

Part One:
The Believer's Armor and the Spiritual Battle
Ephesians 6:10-20

Bill Fallon

Introduction:

In order to determine the correct interpretation and acceptable applications, the background and the context must be carefully considered. Even though the cults are notoriously guilty of the error of neglecting this principle, that does not excuse us from the same responsibility.

Background:

The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians was written about 62 AD by Paul while he was imprisoned, probably in Rome. He had been to Ephesus briefly during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-22), and stayed there for three years during his third missionary journey (Acts 20:31). Paul performed miracles there (Acts 19:11), for God's glory (Acts 19:17,20), and to vindicate his authority (II Cor. 12:12; Heb. 2:4). God's good news of salvation spread throughout much of Asia as a result of Paul's faithful proclamation of it, both publicly and privately (Acts 20:20). In this area Paul had 20/20 spiritual vision .

Paul warned the Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17), whom God had made overseers of the Church (Acts 20:28, 29), that after his departure "grievous wolves" would enter in, "not sparing the flock." It appears that the Church ultimately collapsed, not from an overt doctrinal heresy but from a more insidious and "acceptable" compromise.

About 30 years later John writes of Jesus' assessment of the Ephesian Church (Rev. 2:1-7). Though they had labored and stood for the truth, they had lost their first love. The Divinely-given remedy for this seemingly-minor but potentially lethal problem is found in verse 5:

1. **Remember** - from where you have fallen.
2. **Repent** - change your mind.
3. **Repeat** - do the first works.

The alternative would be that God would remove the Church (v5, cf. 1:20). Apparently they did not heed God's admonition as today we see the Christian Church practically nonexistent in that area of the world. I believe that the same admonition is to be applied personally and corporately to us today.

Context:

The Epistle is divided into two major portions according to the subject matter. Chapters 1-3 are mainly doctrinal in content and chapters 4-6 are primarily practical. Some ways to summarize these two sections are:

Chapters 1-3	Chapters 4-6
Our Belief	Our Behavior
Our Calling	Our Conduct
Our Position	Our Practice
Our Heritage	Our Habits
Our Possession	Our Profession
Our Resources	Our Responsibility

No matter what mini-outline we use, it will help us to understand the thrust of the book if we remember that the two main divisions consist of: what God has done, and what we are to do. This order is appropriate as we cannot have right living without right doctrine.

An example of the doctrinal portion would be illustrated by conducting a study of the first three chapters and noting every instance of what we have or are “in Christ,” “in Him,” or “in whom.” (e.g. 1:3,4,7,10,11,13,17,20; 2:6,7,10,13,21,22; 3:6,12). Great promises abound for the individual believer and for the Church collectively.

It is essential at the beginning of this study to establish to whom Paul is speaking concerning these spiritual blessings. Many people assume that they will go to heaven because they have been “religious” or have led a “good” life. God says that “...*there is none righteous, no not one*” (Rom. 3:10), and that “...*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 3:23). We may have done more good things than our neighbor but, by our works, we do not have the righteousness required to enter a sinless heaven. Titus 3:5, states, “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.*”

That is what Paul is saying in the context of Ephesians. Eph. 2:8,9, states, “*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*” This is a clear statement that contradicts man-made religion, including much of what is called “Christianity.” If we trust in Jesus only, without polluting His perfect payment for sin by adding our sinful efforts (Isa. 64:6), we can know without a doubt that we have eternal life. Let us see what I John 5:13 tells us and does not tell us, “*These things have I written unto you that believe (not work, pay, promise, turn your life around, be baptized, etc.) on the name of the Son of God (not your religion, good works); that ye may know (not think, hope, guess) that ye have eternal life,...* (not life until you sin again, mess up, or stop believing).” It is only after establishing that we are saved by faith in Him can we then proceed to Ephesians 2:10, “*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before ordained (prepared) that we should walk in them.*” Thus the last three chapters of imperatives intended for the one who has trusted in Christ can now be applied to us.

Chapter four begins with a “therefore.” In effect, Paul is saying, “In light of all that has just been presented; i.e. what we have and are in Jesus, let us now “*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.*” Many more practical exhortations follow. (“Vocation” here is usually translated “calling.” It is a noun that comes from the verb “calling” used in the same verse. “Vocation” and “called” are identical to the “calling” and “called” of 4:4).

Chapter four then presents the ministry gifts to the Church - apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor/teachers (4:7-11) and their purpose - for the perfecting (maturing) of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ff. (4:12-16). The walk of the believer as a new man in Christ is described in 4:11 through 4:32. The walk of the believers who are “*followers of God as dear children*” (5:1) is portrayed in 5:1-17.

5:18 seems to both conclude the previous section and introduce the next. “...*but be filled with the spirit.*” Being “filled with the Spirit” simply means to be “influenced” or “controlled” by God’s Holy Spirit. We are talking “yieldedness” or “obedience.”

