

The Whole Armor of God

(Ephesians 6:10-15)

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The life of a Christian is actually a warfare in which the believer is beset by a cunning, artful, persistent foe in the Devil. Fortunately God has provided an adequate armor which will enable the Christian to emerge victorious in the conflict.

Be Strong in the Lord

Do you think there would be any difference in a woman's spiritual experience because of the way she treated her maid?

Is it not true that when we read the word "masters" in the Bible we generally think of men? Perhaps we think of a foreman working with day laborers. However, when Paul writes to "masters," he is talking not only to the superintendent of the mill, but also to the housewife who has a maid. He is writing to anyone who has an employee.

And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him (6:9)

When Paul writes this way, he is not warning me of losing my salvation, but of me missing my spiritual blessing. When Paul writes "Ye masters, do the same things unto them," what does he mean by "the same things"? We have noted above that Paul emphasized that if the believer were an employee, he should treat his boss as if he were dealing with Christ. At once some may say, "That is not practical, it will not work." In answer to all such I would ask, would you be blessed of God? Would you seek to be blessed spiritually? Remember Paul is speaking to believers.

The believer in all things should be considerate. He should not do anything outwardly just for show, but always from the heart, and for the sake of Christ Jesus. Why is this important? Because God sees, and He will not let the believer get away with treating someone else harshly. The Bible makes it clear from beginning to end. If a man actually is unkind to the poor, God will be unkind to him. If a man is actually harsh with those working for him, God will be harsh in working with that man. He will not bless any person who mistreats others. This is an important principle to remember.

Believers are to conduct management in such a way as to win the Lord's approval. Some years ago I read of an investigation being conducted into the way corporations were doing business. A corporation executive was asked why the corporation did certain things in a certain way. This man replied very simply, "You know corporations are not run for the glory of God." Someone may say, "That is terrible." But isn't it true? Many people would feel almost as if you were joking if you asked them to run their business for the glory of God.

Yet this is the very reason that it is so important for us to realize that if God is to bless us, we must conduct our business in such a way that the Lord will approve our actions. I can remember an occasion when I tried to do something for people working for me and others would say to me, "You don't have to act that way toward your hired man. You pay them their wages, etc." But I was always mindful of that passage in the Bible which says that the godly man has regard for the life of his beasts. A believing man would not kick a dog, or beat a horse. Certainly he would not put his employees through unnecessary hardships.

Paul continues to say, "Do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening." In other words, don't threaten them with the loss of their jobs if they don't do what you say. Instead, be kind and considerate. Paul will tell you why. You should remember you have a "Boss" in heaven and He sees you. You may have men working under you here, but you work under the Lord up there.

Paul has discussed in this portion of Scripture three pairs of people – six classes of people; wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters. He has pointed out for each one of them what they should do to be filled with the Spirit. If I am to have the blessing of God, I need a Christian walk. As someone has said, I must put feet on my prayers. I must be saturated with Scripture, "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." I need to practice thanksgiving, "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father," and I must submit myself to others. These are the practical ways in which one can actually prepare for the blessing of God.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). Paul is saying, "I have no question about your personal faith in Christ; but, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. You will need strength to yield yourself, you will need strength to deny yourself, you will need strength to accept Christ as Lord over your life and your activities, you will need strength to obey Him." And I must let Him live His life in me. I must depend upon His almighty power that He showed when He raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord." Not in myself, not in my will power, but in the Lord. "And in the power of his might." May God help each one of us to do these things that we might be blessed by the Holy Spirit in our heart.

The Whole Armor of God

If a person received Jesus Christ as savior, would he need to fear the devil?

Paul has been setting forth in the Book of Ephesians what is true about being a believer. He began by pointing out what has been arranged for the believer in Christ. He spoke of the spiritual blessings that the believer has in Christ. Then he showed how the believer could respond to walk worthy of his name as a Christian.

