

B. The battle for our faith.

Here I am referring to those situations where we are tried as to whether or not we will trust the Lord.

Cf. Abraham in Genesis 12 when he got into the land and found himself in a famine!

C. The battle for obedience to the Word of God.

This was the first battle that any human being had to fight. And the attack was all planned by the devil. He made it seem so reasonable for Eve to disobey God.

How often his hand can be seen when we begin to rationalize about the Word of God! Illus: A young lady, a Christian, who wanted me to marry her to a young man who was not a Christian. She said, "If you knew how God had led us together, you would never doubt but that we are to be married!" What was happening? She was being tested regarding her obedience to the Word.

D. The battle against prayer.

Oh, how the devil hates for us to pray! You can see his hand with Peter and James and John in the Garden of Gethsemane.

E. The battle to keep us occupied with ourselves.

Do you remember when the tide turned for Job? Cf. Job 42:10, "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job . . ."

Cf. Phil. 2:3, 4.

We may have been in some difficulty where we want to be vindicated for our own pride.

Or have you heard people even turn away from the ministry of the Word because they want their needs to be met. And it is apparent when they say that that they really do not know what their needs are! They are looking for excitement, a good time, not to have their souls edified.

F. The battle against the assembling of the saints.

If we are meeting together for instruction in the Word, for fellowship with the Lord, and to worship the Lord, so that we can go out and live for the Lord as witnesses in this ungodly world, the devil is going to do everything possible to keep us away, or to destroy our ministry.

Cf. Heb. 10:24, 25.

Think also of the Corinthian church.

And consider the condition of local churches today -- what they are doing as compared with what they should be doing.

Think of the people who have gone to church in the past, but who do not go anymore. Or those who have made professions of faith, but never attend the meeting of the Lord's people. Granted, they may never have been saved, but at least for a time they were going where they could hear the Word

How clever the devil is.

Concl: In the weeks ahead we are going to be getting into some of the most vital subjects in the Word of God. I want to help you know what the parts of the armor are, and how to put them on. Satan knows that his time is short, and he is going to be intensifying his work in the days ahead. We need to be ready for him, ready to "withstand" so that when the dust has settled we will still be standing.

GIRDED WITH TRUTH
Ephesians 6:14a

Intro: We come now to the point in our text where we begin to consider the various parts of the armor. There are six of them. (Point them out.) Obviously Paul would not mention them in a haphazard way, but would speak of the armour in an orderly fashion. We can assume, therefore, that he would begin with that which is basic to the armor, and proceed to the rest of the parts.

But let us look first at the wording of the part of verse 14 that concerns us just now.

For the fourth time Paul says, "Stand." The Christian is to be standing before every battle, and he is to still be standing when the battle is over. But the thought here is that he is to be constantly in a state of readiness for the approach of the enemy, and that is confirmed by the way the remainder of the first part of the verse reads.

See an illustration of this from Neh. 4:16-18. ("Habergeon" is pronounced, hab er-jun, and is an armor.)

It is not enough to own an armor with all of its parts, but the Christian is to have it on, to live in it, to be prepared for action at any time.

"Having your loins girt about with truth" could be a little clearer. Robertson says that the verb is a first aorist middle participle, and so should be translated, Having girded your loins with truth. The difference is that this latter translation makes it clear that we are to do the girding for ourselves, it is not something that someone else does for us.

To have it about the "loins" means that he is speaking about a large band which went around the waist, on the outside of the soldier's other clothing. This is what held his long garments in place when he needed to move freely without any hindrance.

There has been a lot of discussion about the meaning of the word "truth." The conflict over its meaning has ranged between those who hold that it means objective truth as compared with subjective truth. Even these terms seem to be defined differently. But, basically, it means, that there are those who hold that this has to do with the Word of God, objective truth, as compared with merely a person's idea about the truth. It seems that it has to be the former, that here we are dealing with the Word of God itself!

Cf. John 17:17; 8:31, 32.

This is "truth" in contrast with that which is false, true doc-

trine in contrast with false doctrine. And so to gird it on is to be bound by the truth. It means that we have the truth, that we know the truth, that we are living within the limits of the truth, and so are bound by it!

There is much more to this statement than we might first think.

The fact that it appears first means that there is no use going on unless this first thing is done.

This ought to make us ask immediately, What am I doing to gird myself with the truth of the Word of God? How well do I know it? Can I give expression to its doctrines? Am I living in the truth? How well prepared am I for an attack from the enemy?