Scofield briefly outlines the balance of the book as:

- The inner life of the Spirit-filled believer 5:19,20
- The married life of Spirit-filled believers as illustration of Christ and the church 5:21-5:33
- The domestic life of Spirit-filled believers as children and servants 6:1-9
- The warfare of Spirit-filled believers: (The passage under consideration) (6:10-24).
 - The warrior’s power (6:10).
 - The warrior’s armor (6:11).
 - The warrior’s foes (6:12-17).
 - The warrior’s resources (6:18-24)

The Battle:

If we are believers as described in the first three chapters, then we are to live as believers should live as described in the last three chapters. If we do “*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called,*” we are

living in obedience to God and will be on a direct collision course with the enemy. If we do not, we are in rebellion toward God and in collusion with the enemy (Matt. 12:30).

The Christian life never ceases to be a conflict with the enemy. The obedient Christian life is not to be likened to waltzing through a meadow picking daisies. It is more to be compared to cautiously walking through a mine-field while snipers are firing at us. We cannot see the snipers because they belong to the supernatural realm (6:12).

Some believers are losers because they do not even prepare for the battle (Luke 12:47). They are choosing not to fight. Some are losers because they do not even know there is a battle going on (I Cor. 15:34; Rom. 13:11-14). Both of these groups are already beat. It has been said that there are three kinds of Christians: Those who make things happen; those who watch things happen; and those who do not even know what is happening. It is impossible to live an obedient Christian life without coming into conflict with the enemy.

It is the object of this series of Bible studies to honor God by helping us to be victorious in the battle in which we are engaged. We will study more about:

The Enemy: Satan and his demons, the spiritual realm.

The Believers Responsibility: We do not have to know everything about his wiles, we just need to be obedient (I Cor. 4:2) We need to put on the armor.

The Armor: What it is and how to apply it.

Overview of Ephesians

Theme: Building the Body of Christ

Key verses: Ephesians 2:8-10 and 4:1-3.

2:⁸ *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of your selves: it is the gift of God:* ⁹ *Not of works, lest any man should boast.* ¹⁰ *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*

4:¹ *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,* ² *With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;* ³ *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

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Paul wrote this epistle to make Christians more aware of their position in Christ and to motivate them to draw upon their spiritual source in daily living: “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,” (4:1; see 2:10). The first half of Ephesians lists the believer’s heavenly possessions: adoption, redemption, inheritance, power, life, grace, citizenship, and the love of Christ. There are no imperatives in chapters 1-3, which focus only on divine gifts. But chapters 4-6 include thirty-five directives in the last half of Ephesians that speak of the believer’s responsibility to conduct himself according to his individual calling. So Ephesians begins in heaven, but concludes in the home and in all other relationships of daily life. The two divisions are: the position of the Christian (1:1-3:21) and the practice of the Christian (4:1-6:20).

The Position of the Christian (1:1-3:21): After a two-verse prologue, in one long Greek sentence Paul extols the triune God for the riches of redemption (1:3-14). This hymn to God; grace praises the Father for choosing us (1:3-6), the Son for redeeming us (1:7-12), and the Spirit for sealing us (1:13,14). The saving work of each Divine Person is to the praise of the glory of His grace (1:6, 12, 14). Before continuing, Paul offers the first of two very significant prayers (1:15-23; cf. 3:14-21). Here he asks that the reader receive spiritual illumination so that they may come to perceive what is, in fact, true. Next, Paul describes the power of God’s grace by contrasting their former condition with their present spiritual life in Christ, a salvation attained not by human works but by divine grace (2:1-10). This redemption includes Jews, yet also extends to those Gentiles who previously were “strangers from the covenants of promise” (2:12). In

Christ, the two for the first time have become members of one body (2:11-22). The truth that Gentiles would become “fellow heirs, of the same body” (3:6) was formerly a mystery that has now been revealed (3:1-13). Paul’s second prayer (3:14-21) expresses his desire that the reader be strengthened with the power of the Spirit and fully apprehend the love of Christ.

The practice of the Christian (4:1-6:20): The pivotal verse of Ephesians is 4:1, because it draws a sharp line between the doctrinal and the practical divisions of this book. There is a cause and effect relationship between chapters 1-3 and 4-6 because the spiritual walk of a Christian must be rooted in his spiritual wealth. As Paul emphasized in Romans, behavior does not determine blessing; instead blessing should determine behavior.

Because of the unity of all believers in the body of Christ, growth and maturity come from “the effectual working in the measure of every part” (every member does its share) (4:16). This involves the exercise of spiritual gifts in love, Paul exhorts the readers to “put off concerning the former conversation (manner of life) the old man” (4:22), and to “put on the new man (4:24) that will be manifested by a walk of integrity in the midst of all people. They are also to maintain a walk of holiness as children of light (5:22-6:9) Paul’s colorful description of the spiritual warfare and the armor of God (6:10-20) is followed by a word about Tychicus and then a benediction (6:21-24).