Under the leadership of specially gifted ministers – people with divine enablement, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers -the believer can grow into maturity, into the fullness of the stature of Christ. Paul pointed out that to do this he needs to practice putting off the old human nature, and putting on the new, which is the spiritual nature in Christ. This could best be done if he were filled with the Holy Spirit. Then Paul set out steps to take to achieve this blessed condition: the heart and mind should be filled with Scripture; the believer should practice thanksgiving; believers should submit one to another. To help believers understand, Paul pointed out specifically what six different groups of people ought to do: wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters. The apostle described how each one would be submitting himself in his situation as part of the way in which he could be filled with the Holy Spirit of God.

All this would seem to be a complete presentation and one could wonder why Paul did not stop at this point. He was giving them guidance for living. Now he undertook to help them to put into practice that of which he had written. With reference to a believer living in this world, Paul would say, "There is an enemy."

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (6:11).

Armor is what a soldier puts on when he fights. In ancient times when fighting was hand to hand, the armor would enable him to turn aside the blows of the enemy. "Put on the whole armor of God" means see to it that you are completely covered and protected, so that you "may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Paul had no question in his mind about the devil being real. The believer would be very well

advised to remember that the devil is active and hostile. He is cunning, and is a lot smarter than any human being. God can and will protect believers for which they can thank Him. He will do it in His way.

With reference to the devil, we should never forget that Michael, the archangel, durst not rail at him. Whatever you do, do not joke about the devil.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

"Be sober" – get serious minded about this thing. Do not be light about it – "be vigilant" – keep your eyes open because of your adversary. We have an enemy, someone that means to do us harm, "the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." It would be a whole lot safer for us if he were merely a lion; that would be enough to scare us by our just looking at him. If he were only something you could actually identify then you could be careful. The trouble is he is a liar. He is smooth. He can be found sitting in church, pretending to be pious. In the Book of Revelation where the seven churches are referred to, two of them were called the place "where Satan is." He can be in the church, he can be in the pew. I have spent many years in the pulpit so I am going to take the liberty to tell you that he can also be in the pulpit. Remember that when the Lord Jesus Christ was with His own disciples, He turned around to talk to Peter, one of the best men He had, and said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (Mark 8:33).

Paul has in mind that the devil is real and he is not bound at this time. He is prowling and he is after us to do us harm. He is cunning. He comes at us always on our weak side. Everyone has some weakness. An old farmer one time was heard to pray: "Lord, prop me up on my leaning side." That is how it is with many of us. Well, Satan knows where that is. He knows exactly the weakest spot and that is exactly where he will attack. We should keep in mind, not only does he make a direct attack, but he also seeks to affect us through other people. Satan is the accuser of the brethren. The next time we feel like criticizing someone, let us keep in mind that is exactly what the devil would do.

I remember when I was a pastor that instances occurred when people in the congregation said unkind things about one another. A word of criticism has a way of always get ting back to the person involved. It gets around and causes always more trouble. Sa tan is powerful, no man, woman, or child is strong enough to face the devil alone.

When Jesus of Nazareth warned Peter that Satan planned to sift him like wheat, the Lord Jesus said to Peter "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (Luke 22:32). Jesus of Nazareth would not allow Peter to withstand that testing alone. Our Lord is in heaven now praying for us, which is a great comfort to all believers. God has made provision for believers for this very battle against the enemy, and He has made these provisions as we read in Ephesians by preparing a certain armor that the Christian can put on to help him in self-defense against the devil. Such armor will include truth, "having your loins girt about with truth"; righteousness, "the breastplate of righteousness"; the Gospel of peace, "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"; and faith, "taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

God has given us the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit. This is the armor that the believer is to put on in this great contest where he is fighting for his life against a vicious enemy that wants to harm him. Paul urges believers to put on the whole armor of God, not just part of it, but all of it. Believers need total protection. It is a life and death struggle that we may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil. Satan is so formidable. He is such a powerful enemy that the only chance of survival that I have is by my putting on the whole armor of God. I can rejoice to remember that when I fail to get it all done, the Lord is more gracious than I can think. He can do more for me than I can ask or think. Even if I do not get the whole armor on, I can run to Him for safety. "For Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees." When we get on our knees and look up into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are safe in Him.