We are living in a day when there is very little concern for the Bible, the Word of God, as the truth. I met a lady recently who left one church, and went to another, but she did not even know the name of the church that she was attending. She said it was Baptist or Methodist or something else! And she went to it just because it was close to her home. People do not really care about what is taught; they are more interested in whether or not it is entertaining.

There is a big move on which has been underway for some time now to get Christians together (and this is with so-called evangelicals). The big thing is unity. And they will tell you that we will not discuss doctrine! What did Paul think about doctrine? Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17. What did our Lord think about it? Take the teaching of Scripture as a whole, can you possibly come up with the idea that doctrine is not important?

As a result, Christians do not know the doctrines of Scripture. And since they do not know doctrine, they can be carried away by any teacher who comes along. Paul would have us know that there is a body of truth that is right, and everything else is wrong! And if we are going to be able to stand against the devil, if we are going to be ready for his attacks, we must know the doctrines of the Word of God.

This idea of readiness is taught in two other passages of Scripture using this same word (verb) that we have in Eph. 6:14a. Cf. 1 Pet. 1:13; Luke 12:35.

But now, since this subject is so vast, let us do one thing to make clearer in our minds what is involved in girding our loins with the truth. Let us see how the truth is referred to here in the book of Ephesians. I think that you will find that this will be of help to you. There are five references. Two probably do not apply (Eph. 4:25; 5:9), but the rest do. Let us look for a moment at the three. They are Eph. 1:13; 4:15; 4:21. They will show us what we need to be concerned about if we are to

I. EPHESIANS 1:13.

Here he refers to a major part of the Scriptures: "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation."

Now, if we are to be girded with the truth, it means that we must know the Gospel, and we must have believed the Gospel. And closely related to this is the assurance of our salvation. The knowledge of the Word brings assurance, and it is either the lack of knowledge or the lack of assurance (or both) that leaves us wide open for the enemy.

How well do you know the Gospel?

We are living in a day when men are satisfied with a partial Gospel, which becomes a false Gospel. Our approach to the Gospel is not like Paul's in Ephesians 1; we approach it almost entirely from man's point-of-view. We say that it is up to man. He determines his own destiny. God will save him if he wants to be saved, but we hear practically nothing about a sovereign God with a sovereign plan and with sovereign power sufficient to see that His sovereign plan is carried out in every detail!

What kind of a Gospel would you get from Eph. 1:3-14?

To deny any of these truths means that we are not girded with the truth.

But let us look at the second passage.

II. EPHESIANS 4:15.

Here Paul is talking about the ministry of the local church. What must it be? The truth must be spoken, which is the equivalent of saying that it must be taught; it must be preached--and "in love"!

Why are we to speak the truth in our churches? So that the people of God "may grown up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."

The local church has a tremendous responsibility in equipping the saints for the ministry (which includes all of the conflicts that we will have with the enemy). If the Word is not being taught, if it is being taught, but now "in love," then is it any wonder that the people of God are so pitifully helpless before the enemy?

Pray that we will never turn away from our calling. Pray that we will never be "choosey" about the truths that we do preach. And pray that we will constantly be improving in

our teaching. Thank God, He overrules for our weaknesses, and usually uses His Word in spite of us. But it is the Word that must be the sum and substance of our ministry in the church. Then the saints are to take the Word, and under the guidance and blessing of the Spirit of God are to put it on!

What about the third and last passage?

III. EPHESIANS 4:21.

Note two things about this verse.

A. The emphasis has to do with a holy life.

See the context from verse 17 to 24.

If we are being girded with the truth, then it means that we are concerned not only about knowing the Word, but about obeying the Word--because it is through Spirit-led obedience that we become holy.

If the devil is the accuser of the brethren (as he is), then this is where he gets to us! We need to be holy. Peter said we may suffer as Christians, but we must not suffer because we are sinning Christians!

But notice the other point which Paul made here.

B. The expression, "the truth is in Jesus."

Note what Paul wrote in the verse just before this:
"But ye have not so learned Christ."

You see, that which gives life and blessing to our teaching of the Word is that all doctrine, all the practical instruction, is related to Christ. Don't miss what the Lord said in John 14:6 when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: . . ." If we are to gird ourselves with the truth, then we must gird ourselves with Christ! When we are learning of Him, and loving Him, and trusting Him, and seeking to glorify Him, the devil and all of the demons of hell back off! What did Paul say in Rom. 8:37? "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." What did he say in Phil. 4:13? "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Cf. our Lord's words in Matt. 11:28-30.