Part Two The Believer’s Armor and the Spiritual Battle Ephesians 6:10-20

The Text

Ephesians 6:10-20:

- 10 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*
- 11 *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*
- 12 *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.*
- 13 *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.*
- 14 *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*
- 15 *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*
- 16 *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*
- 17 *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*
- 18 *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*
- 19 *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,*
- 20 *For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

An Overview:

- V.10 The source of our strength.
- V.11 The command to appropriate the resources and the purpose for their application.
- V.12 The description of the enemy with whom we battle.
- V.13 Reiteration of the command to appropriate the resources, and the purpose of them in light of the magnitude of the enemy.
- 14-17 The description of the resources.
- V.18 Prayer, the way to apply the resources.
- 19-20 The ultimate goal in the battle; to proclaim God’s message (John 15:8; I Thess. 2:4; Gal. 1:10).

Comments on Text:

10 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

The source of our strength:

We are “kept saved” by God’s power (I Peter 1:3-5). There is no power that can undo our eternal life (John 10:28). None of these same powers against whom we battle can separate us from the love of God (Rom. 8:38,39). He now commands us to be strong but not in our own strength. The strength is God’s but the commitment is ours. We must choose to obey or we will suffer defeat in our own strength. Please read I Cor. 1:26-31. This passage shows how God is honored as He works in His power through our weakness. “...*God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty... That no flesh should glory in His presence. ...He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*” (I Cor. 1:27-31; also Prov. 14:12). A very rough paraphrase could be, “God uses dedicated nobodies.” It sometimes is a disadvantage for us as believers to have great natural talents. We have the tendency to be great through our own strength and not in God’s.

Jesus told His disciples that they would receive power after the Holy Spirit came upon them. The purpose given was so that they could be witnesses of Him throughout the world (Acts 1:8). They would then be able to testify with God’s power. This is the same power and the same Holy Spirit which we have. Too often we are not yielded to Him for His power to be manifested through us (Rom. 6:16; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 5:18).

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

The command to appropriate the resources and the purpose of them:

We are now commanded to put on the “whole armour of God” so that we may stand against the wiles of the devil. That is the purpose of the armour, so that we may stand against the wiles of the devil. (“wiles,” Greek, *methodias* = scheming, craftiness, deceitfulness, cunning arts, trickery, strategies. Used only here and in 4:14, lit. “deceitfulness of the error”) The “whole armour” is necessary when we go into battle because a clever adversary will always find the “chink in the armour,” i.e. the weakest part to attack.

Notice that the purpose of the whole armour is so that we may “stand” against the wiles of the devil. We are not told to chase him down or to look for a demon behind every rock. Our “*adversary, the devil is walking about seeking whom he may devour*” (I Pet. 5:8). He or his emissaries will find us soon enough if we pose a threat to his cause. James 4:7, tells us, “*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” Too often we “assist” the devil instead of resisting him. The word “resist” means to “stand against” or “oppose” and is the same Greek word as “withstand” in verse 13, It is from the same word as “stand” in verses 11 and 13.

Notice also that just knowing the facts is not sufficient. We must apply what God has told us. Many of us know so much but obey so little (Luke 12:47; Hebrews 5:11-14).

The Wiles of the Devil:

What are some of the wiles of the devil? The following is a partial list of possibilities that will be discussed:

1. Undermining God’s character and credibility.
2. Trying to make it difficult for us to live the Christian life. Three of the ways in which this is done:
 - A. Through Persecution:
 - B. Through Peer Pressure:
 - C. Through Peaceful Preoccupation:
3. Confusing the believer with false doctrine. The two major areas that we shall consider are:
 - A. False doctrine concerning Salvation.

- B. False doctrine concerning the Christian life.
- 4. Causing division in the body of Christ.
- 5. Encouraging worldliness among believers
- 6. Promoting improper priorities.

Wile #1. Undermining God’s character and credibility.

Satan tries to get us to doubt God’s word. This was one of the strategies used against Eve in the Garden of Eden. He first attempted to introduce uncertainty concerning God's word by the cunning question, “*Yea, hath God said...?*” (Gen. 3:1). He then endorsed Eve's misrepresentation of and addition to God’s word by her statement, “*...neither shall ye touch it.*” (v3). Then he called God a liar, “*Ye shall not surely die.*” (v4). Eve fell for it. How often do we do the same? The sinful heart has a way of rationalizing any thing it desires (Jer. 17:9).

Many do not notice the subtlety of Satan that was demonstrated in the temptation of Jesus in Matthew, chapter 4 (Gen. 3:1; II Cor. 11:3). Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tested (v1). After he had fasted and was hungry (v1,2), Satan tried to tempt Jesus with what would normally be a priority or a weak point at that time — food (v3). What is to be noticed is the subtle undermining of Gods’ word. His first statement is, “*If thou be the Son of God...*” (v3). God, the father, had just made a public proclamation four verses before, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” Note also that God, the Son, answered all these attacks by quoting God’s word. Can we do any less under similar circumstances?