We Wrestle Against Rulers

Can you understand that active opposition makes living much harder to endure?

Doing anything at all involves effort. When difficulties and opposition arise, it is harder. One result of man's original sin as told in the story of Genesis is the curse that is pronounced upon the ground. The statement was that man should eat his bread in the sweat of his brow. Man was put in the garden to dress it and keep it. He was going to have to work.

It is such a mistake for anyone to think if we just do our work everything will be all right. Actually the very work we want to do is going to run into obstacles and hindrances. That makes the task harder. Sometimes our enemies seem to be personal. We seem to feel that some people just have it in for us. But the greatest enemy that a believer has is an unseen foe, the devil.

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

Paul points out that we face a cunning, powerful enemy, and we must contend with a host of his evil spirits who are against us.

In another Scripture Paul wrote like this:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

This places the struggle that the believer has largely in the spiritual world. Paul instructed the believers at Ephesus about this:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places (6:12).

The greatest enemy is in the spiritual world where we have to face the devil and his hosts. We need help. We cannot cope with the devil in our own strength. We are just no match for him. We are not wise enough, strong enough, nor good enough. The conflict is unavoidable, and continuous. The devil is on all sides, doing everything he can to keep us from walking with the Lord. This conflict is not brought on by our thinking about it. Every now and again someone will say, "Well, I just don't care to think about these things, and I just wish you would not talk about them." This reminds me of some people who do not want to keep a thermometer around, because they do not want the weather to get cold. The devil is very real. The fact is, we are in this fight whether we want it or not. And we have much to lose.

The devil raises questions about the ways of God. Can God be trusted? If the suggestion comes into your heart that God is not favoring you, that He is against you; such thoughts can shake you right down to your heels, believe me. Then again the devil will flatter us by appealing to our own self-importance. The idea will come to us that we do not deserve anything bad or harsh. This is Satan's way of encouraging a grievance against God for letting this or that happen to us. Satan may suggest the threat of some rival at work, suggesting that Jones over there is getting ahead of you. Someone is getting an advantage at work, at school. We must be so careful about this, lest we be deceived and act in ways that would actually be harmful.

Stand Therefore

Do you realize that in our spiritual warfare we must take a positive stand?

Some years ago there was a president of the United States who was widely known for his terse statements. On an occasion when he went to church without his wife, and then returned home, she asked about the sermon. "What did the preacher preach about?" He answered her, "Sin." "What did the preacher say

about it?" "He's agin it." Here is a fine clue as to what believers might do. Take a position in spiritual things and stand there. People know of me as a Bible teacher. I pray there is no doubt in anyone's mind where I stand. If one were to ask: "How does he feel about the Bible ?" I hope he would soon find out: "He believes it!" "How does he feel about the reality of the things of the Gospel?" "He trusts them." These things should be clear and to the point.

There is a common idea that if a person were a believer he would offer his testimony softly, gently, tentatively, with a sort of "with your permission." If challenged, he would be expected to be in some confusion, to be apologetic, perhaps embarrassed and certainly not to be too bold. Now there will be situations in which the believer can show humility and gentleness, but this in no way would mean weakness. A man can be humble without being weak. In all that is related to public witness or testimony, it is always a good thing for a person to be clear in his stance. "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" (1 Cor. 14:8).

It is well to keep in mind that the believer's public testimony is carried on in enemy territory. Believers face a public that is more dominated by Satan than it realizes.

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (2 Cor. 4:4).