Concl: This statement in our text is a command. Go now and make sure that you have the girdle of truth in place, and that daily you are making sure that this part of the armor is ready for battle!

THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER'S FOOTWEAR
Ephesians 6:15

Intro: The third part of the armour that is mentioned--for the feet!

This obviously has to do with the Christian's ability to stand against the enemy.

The parts of the armour not only suggest that which is for our protection, but also that which will be under attack. Thus now we come to focus our attention on one major part of the Word of God: "the Gospel of peace."

Let us make sure that we understand the verse.

I. THE MEANING OF THE VERSE.

"The gospel of peace," we should understand. "The gospel" is the message of salvation. Cf. Rom. 1:16. It is "of peace" because it is the means by which peace is established between God and the believing sinner.

To have "your feet shod" means two things:

- 1) That you should have the Gospel on--that is, that it should be your salvation! It speaks of one who is saved.
- 2) That this is where you stand. You will not be moved away from it.

"Preparation" means preparedness, battle-readiness. It means to be on the lookout for the enemy.

But, as Thomas Manton once wrote,
He calleth it also the preparation, , because
this peace breedeth firm and ready resolution to go
through all difficulties, crosses, and hardships: Acts
xxi. 13, "I am ready not only to be bound, but to die
at Jerusalem . . ." See Vol. 9, p. 215.

Thus, it means, No compromise!

This is the way the Reformers felt about the Gospel. It had been so corrupted in their day that it was not the same Gospel. Calvin once said,

You yourself know, or at least ought to know, what I am; that, at all events, I am one to whom the heavenly law of my Master is so dear, that the cause of no man on earth will induce me to flinch from maintaining it with a pure conscience (quoted by Thea Van Halsema in This Was John Calvin, p. 156).

Also, Luther's, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. So help me God." (Op. cit., p. 125.)

We can never know when the devil will attack. He wants to catch us unprepared and not expecting him. But here we have the Word of God to show us what we must do.

II. THE ESSENTIALS OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.

On what truths of the Gospel is there to be no compromise? None of them! All are absolutely essential. We cannot give ground on a single point.

Let us deal with them.

Let me give you another word from Luther:

When the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battle front besides is merely flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition of the truth of God except precisely that point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, then I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Him.

Where is the battle focusing today?

Please turn to the beginning of the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, chapter 1, verse 1: "the gospel of God."

The battle today centers on the extent to which God is involved in the Gospel, in its preaching, and in its effect!

Thus we turn first to

A. The Gospel of God.

He planned it freely, sovereignly, completely. He did not overlook a single part of it. And it is being carried out exactly as He has determined that it shall be.

Who can read Romans or Ephesians or the Gospel of John or any other passage or book that speaks specifically of salvation, and come up with any other idea?

Cf. Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3 ff.; John 6, 17.

B. The Gospel of Christ. Cf. Rom. 1:3, 4, 9.

A. His Person. See the Romans passage above.

1. His Deity.
2. His Humanity.

B. His Work.

1. His death.

- a. That it was real, historical.
- b. That it was substitutionary.
- c. That it was sufficient.
- d. That it was effectual, not a mere provision.

2. His resurrection.

- a. That it was real, historical.
- b. That it was victorious.
- c. That it was final.

C. "The Gospel of peace" -- the sole provision for the forgiveness of man's sin and for peace with God.

Cf. John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16.

D. The necessity of faith. Cf. Acts 16:30, 31.

The works of the Law cannot be added to it, and so all other works are also excluded.

The ordinances of the church are not a part of it.

No race nor any nation has preference over another.
It is only "by grace through faith."

Concl: Is this where we stand? Is this our hope for salvation?
Do we understand it, and is it so precious to us that
no one could turn us aside from it? Do we bear witness to it?

If we are without this part of the armour, we are not ready for
the battle!

THE SHIELD OF FAITH
Ephesians 6:16

Intro: We come to the fourth of the six parts of the armor which were mentioned by Paul.

A change is suggested by two things in the text:

- 1) In the first three parts the emphasis is on "having"; in the last three, "taking."
- 2) Here the Apostle said, "Above all, . . ."

The difference seems to be this: The first three are pieces that the soldier would wear continuously; the last three he would take when the enemy began to attack.

"Above all" is lit., in all, i.e., in all conflicts, or, on all occasions. In a sense it points to their importance, but not to make them more important than the parts of the armor already mentioned. The point is: You have the first three on; do not forget to take up these last three.