God’s word is truth (John 17:17). Jesus is the Truth (John 14:6). He said “*And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.... If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*” (John 8:23,36). God has never lied. In fact, it is impossible for Him to lie (Heb 6:18). That would be contrary to His self-imposed attributes.

12 *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.*

The description of the enemy with whom we battle:

This is a spiritual battle. We cannot use physical armour and weapons against a spiritual foe. We cannot even become completely knowledgeable of our enemy. We can be obedient to the One Who has chosen us to be a soldier (II Tim. 2:4). He has divine knowledge of the enemy and his strategies. We can apply God’s infinite knowledge and wisdom as we obey His word. We need to put our armour on and not get improperly involved in a dominion in which we are ill-suited to survive. Some have fooled around with the occult and suffered greatly for it.

Though this battle is against our spiritual adversary, it can manifest itself in the physical realm. To discover God’s good and acceptable and perfect will, we must still present our bodies a living sacrifice, and not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:1,2). Though Satan is much more powerful than we are, we have no need to fear. “*...Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.*” (I John 4:4; See also James 4:7).

**Verses That Describe Our Adversary,
Satan, And His Demons**

Satan is:

Powerful, Acts 26:18, 2 Thess. 2:9; Luke 4:6; Heb. 2:14; Jude 1:9; 1 John 5:19; John 14:30; Eph. 2:2; Tricky, 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11; Able to perform miracles, 2 Thess. 2:9; A deceiver, Rev. 12:9; A liar, the father of lies, John 8:44; Lustful, John 8:44; Our enemy, Mt. 13:19,39; The wicked one, Mt. 13:38; 1 John 2:13; A murderer from the beginning, John 8:44; The father of the Jews who sought to kill Jesus, John 8:44; A master counterfeiter, 2 Cor. 11:13-15, states, “*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*”

In regard to people in general, he:

Binds them, Luke 13:16; Enters them, Luke 22:3; John 13:27; Beguiles them, 2 Cor. 11:3; Oppresses them; Acts 10:38; Takes them captive, 2 Tim. 2:26; Seeks to devour them; 1 Pet. 5:8; Possesses them, Mt. 9:32; Mr. 5:15; Mr. 7:30; And can cause blindness and deafness by his possession, Mt. 12:22.

In regard to unbelievers, he:

Wishes to condemn them, Job 1:6-12; 1 Tim. 3:6; Spiritually blinds them, 2 Cor. 4:4; Maintains a snare for them, 2 Tim. 2:26; Steals the Word from potential believers, Mt. 13:19; Mr. 4:15, Luke 8:12; Is active in efforts to keep them from being saved, Mr. 4:15; Acts 26:18; Luke 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:4;

In regard to believers, he:

Resists them, Zech. 3:1; Accuses them, Rev. 12:10; Strongly influences them, Mt. 16:23; Corrupts their mind, 2 Cor. 11:3; Tempts them, 1 Thess. 3:5; 1 Cor. 7:5; And even tried to tempt Jesus, Mt. 4:1 Mark 1:13; Desires to sift them, Luke 22:31; John 13:27; Can fill their heart, Acts 5:3; Takes advantage of them. 2 Cor. 2:11; Buffets them, 2 Cor. 12:7; Hinders them, 1 Thess. 2:18; Is their adversary, 1 Pet. 5:8; Conducts ongoing spiritual warfare with them, Eph. 6:10-17; Maintains a snare for them, 1 Tim. 3:7; Will cast some believers into prison, Rev. 2:10

He is judged:

John 16:11; John 12:31; 1 John 3:8; Rev. 12:9,10; Rev. 20:10;

We can have victory over him:

James 4:7; Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (Eph. 6:10-17; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:13).

Part 3

The Believer's Armor and the Spiritual Battle

Ephesians 6:11; "Wile" #2

God's word exhorts us to be "...looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). We are to keep our eyes on Jesus and not to become unwisely preoccupied with Satan and his kingdom. It would also be foolish to adopt the other extreme and not become knowledgeable about the enemy whom we are sure to encounter. In II Cor. 2:11, Paul encourages us by his example to not let Satan "*get an advantage of us*" and to be "*not ignorant of his devices.*" It is wise to know something of the enemy.

According to John 8:44, Satan was a murderer from the beginning and he is the father of lies. I Peter 5:8; He is like a lion, walking about seeking whom he may devour. Rev. 12:10; He accuses the brethren before God, day and night. He is not to be considered an all-around nice guy or passed off as a fairy tale. Ephesians 6, tells us that we are fighting not only a spiritual battle, but also an actual one.

Wile #2. Satan tries to make it difficult for us to live the Christian life. The following are 3 of the ways in which this goal is attempted.

1. **Through Persecution:** While vindicating his apostleship to the Corinthian church (II Cor. 11:23-28), Paul reiterates some of the persecutions which he endured (II Cor. 11:23-28) for the gospel's sake (I Cor. 9:23). He said that he was willing to "...suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ" (I Cor. 9:12). His attitude toward the price he paid by his suffering is summed up in Romans 8:18; "*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us.*"

We have yet to suffer the persecution that characterized the early church or even the church in some countries today. In spite of this relative ease, we frequently sell out, or chicken out at the least hint of mild persecution. History tells us that when there is persecution, the true church grows (Acts 8:1-4).