The believer must stand firm, with a clear note on God, Christ, and Calvary .He must keep it clear in his message that Christ Jesus died for sinners, and that He arose from the dead. He must speak firmly on the truth that Christ is now in the presence of God, that He is praying for us; and praise His Name, He will return! These things have been revealed, and they all come together. The believer should affirm them as they are. To be sure, Satan wants to interfere with the communication of the Gospel. He will oppose any faithful presentation of the Gospel.

In the parable of the Sower and the Seed, Jesus of Nazareth taught that if a seed falls by the wayside the fowls of the air come to pick it up. And when He gave the interpretation of that He said that if anyone hears the Word and does not understand it, the evil one comes and takes that message out of his heart. Satan steals the spoken Word away just like the birds eat the exposed grain that is lying on the road. Any teacher or preacher should beware lest he allow himself to be sidetracked from his purpose. If he is up there to preach and to teach the Word of God, everything else is beside the point. I am saddened when I think of how much time earnest sincere people lose by arguing and discussing matters that do not matter. Believers should beware lest controversy over interpretation of Scripture confuse the minds of the people who are listening. Feelings can be aroused, emotions can be aroused that actually hinder communication.

Paul has reminded the Christians at Ephesus that there is an active enemy opposing their testimony, whom they must withstand. The believer must stand firmly on the position that he has taken in the conflict.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (6:13-15).

The believer must take a positive stand: "You don't mean to say you believe the Bible?" "Yes, I do." "You don't believe the story of creation?" "Yes, I do." "Well now do you believe that Christ Jesus literally arose from the dead?" "Yes, I do." "Do you think He is in heaven now?" "Yes, I do." "Do you think He is coming again?" "Yes, I do." When the argument is over and the feelings have quieted down, there is a tendency on the part of a believer, in goodwill and in humility to retreat. But this is no time to be faint-hearted nor to yield in mistaken modesty. In matters of personal preference, comparing person with person, the believer will esteem others better than himself. But in matters pertaining to the Gospel, to the truth as it is about Jesus Christ, there must be no retraction, no yielding to the enemy.

Peter and John were humble men, and they were meek toward their persecutors. They never fought back when they were whipped, but they persisted in preaching. They were warned not to preach. They said, "You'll have to judge for yourselves what you are going to do about it, we can only do what God told us to do." The preaching they did brought them a beating and they took it. They did not fight about it, but they stayed with it. Paul knew that the ordinary believer does not have the strength for it, so he outlined how he can prepare himself. Paul says he should "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." The believer should stick to the truth. "Having on the breastplate of righteousness"; making sure that he is doing the right thing, and then remaining steadfast. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Believers would like to live at peace with people. If they cannot, they regret it, but on matters of the Gospel believers must stand and stay there. May the Lord help us each one to be courageous and trust in Him no matter how weak we are personally, and stand where His truth is.

Praying Always

(Ephesians 6:16-24)

All the parts of the armor of God are described as protection to be used in defense with one exception: the sword of the Spirit. This is the only offensive weapon provided and it is adequate, being the Word of God. The one activity that is to be performed constantly is praying, especially for one another, and for those who minister the Gospel.

Shield of Faith

Can you understand that a believer who is trusting Christ for salvation will need to exercise his faith in daily living?

It is true that we are saved by faith: wonderfully, gloriously true. A soul can accept Jesus Christ as his Savior, and never have any reason to doubt his destiny. God will see him through. "He which hath begun a good work in you will [complete] it" (Phil. 1:6).

This was the pattern of my own experience. After years of seeking in which I read the Bible and prayed, and went to church and listened, I came to faith in the course of speaking about the Gospel to other Christians. There came a time on one glorious night when I was able to believe. I was able to accept that Jesus Christ died for me. It was a wonderful thing and I have rejoiced in it ever since. I never needed to add to that gracious, glorious experience as far as my faith in God and in Christ Jesus was concerned. But I learned later, and now we are going to see it as Paul points it out here, that it is also true that a Christian can and should live by faith.