I. WHAT IS "THE SHIELD OF FAITH"?

It clearly means that our shield is faith!

The word, "shield," is taken from the root of the word door. Perhaps originally doors were used for shields because they could protect the whole body. Later on the shields were made in an oval shape and were more mobile, but still large enough to defend the whole body.

Note what this implies about the sufficiency of faith.

II. WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

Not just to stop them, but "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

"The wicked" here is the Wicked One.

Related to this is Paul's statement about "the evil day" in v. 13.

The Devil is called the Evil One because the effect of what he does is always evil; it is never good.

In the warfare of that day the "fiery darts" were used to injure by burning, and to render the enemy unable to continue in the battle.

III. WHAT ARE "THE FIERY DARTS"?

They are meant to hurt us and to render us incapable of

engaging in the battle. What does the Evil One throw in our direction?

For this we must turn to the Word of God. What did he do in Scripture? This is our only reliable source of information concerning our enemy.

Let me point out what any concordance will show you if you look up the verses which have to do with the Devil. It is this: Satan usually fights, and his forces fight, behind the scene. He does not like to be detected. And so there are very few passages in the OT which speak specifically of him. There are more in the NT. But we can be sure that he and his evil forces have always been busy in one way or another.

But we have enough given to us in the Scriptures to expose "the fiery darts" which he uses over and over again. We cannot take up all of the passages, but let me point out some of the most important ones.

One thing that can be said about all of them is that in one way or another they are aimed to disrupt a believer's attitude toward God.

A. With Eve -- the dart of doubt.

He questioned the Word of God, and the goodness of God.
Cf. Gen. 3:1 ff.

B. With Job -- the dart of injustice and suspicion of God.

Satan is mentioned in the first two chapters, and then no more! This is characteristic of the way he works.

Job could see no reason why he would have to suffer as he did, and so his attitude brought him to charge God with being unrighteous.

C. With David -- the dart of pride.

Cf. 1 Chron. 21:1 ff., and the numbering of the people.

D. With our Lord Jesus Christ -- the dart of impatience.

This is undoubtedly one of the most valuable of all the passages dealing with Satan. He set before the Lord all kinds of shortcuts to the kingdom. He wanted our Lord to ignore the ways of God.

E. With the Corinthian church -- the dart of an unforgiving spirit.

Cf. 2 Cor. 2:11.

F. With Paul -- the dart of discouragement.

Cf. 2 Cor. 12:7. "Buffet" means to hinder so as to discourage.

G. With all saints -- the dart of criticism.

Cf. Rev. 12:10.

IV. HOW DO WE TAKE "THE SHIELD OF FAITH"?

Notice how important this is. By it we can quench all of "the fiery darts of the wicked." Not one can get by "the shield of faith."

Well, this brings us back to the question, Where does our faith come from?

One of the greatest things that Satan has ever done is to make us think that our faith comes from ourselves. So the result is that Christians are led to believe that it is really up to them, and that maybe the Lord will help when the darts are coming in too fast for us to be able to cope with them.

What is the right answer? Where does our faith come from?

A. It comes from God. Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

B. It comes through the Word. Cf. Rom. 10:17.

This does not mean that we have a strong faith just because we read the Bible through every year, or even more than that. It means that we must understand the Bible, and believe it, and rest in its truth and in its promises!

C. It comes in answer to prayer. Cf. Luke 17:5.

D. It comes through our fellowship with Christ. Cf. Heb. 12:2.

We learn of Him. We love Him. We spend time with Him. And He imparts faith to us.

E. It comes by the Holy Spirit. Cf. Gal. 5:22.

How often we miss out with the Word and with the Lord and we miss out in prayer because we ignore the Holy Spirit!

Concl: Where do I begin to take "the shield of faith"? I begin

with the Word. That is the point of my contact with each Member of the Godhead, and it is through the Word that I am taught to pray.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones has what seems to me to be an excellent definition of what it means to take and to use "the shield of faith." This is what he says:

Faith here means the ability to apply quickly what we believe so as to repel everything the devil does or attempts to do to us . . . the quick application of what we believe as an answer to everything that the devil hurls at us (The Christian Soldier, p. 305).

The shield is for our defense, for our protection. The Word is also our sword as we shall see in a couple of weeks, but we need the Word to defend us.

Notice what the Lord did three times: Matt. 4:4, 7, 10.

Notice what Satan did: "Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him" (Matt. 4:11).

Notice the promise given to us by James: "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7b).

How do we resist him? How do we defend ourselves against his attacks? Peter said that "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Pet. 8b, 9).