We are told in I Peter 4:12,13, "*Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's*

sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

The night before Jesus’ crucifixion, He left His disciples with the exhortation to bear fruit (John 15:1-16), a warning about future persecution, (14:18-25), and the promise of the Comforter, God’s Holy Spirit, who would come to be with them and to dwell in them (15:26-16:15). In regard to the upcoming persecution He stated, *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you... ye are not of the world... therefore the world hateth you... The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you”* (John 15:18-20).

Some of the most difficult persecution to endure is that from those we love, whether it be family or fellow-believers. Jesus knows the feeling as He was rejected by His own people (John 1:11), and He lamented over Jerusalem who rejected Him (Matt. 23:37). Sometimes taking a loving stand for Christ will result in mockery or rejection from family. Salvation is very costly, but is free to the believer (Eph 2:8,9; Rom 5:8; 6:23). True discipleship is costly for the disciple (John 15:8; Matt. 16:24). He must love Jesus more than anyone else (Luke 14:26; Matt. 10:37; John 21:15-17).

A wife need not fear when her husband puts Christ first in his life. As he loves and obeys Christ in the Biblical manner (II John 6a), he will also love and honor his wife in a Godly manner (Eph. 5:25; I Pet. 3:7). If we have not endured persecution for the sake of Christ, perhaps we have not taken a consistent enough stand for Him. (This statement is not meant to encourage ungodly actions on our part which would bring persecution) (I Pet. 4:15).

2. Through Peer Pressure: Following the raising of Lazarus from the dead, many of the Jews believed on Jesus (John 11:45, 12:11), along with many of the chief rulers. John 12:42, presents a sad commentary concerning them and their wimpy character as men and rulers: *“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue.”* I wonder what they think of their decision now.

We seem to be so starved for acceptance by our peers that we seek to pay almost any price to be conformed to the world system in which live. Romans 12:1,2, tells us not to be conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We make daily decisions. It takes courage to stand up for Christ when we are swimming against the current, but God tells us to *“be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”* As we are faithful, He provides the power to be used. Not only will we be blessed, but God will get the glory.

The One whose acceptance we should seek is the One Who bought and paid for us (I Pet. 1:18; I Cor. 6:19,20). Positionally, we are already accepted through Christ (Eph. 1:6). Eternal life is a gift but we can earn rewards in addition to that. The acceptance of our labors in relation to rewards is based on our faithfulness (II Cor. 5:9,10; Rom. 12:1,2).

The Apostle Paul had been faithful to his Savior and was able to make these closing remarks to a fellow believer, *“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* II Tim. 4:6-8). All the laud of man during a lifetime will pale in comparison to the eternal value of *“Well done, thou good and faithful servant...”* (Matt. 25:21).

3. Through Peaceful Preoccupation: Hebrews 12:1, tells us that we are to lay aside not only our sin which besets us, but to also lay aside every weight. We tend to put a lot of effort into nice but unproductive pursuits. We major in minor things. If the Titanic is sinking, let us not worry about installing new curtains. Let us save the people. Do not get sidetracked from our goal. Satan’s ministers are ministers of righteousness (II Cor. 11:15), He deceives the unsaved by presenting a “good works” salvation which cannot save. He deceives some believers by presenting good-sounding efforts that feel good and look good but are not really based upon obedience to God.

I believe that some of the modern-day tongues movement fits into this category. Some of the people involved in this activity are sincere believers and feel that they are truly worshiping God. The Bible is clear that most of what we see of “speaking in tongues” today does not coincide with the Bible description (i.e. a known language, Acts 2:6-11). Satan cannot make a saved person become unsaved but he can influence him to become unproductive. He is content if a believer thinks he is worshiping or obeying God as long as he actually is not. Do not be deceived. We must judge our actions and experience by God’s word, not vice versa.

The Parable of the Sower tells of a segment of believers who, “*heard the word; and the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, chokes the word, and he becometh unfruitful*” Matt. 13:22). They claimed some good-sounding excuses for not being fruitful. God’s requirement for His servants is not “excuses.” It is “faithfulness” I Cor. 4:2).

In some ways America is a more difficult place to live an obedient Christian life than in countries where there is active persecution. The general attitude is that Christianity that is not too radical or intrusive is OK. In some cultures a believer looks, acts, and smells better than the world. There is not a whole lot of external difference between an average believer and the normal nice average American (See Rev. 3:15,16). There should be a difference (II Cor. 6:17; John 13:35; I Thess. 5:22; If you were God looking for a faithful worker, would you hire yourself?