The famous Scripture, "the just shall live by faith" includes both these ideas. When we say "the just" we do not mean a naturally good man. We know that there is none good, no, not one. When we use the word "just" we mean "justified." The believer is justified by faith in Jesus Christ. This justified soul shall live. Day in and day out, noon and night, seven days a week, he shall live by faith. As a believer goes through his daily experience he is faced again and again with practical issues, where he has to do things that challenge him to look to God for help, to believe in the living God. Paul speaks of believers receiving "the gift of faith." In 1 Corinthians, in the 12th and 14th chapters, we read that one of the gifts of the Spirit is faith. But did the believers not have faith when they became believers? They certainly did! But it seems possible that a good many people miss a greater blessing here because they think all was taken care of when they accepted Christ.

Let us note the example when the apostles asked Jesus of Nazareth why they had not been able to deliver the afflicted boy from the demon that possessed him. Jesus of Nazareth told them that it was because of their unbelief. These were apostles. Their unbelief was not that they did not believe in Him as their Savior. It is possible that in that particular instance when they were exercising themselves to deliver that boy they were not believing in the living God as they could have been.

On the last journey to Jerusalem when the disciples were walking along with the Lord Jesus and He came to the fig tree and found no fruit on it, He cursed it. The next morning as they were again walking by there they noticed that the fig tree had begun to wither. They drew His attention to it. He said at that time, "Have faith in God." They already believed in God, and that He, Jesus of Nazareth, was the Son of God. They were following Him. What then did He mean when He said, "Have faith in God"? When we pray, when we enter into an exercise of our will in obedience to God, we need to have faith in God. We must exercise a certain functional faith in Him.

On one occasion the apostles, when they saw things that had happened, made the request, "Lord, increase our faith." They felt the need of an ever deepening relationship with God in all that they did. They wanted greater confidence in God, more commitment to Him that would guide them in their actions. Such a functioning faith would guide and strengthen them. It appears that this is an aspect of faith that could be called "operational," in that it enables a believer to avail himself of the help that comes from God. This is evidently the kind of faith that Paul has in mind in chapter 6:16: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

"Taking the shield of faith" calls to mind the use of military equipment. The shield was like a large lid the soldier could move around in front of him to keep him from being hit by darts and arrows. The shield could be moved to cover his body or his face as needed. This was for protection. It was not used to attack anyone.

In a real sense this is the sort of shield spoken of here by the apostle. "Taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The "dart" was somewhat like an arrow. It could be dipped in pitch and set on fire. Thus when this dart or arrow would be shot it would actually have a burning tip, that could cause real damage. The shield was used to ward off these missiles.

In daily living, Satan will attack us. He will suggest things. For instance, he will tell us, "You can't depend on anything." Then we should use our shields. What will such a shield be? To remember that God is faithful, that would be your faith. Satan might say, "Don't trust Providence. Things are all against you." Then we would swing around our shield of faith and catch that "dart" on this: "God is merciful." That will put the fire out. The devil may say to us, "There is no hope for you." Then we will swing around the shield: "God is gracious." That will put the fire out for that one. "Your sin condemns you." But we have our shield of faith, which we swing around and catch that dart, "Christ died for our sins." That will put the fire out. "You can never be any better than you are now. You are no good and you can never be any better." Then we will swing around the shield of faith, remembering "Christ rose from the dead and because He arose, I am going to rise too."

Perhaps I have someone acting evil, doing wrong to me. I wonder what in the world I can do about it. That wrongdoer is flaunting his evil actions against me. What can I do? The thought comes: "I have been so wicked, there is no hope for me." Then I can bring this shield of faith: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). Or someone will say, "You are being blessed now, but wait until you are old, weak and alone." Then I can raise my shield, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5b). These darts, these flaming arrows, these thoughts, can be hurled at me as missiles, to undo, disturb, and distress me. I can catch those on the shield of faith, which is my faith in God based on His Word. The Word of God will put the fire out and I can be at peace.