May God enable us to understand our need for "the shield of faith," and what it means to take it!

THE HELMET OF SALVATION
Ephesians 6:17a

Intro: One thing that I have not stressed throughout our study of this passage is that Paul was writing in the plural.
— We are all to be armed. We are all involved in the battle. And we can assist and encourage each other.

The devil may at times single us out, and we are engaged in a personal struggle, but his objective is to get us out of the great army of the Lord. But it should help us to know that we are not individual soldiers standing alone, but we are a part of an army.

Tonight we come to the fifth part of the armor: "And take the helmet of salvation . . ."

It is a command. It is plural. It is specific: "the helmet of salvation."

How are we going to determine what it means?

Well, let us take a concordance and see if it is spoken of any other place in the Bible.

— We find that it is--in two places: Once in the OT: Isa. 59:17; once in the NT: 1 Thess. 5:8.

Both of these are significant passages because:

- 1) Isa. 59:17 clearly points to the doctrine of salvation.
- 2) 1 Thess. 5:8 speaks of "the hope," the ultimate objective of salvation.

Let us ask another question: Did Paul refer to salvation any other times in the book of Ephesians? Did he refer to this truth by name?

Again, the answer is, Yes. Cf. Eph. 1:13; 2:5, 8; 5:23.

What about "hope," the word that is used in 1 Thess. 5:8?

Yes, it also is used in Eph. 1:18 (cf. Col. 1:5); 2:12; 4:4.

Obviously "the helmet of salvation" is going to be an object of attack, as well as a protection against the enemy. But how?

— Let us begin with the word, "salvation," and then work toward the word, "hope," as we have it in 1 Thess. 5:8. We will confine ourselves for our use of the word salvation to the book of Ephesians.

I. EPHESIANS 1:13 -- THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION.

If we are going to put on "the helmet of salvation," we must be clear as to what the Gospel is! Not to be clear on the Gospel itself, makes it impossible for us to wear it as an "helmet."

— This takes us back in chapter 1 of Ephesians to verse 3 and right on up to verses 13 and 14. No part is unimportant!

Cf. also the emphasis in Isa. 59:17. (See vv. 12-21.) The children of Israel had departed from the truth! And so the Lord put on "righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head . . ."

Notice how many parts of the armor have to do with the Gospel! We must stand on it, and for it.

II. THE CONDITION OF SALVATION (Eph. 2:5, 8).

When Paul wrote, "And take the helmet of salvation," he was indicating that it was a gift, a gift of grace, an undeserved gift!

There must be real humility in putting on the helmet of salvation. There must be that continual realization of unworthiness.

— III. THE PERSON WHO SAVES (Eph. 5:20).

In our defense of the truth of the Gospel, there is always the danger that salvation will become to us no more than a doctrine. It is, however, the doctrine of the work of a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He does the saving. We do not have any part in it, not even in assisting Him to save us.

IV. THE "HOPE" OF SALVATION.

If there is one special emphasis that stands out above the others, it is this!

What is "the hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8)?

It has to do with the ultimate goal of our salvation -- salvation in the future tense.

— Cf. Eph. 1:18; 2:12; 4:4 -- the three times that the word is used in Ephesians.

This is our prospect and our expectation -- that we will be with the Lord and like the Lord!

Cf. Rom. 8:23-25.

See how it is used (the word, "salvation") in anticipation of a future fulfillment: 1 Pet. 1:3-9 (esp. vv. 5, 9); Heb. 9:28; Rom. 13:11.

Concl: Obviously the only people who can "take the helmet of salvation" are believers.

This is a part of our only defense against the devil. Therefore, there are four questions I need to ask and to answer in harmony with what we have seen tonight:

- 1) How well do I know the Gospel, and am I standing firmly for it?
- 2) Do I live in the consciousness that I do not deserve anything that the Lord has done for me?
- 3) How often do I praise the Lord that He has done all that is necessary for my salvation?
- 4) Am I really looking forward to the coming of the Lord and the changes that will take place in me at that time?

The right answer to these questions will show if we have really taken "the helmet of salvation."

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT
Ephesians 6:17b

Intro: This is really the only offensive weapon we have, unless we add to it, prayer.

Notice each part of the expression. We are now talking about the Word of God. Here Paul calls it, "the sword of the Spirit." What does he mean by this expression?

There are at least three ideas in these words:

- 1) That it originated with the Spirit.
- 2) That it remains the property of the Spirit.
- 3) That it is the Spirit Who will use it.