Part Four:
The Believer’s Armor and the Spiritual Battle
Ephesians 6:11 “Wile” #3

Ephesians 6:10-20 presents the believer’s responsibility as we engage the enemy in the spiritual warfare which is faced by all. In order that we may be adequately prepared for the battle we are told in verse 11, to “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*”

God also wants us to know about our enemy. “*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.*” (II Cor. 2:11). Do not be ignorant of Satan’s devices. In this context, Paul is telling us that we give Satan an advantage when we sin. The particular sin mentioned is “unforgiveness.” Many times we allow our sinful pride to keep us from victory by refusing to forgive.

There is no detailed and all-inclusive “list of Satan’s wiles” mentioned in the Bible but we are given various scriptural examples and exhortations which obviously comprise some of these strategies that are used against Christ and His Church (II Tim. 3:16).

Wile #3. Confusing the believer with false doctrine.

The two major areas of false doctrine that we shall consider are:

1. False doctrine concerning Salvation.
2. False doctrine concerning the Christian life.

Some essential keys to finding true doctrine:

1. Seek the truth wherever it may lead. Do not try to bend the truth to fit your preconceived doctrine. (John 7:17; Luke 11:9,10).
2. Seek God’s guidance and wisdom (James 1:5,6; John 16:13).
3. Diligently Study God’s word (II Tim. 2:15).
4. Be honest (Rom. 12:17).
5. Do it for God’s glory (Col. 3:23; Gal. 6:14).

False doctrine concerning Salvation:

A. Works for salvation:

Eph. 2:8,9; “*For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast.*”

The Bible is quite clear that we are saved apart from man's works, goodness, promises, etc. We are saved by His grace through faith. Even though God's word repeatedly exhorts believers to do good works, the one who believes and does not do any good works is still saved (Rom. 4:5). God's grace and perfect payment for sin is still sufficient for sinful man's justification (Heb. 10:11; Titus 2:14; I John 2:2). God's righteousness is applied to us as we trust Him (II Cor. 5:21). We will be rewarded for our works (II Cor 5:10; I Cor 3:11-15). Eternal life is a gift (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8,9).

The issue in presenting salvation is always "Grace or Works." (Rom.11:6). It cannot be Christ plus works. God's curse is upon those who teach a false gospel (See Gal. 1:6-9 and the balance of Galatians).

We do not have to go just to the cults for this heresy, though that is a common thread among them. Baptists and other fundamentalists frequently use unbiblical terms for salvation such as: "Give your heart to Jesus," "commit your life to Him," "ask Him to come into your life and save you," "repent of your sins." Analyze these phrases in light of the Bible and what comes across to the unsaved man who is already blinded by Satan. Then strive to use Biblical and understandable terminology.

We are not talking of different methods of evangelism, as we have great freedom of diversity in that area (I Cor. 12:4-6; I Cor 9:22). We are pleading for the truth of the Gospel. The gospel "is the power of God unto salvation..." (Rom. 1:16).

The vast majority of the people with whom I have shared the Good News of Salvation have already heard and been blinded by a "Christian counterfeit" of a "Christ plus works" gospel. Satan's ministers are "*transformed into the ministers of righteousness*" (II Cor. 11:15). The "Christ plus works" message is commonly heard and accepted in Christian circles but it is error and helping to deceive people (II Cor. 4:3,4).

B. Eternal security:

I John 5:13; "*These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life...*"

This is closely related to "Works for salvation." Most, but not all, with whom I have spoken who have difficulty with eternal security (A.K.A. eternal life) actually are, in some form, trusting their works to merit them salvation. It is no wonder that they cannot know that they have eternal life. It would depend upon untrustworthy man whom we know will fail. It is also likely that some who do not believe in eternal security are simply not knowledgeable of what the Bible says on the matter.

When seeking truth about salvation, it is essential to use verses that are speaking of salvation. Many well-meaning Bible teachers use verses that are speaking of fellowship or service and force them into a context of requirements for salvation.

Several verses can be given for examples:

Rev. 3:20, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me.*"

The verse and the context have nothing to do with salvation, it is referring to obedience to Christ for fellowship with Him. It is speaking to people already saved but disobedient.

I John 1:9, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*"

This is speaking to believers. John includes himself in the "we." He had been saved about sixty years at the time. It has nothing to do with being saved. It is speaking of confession, forgiveness and cleansing. The context is speaking of walking in the light and having fellowship with Christ (1:3-9).

John 15:8, "*Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*"

This verse is misused as a requirement for salvation. It is speaking to people already saved and is a requirement for discipleship. Salvation is very costly but the price has been paid. It is free to us. Discipleship is costly to us, but has great reward.

False doctrine concerning the Christian life.