Sword of the Spirit

Have you ever realized that for a believer the only weapon he has with which to attack the enemy, is the Word of God?

In the Book of Ephesians, Paul has recognized that God has arranged for the believer to be guided, to become more mature in Christ Jesus. To this end God has arranged that the believer should have the Holy

Spirit, and be filled with Him for his daily living. Paul understood that even with this background, there would be spiritual conflict. The believers have an enemy: a vicious, active, cunning, capable enemy, an adversary who is against them. Paul points out that because of this the believer should put on the whole armor of God. This armor was provided for protection. But in addition to the armor there is given to the believer one weapon for attack, and that is the Word of God. " And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). As the believer engages in conflict Paul tells him how to put on the whole armor of God. The concluding features are the helmet protecting the head, the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Let us look for a moment at the helmet protecting the head. The head contains the brain where, among other things, the process of thinking takes place. It is important to understand that if my ideas are false, biased or one-sided, my conclusions will also be wrong. So salvation is what I need to have to protect my thinking. Salvation is the helmet to protect the head. Salvation is the work of God through Jesus Christ. When I call to mind what God has done through Jesus Christ, when I understand the relationship I have with Christ Jesus by faith, then the mind is protected from errors that could be introduced. Everything that comes to mind then is checked by the revelation in Christ. After I have once known Him, when any thought comes to tell me anything, I consider it in the presence of Christ. If it is acceptable to Him, I accept it; if not, out it goes.

The Gospel is a message to be believed. In the Gospel all men are the creatures of God, made by Him. All men are responsible to Him for their own conduct. The Gospel is to those who will need help. All of them have done wrong. All of them are now doing wrong. Some of them do not know how to do right. These men need help and so the Gospel comes to them. The Gospel is grounded in certain events in the life of Jesus Christ. There isn't any such thing as the Gospel apart from telling the story of Jesus Christ. The Gospel brings to mind that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself; that Jesus of Nazareth was the Son of God, and came into the world to give His life a ransom for many. Christ died on Calvary's cross for sinners. God accepted that death as a substitute sacrifice for sinners and, on the basis of it, He will forgive anyone who accepts Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord. Christ Jesus was buried. He arose again the third day according to the Scriptures, He was seen, and He ascended into heaven in full view of them all. He is now in the presence of God praying for us, and He is coming again. This is the Gospel.

The central idea of the Gospel is the resurrection. This is absolutely essential. If a man confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes in his heart that God has raised Him from the dead, he shall be saved. The Gospel that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 is grounded in certain events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. This Gospel, these events, are interpreted by certain historic documents called the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and later the New Testament. The Gospel story of Jesus Christ is verified by the testimony of countless millions of people who have believed and have been saved, and is now demonstrated in the lives of believers. This is the whole truth of salvation which I must get into my mind. It will be like a helmet. It will protect me from wrong thinking.

Into our hands is put the Scriptures, the written Word of God. God has revealed in the Scriptures the nature of creation, of heaven, of His law, and the nature of His grace. These are given to the believer. This is the one weapon with which the believer can attack the enemy. The believer confronts the lies of Satan with the truth of God. Here the believer can stand. Satan will use someone to say, "There is no hope. Look around, it is just a hopeless situation. This world is just ruined." The believer can see all this, but he realizes that he has the Word of God. The Scriptures are in his heart. The Scriptures confront the bad situation by saying God can raise the dead. When the heart is filled with fear, the believer has the Gospel telling him "Fear not, for I will be with thee, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." If I feel uncertainty around me, as a believer with the Scripture in my hand I can give a firm word. There is a flat statement from God that I can put over against all the uncertainty of men. Around me may be a storm at sea, but as a believer I have in the Scriptures a compass to follow, to guide me directly in the will of God.

This is fighting with the sword of the Spirit. I am not going to kill anyone with this, but I am going to answer the lies of Satan. I am going to put the enemies to flight, because actually as over against everything I have the plain Word of God which is my weapon for attacking the lies of the enemy.