We will deal with these more in detail in a moment.

Next we notice that Paul called it, "the word of God."

This is not the expression that we normally would expect, but another word altogether: ῥῆμα. It is used also in Eph. 5:26.

"Philo makes the distinction of the λόγος and the ῥῆμα to be that of the whole and its parts (Leg. Alleg. iii. 16)" (Trench, p. 289, footnote).

Thus, it seems that Paul used this particular word to indicate two things about the Scriptures:

- 1) That they are the utterances of God, that which God has actually spoken.
- 2) That this is what they are in all of their parts--nothing is excluded.

We are to "take" this "word" as if we had heard, or were hearing, God speak it. We are to take hold of it, take it up, take it in our hand as we would a sword. God has provided it for us as a gift, and we are to take what He has provided and to consider it as it actually is.

But we also need to keep in mind our purpose in so taking it. It is to be used against the enemy, and the enemy is described in verse 12 of Eph. 6. Men, "flesh and blood," are not our primary enemies, but they most often are involved (although not all of the time).

So it means that we must be prepared to use the Word against the Enemy and his spiritual forces.

What is the Devil always trying to do?

To answer this question we must go to the Scriptures themselves. Cf. Gen. 3, Job 1, 2, and Matt. 4:1-11. What do we learn from

these passages? We learn:

- 1) That he wants to drive a wedge between us and God.
- 2) That, to do this, he seeks to discredit the only source of knowledge that we have about God and His will.
- 3) Therefore, he wants us to turn away from the Word of God, from believing it, from reading it, from having anything to do with it.

And so it is significant that the Devil actually wants to take "the sword of the Spirit" out of our hands!

Consequently, the only way we can oppose him is by using the very Word which he tries to take from us. Cf. 1 Pet. 5:8, 9; 2 Tim. 4:1-7, esp. v. 7; Tit. 1:13.

Having seen all of this, let us consider this part of verse 17 in two ways:

- 1) What it means to "take" it.
- 2) What it requires of us.

I. WHAT IT MEANS TO "TAKE" IT.

We are to "take" it as "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." Keep in mind what we have already pointed out by these expressions.

Needless to say, it matters a great deal how we "take" the Word, i.e., what we consider it to be!

Let me point out four things which are indicated by the words Paul used here:

- A. We must "take" it as having been given to us by the Holy Spirit. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:20, 21.
- B. We must "take" it as being in all of its parts the Word of God, equally the Word of God. Cf. 2 Tim. 3:16, 17.
- C. We must "take" it as requiring the ministry of the Holy Spirit if it is to be known. Cf. John 16:12-15; 1 Cor. 2:9, 10.
- D. We must "take" it as to be used the way the Holy Spirit intends for it to be used. Cf. Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; Isa. 55:10, 11.

II. WHAT DOES IT REQUIRE OF US?

If we are to "take" it, then it means that we must know it, believe it, obey it, and be prepared to use it (as the Holy Spirit intends that it should be used).

In all this, we must depend upon the Holy Spirit to teach us.

What does it require?

- A. Reading. Cf. Rev. 1:3.
- B. Hearing -- hearing it read, hearing it taught and preached.
Cf. Rev. 1:3; 2 Tim. 4:1-8; Eph. 4:11-16.
- C. Meditation. Cf. Josh. 1:8; Psa. 119:97; Psa. 1:2.
Meditation includes praying for illumination and understanding.
- D. Faith--faith in the Word, and in God through His Word.
Cf. Rom. 10:17.
- E. Obedience. Cf. Rev. 1:3.

Concl: We have yet to deal with the subject of prayer, but at this point it is important for us to know that we are taking the Word of God in all of its parts, learning it, enjoying it, believing it, and using it.

Are we?

Obviously we can do all of the rest, but, if we fail here, then defeat is certain.

We need to be reading the Word daily, after we have asked the Holy Spirit to teach us. And we do it with every intention that, by the grace of God, we will do what the Lord tells us to do, and be what He wants us to be.

May the Lord Himself teach us more in our own lives about what it means to "take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

THE COMMAND TO PRAY
Ephesians 6:18-20

Intro: One thing that a Christian has to learn is that obedience is not optional. This is brought out very clearly when he is portrayed as a soldier.

Therefore, there is no part of the armour that can be left off.
Neither can he fail to pray!

Note Samuel's words in 1 Sam. 12:20-25, esp. v. 23. When we begin to look upon prayerlessness as sin, we will be making progress in the right direction.