Matt. 5:16, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

Eph. 2:10, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained [prepared] that we should walk in them.”*

John 15:8, *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit so shall ye be my disciples.”*

Gal. 5:16, *“This I say them, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”*

Our purpose as believers is to glorify God by obedience to Him. Any doctrine that hinders our good works to glorify God is either in error or is being applied improperly. Doctrinal error in the realm of Christian living generally encompasses one of two extremes:

- A. Promoting the lack of good works, e.g. an apathetic or compromising attitude toward discipleship or the Lordship of Christ in the believer’s life. Rev 3:16, describes this as lukewarm. The Bible does not teach “Lordship salvation,” it teaches “Lordship Christian living.”
- B. Promoting what seems to be good works but is imbalanced or not biblical. Examples would include:
 - 1. Legalism. You are spiritual if you do not indulge in the man-made list of “taboos.” This mindset has driven many people away from being saved. Obeying a set of rules does not make you spiritual. Obeying God’s Holy Spirit does.
 - 2. Materialism, the “Health and Wealth” gospel. It is appealing but not taught in the Bible. The lukewarm church of Laodicea described in Rev. 3:14-22 also had this problem.
 - 3. Feel good at the expense of Bible truth. This is a human tendency. I will worship God my way, not how the Bible says. Some Charismatics fall victim to this when they say, “I don’t care what the Bible says, “it” happened to me.” Satan is quite content for us to feel good as long as we are not obeying God. We must judge our doctrine by God’s word, not by our experience.
 - 4. Fatalism - the five points of Calvinism carried to its logical conclusion. If the “elect” will be saved whether or not I tell them the Gospel, why witness? It is interesting to note that whenever someone faithfully starts presenting the gospel according to God’s command, that there seems to be a lot more “elect.”

These examples are just a sampling of prevalent errors. There are many more. We must build our doctrine on the truth of God’s word. Be wary of any doctrine that does not lead toward glorifying God by good works and bearing much fruit. Do not let Satan entice us from our goal.

Part Five The Believer’s Armor and the Spiritual Battle Ephesians 6:11

Ephesians 6:10-20 presents the believer’s responsibility as we engage the enemy in the spiritual warfare which is faced by every believer. In order that we may be adequately prepared for the battle we are told in verse 11, to *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”* One of the “wiles” or “strategies” of the Devil is to cause division in the Body of Christ and therefore render it less effective in the spiritual battle against Satan’s forces.

Wile #4. Causing Division in the Body of Christ

Psalm 133:1; *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*

Is it possible to have unity in the church? After all, the church is made up of selfish sinners. It must be possible as we are given just that command in I Corinthians 1:10, *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.”* And in I Corinthians

12:25, “*That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.*”

The early Christian Church had this unity— for a while. In Acts, we read that the believers were with one accord; in 1:14; 2:1, resulting in 3,000 being saved (2:41), in 2:46, with joy, fellowship and church growth (2:46,47), in 4:24,32, praising God and sacrificial sharing of material things. Much can be accomplished for God when we are working in unity.

Then sin crept in. In Acts 5:1-11, we read of a couple who sold a possession, gave part of it to the Lord, but lied about the amount that they gave. God judged this sin by taking these two home before He normally would have done so. We have similar examples of pride and selfishness in our congregations today.

Among the purposes that God gave for the leaders in the church (Eph. 4:11) are “*For the perfecting (adjusting or qualifying) of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith...*” (Eph. 4:12,13). We are told that divisions are a result of carnality, by being controlled by the flesh and not by the Holy Spirit. “*For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*” (I Cor. 3:3). Jesus warns us that a “*house divided against itself shall not stand*” (Matt. 12:25). Division causes destruction. Disunity is so serious that we are even told to, “*...mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*” (Rom. 16:17; also Titus 3:10).

What is unity? Does it mean that we all have to think alike, act alike, or minister alike? Absolutely not! The twelfth chapter of I Corinthians clarifies these legitimate questions.

I Corinthians, Chapter 12

The letter of I Corinthians was written by Paul to the church that he had established there during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17). The church was largely composed of Gentiles and had different problems than the primarily Jewish churches had been experiencing. The problems were not related to Jewish legalism or even primarily to heretical doctrine. The Corinthian believers were causing divisions in the body along with many of the other consequences of carnality (I Cor. 3:3; 11:18). There was no lack of spiritual gifts. The gifts were being misused (I Cor. 1:7; 14:1-40). The epistle’s main thrust is “Christian conduct,” or exhortation to “act like what you are.” They were to be examples *to* the world, not *of* the world. The church was to go into the world, not the world into the church. See also Eph.4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10-16, Titus 3:8. If Believers “automatically” live a fruitful Christian life, this epistle need not to have been written.

Brief Overview of I Corinthians 12

Verse one introduces the subject of spiritual things (pneumatikon). “Gifts” is in Italics and is not in the original text. It has to do with things referring to the Spirit, the context also including spiritual gifts (charismata, v4,9,28,30,31).

V.4-6: Gifts have a unity in source.

V.7-10: Gifts have a unity in purpose.

V.12-31: The ramifications of one head and one body composed of many members, each with a different function.

“Unity” and “difference” seem to be key concepts in verses 4-6. Union is not unity and unity is not conformity. Unity is diversity in harmony. We tend to seek unity in conformity. Rather than encouraging each person’s uniqueness, we discourage it. This passage stresses unity in Christ but it is worked out in different gifts, different administrations and different manifestations.