Praying Always

Can you see how praying on the part of a believer is an important service that he can render?

Praying always sounds proper when a believer's way of living is discussed. Being a believer and living under God you would think praying would come just normal and natural. There is no doubt that believers pray, and that praying can become routine. One prays at certain times about certain things, and all too often the times become more brief. There can be praying in an emergency. If a believer had real trouble, he would naturally turn to God to pray. Unfortunately this is the sum of praying for many. How often it is I wait until I am in trouble before I pray. I need to pray in order that I might avoid trouble. I need to pray for each day, and in each day to pray for each other.

After Paul had set forth a sketch of all the blessings for the believer in his letter to the Ephesians, and explained the wisdom of God in bringing His will to pass, he then showed how believers could walk worthily of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; and how they could grow in grace and in knowledge. Then Paul sketched the provision which God has made for the believer's victory in living. He tells how the Christian should put on the whole armor of God to protect himself.

After this Paul spells out what the Christian should do and that is to pray.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak (6:18-20).

With everything that is in the Bible in hand, what are we to do? We are to pray! Pray always! The believer is told that he should always be practicing this exercise of praying. For the believer there will be repeated opportunity to deny himself, that God's will might be done. No one is able to see the will of God in his own strength, or wisdom. Nor would he be able to obey it in his own strength and his own wisdom. The believer needs to have the blessing of God. Paul tells us to pray. There is a constant need for the grace of God that He gives freely when He is asked.

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth (Luke 11:9, 10).

What is going to happen to the person who doesn't ask? If I don't ask, I will not have. James makes this clear: "You have not, because you ask not" (James 4:2). The Lord gave a wonderful promise if I will but do something about it. If I will just ask and seek and knock. I must ask, I must pray. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." In every situation does not mean sixty minutes in every hour, twenty-four hours in every day, and seven days in every week, constantly, but "always" does mean in any and every situation.

"With all prayer and supplication in the Spirit" means as led by the Holy Spirit of God. I will be prompted by His Holy Spirit.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom. 8:26).

When I pray in the Spirit, I pray as I am inwardly prompted to pray.

"And watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Note the order of this: praying and watching thereunto. Watching my own heart and my own weakness and praying for the grace that I need. The emphasis is praying always in every situation as led by the Holy Spirit, and watching

thereunto. This means to pray to Almighty God and then to look to see how the tide of the battle is going. When I am praying for something that I feel the Spirit wants done, I have confidence that God wants it done. So I ask for it, and then I look – "watching thereunto." I look to see how the tide of battle is going, since I am praying for all saints. The Holy Spirit will lead me to care for other believers. As I see their need, feel their challenge, and I sense the danger that they have and the weakness that they have in themselves, I care for them and pray for them.

"And for me," Paul says to these Ephesian Christians, "pray for me that utterance may be given unto me." Notice, Paul did not ask that they pray that he might be comforted. He was not urging them to pray that he could be helped, just because he was weak. He wanted them to pray that he might be able to do what he was to do. He was involved in things. The Lord had things He needed done. With this in mind, they were to pray. Paul wanted help that he might be ready and able to do the will of God, so he wanted them to pray for him. It was for this kind of preaching that he had been put into prison.

Now he wants grace while he is there in prison to know just what he is to do. Should he not pray for himself? Certainly, and undoubtedly he did. Jesus of Nazareth prayed for Himself, and so should I. But the thrust in this passage "praying always with all prayer and supplication for all saints" is to pray for others. The armor is for me. The sword is in my hands. But the burden of my praying is for other people – "for all saints." Yet Paul specifically requested that they should pray for him. Not that he should be delivered from the challenge, and not that he should be spared any hurt or any harm, but that he should be strengthened and guided to do his task well. Twice he requested that "I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Paul was seeking the help of God to obey His will.