To fail to pray has to be considered as one of the two most basic sins in a Christian's life. The other is the neglect of the Word. And so it is very clear in this passage that failure to prayer is insubordination. The effect of it is that it will bring the disciplinary action of God Himself, and it will mean spiritual defeat for any believer, as well as those for whom he should be praying.

So, what Paul said in verse 18 was linked grammatically to the preceding verses, and is a part of all that has gone before.
We must pray!

And therefore it is important for us to understand our orders.

First, let me give you a literal translation of the verse:

With all prayer and supplication, praying at all time
(or, ^{always} every time) in the Spirit, and unto this (or, in this very thing) watching with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

The NASB has it this way:

With all prayer and petition pray (mg., praying) at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all saints.

The NIV is more of a paraphrase and does not follow the original text as well:

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

The NKJV:

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

The KJV: (Read.)

What I want to do tonight is to take verse 18 in particular and draw out of it certain principles regarding our praying as Christian soldiers which we need to be following daily. These are divinely inspired principles which we should understand and then practise faithfully.

There are ten of them.

I. THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER IS TO PRAY.

As a Christian he will pray, but pictured as a soldier he must pray. And he must pray not only because God has commanded it, but because he needs to!

II. HE IS TO PRAY FOR HIMSELF AND FOR OTHER SAINTS.

The verse in the original is clearly divided into two parts, and this is the reason.

III. HIS PRAYER IS TO BE TO GOD.

This is the meaning of _____ and its verb which are translated "praying" and "prayer" in our text. It is the common Greek word for prayer to God. Calvin taught this. Trench holds to this, as to Arndt and Gingrich.

In order to prayer to God, we need to know the kind of prayer that is acceptable to Him, and we must keep ourselves from any ritualistic or formal attitude toward prayer.

IV. HE IS TO PRAY ALL KINDS OF PRAYER.

This is the meaning of "all prayer."

What kinds of prayer are there?

- 1) Confession.
- 2) Worship.
- 3) Praise.
- 4) Intercession.
- 5) Petition.

V. HIS PRAYER IS ^{TO BE} BOTH GENERAL AND SPECIFIC.

This is brought out by the use of the two words for prayer: "prayer and supplication." (The former word is under III above; the latter word is _____.)

These two words are used together in Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5. In the LXX, Psa. 6:9; Dan. 9:21 ("prayer") and 23 ("supplication").

It is important that we be prepared to do both. There are

prayers that we can pray for ourselves and anyone else. But then there are other requests that apply to us or to certain individuals at specific times.

VI. HE IS TO PRAY CONTINUOUSLY.

This is indicated by the present tense of the participles, ""praying" and "watching."

Cf. 1 Thess. 5:17, "Pray without ceasing." We are not always on our knees, nor are we always speaking to God in prayer. But the word means that we must never stop praying. We do not take vacations from praying. Prayer must be an integral part of our daily life. It must be a regular habit.

VII. HE IS TO PRAY "IN THE SPIRIT."

In the Greek text "always" is linked with "in the Spirit." And so this is not a special way to pray on certain occasions but this is the way we are to pray at all times.

Cf. Jude 20,

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit . . .

Note that the order here is the same as in Eph. 6:10-20 -- the Word first, and then prayer in the Holy Spirit.

What does this mean? Let me suggest two simple answers to get you started:

- 1) It means to pray in dependence upon the Holy Spirit to lead you instead of depending upon yourselves. And this applies as much to your faithfulness in prayer as well as to the content of your prayer.
- 2) It means that your praying must be consistent with "the sword of the Spirit" which Paul had just mentioned in v. 17.

VIII. HE IS TO PRAY AS A SOLDIER ON GUARD: "watching."

It expresses the fact that you care. Just as a soldier may be on guard all night, the Christian soldier must be willing to forego sleep in order to pray.

This word is used in Heb. 13:17; 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27.

XI. HE IS TO PRAY PERSEVERINGLY.

This is different from what I mentioned under VI above. "With all perseverance" refers to the way that I pray about certain needs. I can keep on with the habit of praying, and yet give up on particular requests.

George Mueller prayed for one man for over 50 years, and

he was not saved until after Mr. Mueller died! That is praying "with all perseverance."

The verb of this word is used in Rom. 12:12; Acts 1:14; 2:42, 46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7; Rom. 13:6.

X. HE IS TO PRAY FOR "ALL SAINTS."

It is the "saints" who need prayer.

We pray for the saints we know. We pray for those in our church. But this expression means that we are to keep our hearts open to pray at least some times for people we do not always pray for.

Cf. Paul in Rom. 1:9; Col. 1:3, 4.

Concl: Here are the principles. Take them and examine your praying in the light of each one. Seek the help and guidance and blessing of the Holy Spirit. And then pray, acting upon them. The blessing of God will surely come to you, to those for whom you pray, and upon us as a church!

AN URGENT REQUEST
Ephesians 6:19, 20

Intro: These verses come at the close of what Paul has had to say about the Christian's armour--but it is a part of what he was saying.

There are obviously two things which the Devil hates, and hates intensely:

- 1) A holy life.
- 2) The preaching of the Gospel.

And when these two are combined in one person, you can be sure that there will be the strongest kind of opposition.

This was the kind of a person the Apostle Paul was.

Consequently we find many times in his Epistles when he requested prayer. He was not self-confident. He knew what he was doing (as Lloyd-Jones reminds us). And he knew the Satanic forces he was facing. Therefore, with all of his knowledge, with all of the blessing he had seen, with all of the people he had seen drawn to Christ, he still recognized that he needed the Lord's people to pray for him.

It is significant that with all he knew about the will of God and the sovereign purposes of God which could not fail, he spent so much time in prayer himself and was always asking others to pray for him. There was still hesitancy and apprehension in his heart when it came to the preaching of the Gospel.

Let us notice some things about our text, and then examine the text itself.

I. THE ONE MAKING THE REQUEST: the Apostle Paul.

This is a call for the Lord's people to pray faithfully for all who have been appointed by God to preach the Word. If Paul needed prayer, then no one is exempt!

Do you have a special list of the Lord's servants you pray for--pastors and missionaries?

II. HIS CIRCUMSTANCES.

- A. He was away from home.
- B. He was a prisoner in chains.
- C. He was not strong physically.
- D. In the word "ambassador" there is the suggestion that he was old.

Any one of these would have been an excuse for him to feel that he did not have to be as zealous in his work as he had been before.

And yet, not one of these was included in his prayer request to the Ephesian church!

III. HIS REQUEST -- because there was really just one!

Paul was concerned about his witnessing, his preaching.

These are the details of his request. It seems fruitless to argue about what he wanted "given" unto him. He needed all of these things which he mentioned, and his request means that he was absolutely dependent upon God for each part of the request, and also that he knew that God grants these in answer to prayer.

Cf. James' "ye have not, because ye ask not" (Jas. 4:2).

A. He wanted to speak with power!

This is the thought in the word, "utterance."

Cf. Acts 1:8.

B. He wanted the Lord to open his mouth.

This is why there is so little witnessing done, and we need to realize that it is something that we need to pray about.

C. He wanted to speak "boldly."

This is a word that is rich in its meaning. Look at the ideas that are included in it.

1. Basically it means, "free-speech"--not holding anything back.

Compromise with the truth is a temptation that is constantly facing the child of God, and especially the pastor. It is easy to hold back part. The Gospel is foolishness to the world, and we sense that as we witness.

Paul wanted to hold nothing back! He wanted to be able to tell it all!

2. It means to be clear and frank.

3. It means to speak with confidence and assurance.

But there was a fourth part to his request.

D. He wanted "to make known the mystery of the Gospel."

Here we have his message, but we also have his objective in preaching the message. "To make known" means that he was not going to be satisfied with preaching the Gospel; he wanted people to understand it and to believe it!

The request would seem to indicate that Paul felt that his time in prison was an official assignment from God-- that he was there because God intended some to hear the Gospel and be saved!

"The mystery of the Gospel" pointed to the glory of his message. That which had been given in part throughout God's dealings with His people, had not been given in its fulness. It was to be heard and to be understood, and this was the message which Paul had been appointed to give, and which he loved to preach--"That therein I may speak boldly as I ought to speak."

The word, "therein," is a translation of two words which could be rendered, that in Him, referring to the Lord. The commentaries do not seem to favor this, but there is such an example in 1 Thess. 2:2.

"Ought" = must. Paul had to speak the Gospel as he had expressed in his prayer, but he could not do it apart from the enabling grace of God!

Concl: Is this not one of the greatest lessons in witnessing-- that we fail in our testimony because we do not realize the opposition we face and the great need that we have for prayer. There is no other communication that is as difficult as telling people about Christ. The Lord will enable us to serve Him faithfully in preaching the Gospel only when we pray, and others pray, that we will fulfil the work that the Lord has given us to do.