Different gifts - Same Spirit, v.4

Different administrations - Same Lord, v.5

Different operations - Same God, v.6

“Gift” = literally a gracious gift, seems also to apply to the gift of an enablement or talent as in Rom. 12:6-8. (See also I Tim. 4:14; II Tim. 1:6.

“Administration” = a service, such as waiting on a table. The same word from which we get our “deacon.”

“Operation” = a working, a thing effected, same word as “working” in verse 10).

Each of us is to serve the same God, witness with the same Gospel, but to do it in the manner in which God has enabled us. These gifts are dispersed as God desires not as we desire (v. 11, 18, 28).

Some commentators also see the unity of the trinity in these verses.

Verses 12-31 stress that we each have different functions in the body. We are to work together for the betterment of the team, not just the individual members. This is for the purpose of honoring the Head of the body, Jesus (I Cor 6:19,20).

The command in verse 31 to “*covet earnestly the best gifts*” could grammatically be either imperative or indicative. The context seems to demand the indicative mood instead of how it is usually translated. God just told them in three places that He makes the decisions on who gets which gifts, so it is unlikely that he is now telling them to seek a particular gift. He is probably saying that they have been desiring the best gifts (megas = greater or more magnificent, such as the showy display of tongues mentioned in chapter 14), but he will show them a more excellent way. The more excellent way is (chapter 13) exercise your gifts in divine love, (chapter 14) for the edification of the body. (Note how many times chapter 14 uses derivatives of the words “know” or “understand”).

If we would start using what God has given us, in love, for His glory and the edification of the church, most of our “division” problems would cease.

Some key concepts to be understood to help Christians maintain unity amongst the diversity of spiritual gifts (I Cor, 12:1-14:40):

1. We need knowledge (12:1), but not knowledge alone (8:1).
2. There are different types of gifts, ministries, and activities 12:4-6,29-30).
3. Gods’ Holy Spirit distributes them as He wills (12:11, 18, 28).
4. We are many members of one body. Each member is important and affects the whole (12:12-27) positively or negatively (12:26). Even the weaker members are necessary (12:22).
5. God composed the body how He pleased (12:18,24,28).
6. The one who exercises gifts without love “is nothing” (13:2).
7. There is no profit to the one who exercises gifts without love (13:3).
8. Love is permanent. The gifts are not (13:8). Prophecies and knowledge will fail. Tongues will cease of itself. The verb used here is in the middle voice, meaning that the subject will perform the action of the verb upon itself. A different verb that is used for the other two gifts is in the passive voice, meaning that the action will be performed upon the subject by an external means, probably referring to “*that which is perfect*” of verse 10. That is likely referring to after the time that Jesus sets up His future kingdom.
9. We should pursue love and desire spiritual things (14:1)
10. The gifts are not given to edify ourselves (14:2-4).
11. The gifts are given to edify the Church (14:4,12,26,31).
12. If it causes confusion in the Church, it is not of God (14:33,40).
13. In general, we should recognize that an unspiritual man can have gifts and can also put on a good show with no real profit just as the Corinthians had been doing. One function of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus (John 16:13,14). We should do the same (John 15:8).

Is It The Pastor’s Job?

He has the same responsibilities to exercise his gifts as we do, plus:

I Pet. 5:1-4; Feed (shepherd) the flock, be an ensample (example, pattern) to the flock.

I Tim. 3:1-7; Be an example and care for the Church.

Titus 1:6-9; Be an example and exhort and convince those who contradict.

Eph.4:11-16; Mature the saints for the work of the ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The Pastor should not and cannot exercise your gifts. If you do not use your gifts, the body will become lopsided in its operation. God gave you something that is needed to balance out the ministry (I Cor. 12:22). God knew that various members of the body were necessary in order to function. How far would the Church of Christ progressed if every member of the body had been a gall bladder?

Could it be that our gifts simply need to be nurtured and stirred up? Late in Paul's ministry he exhorts Timothy to not neglect (I Timothy 4:14), but to stir up the gift of God which was in him (II Timothy 1:6). This was probably referring to the gift of evangelism (II Tim. 4:5). Is there a parallel between this and the long-term baby believers mentioned in Hebrews 5:11-14, who should have been teachers (maybe they had that gift) but did not reach maturity because they did not "*by reason of use have their senses exercised*"? It is not a crime to start life as a baby but it is a tragedy to remain one when we should be mature and fruitful.

How to Cause Division

Probably most division is caused by sin that manifests itself in some form of gossip. Webster defines gossip as "idle talk and rumors, especially about the private affairs of others." What is said may or may not be true, but it is not loving or edifying. Usually, we wish to elevate ourselves in other people's eyes by putting someone else down. This is always someone who is not there to defend themselves or to correct any wrong statements made about them. When God tells us to let our light shine before men to glorify God (Matt. 5:16), He does not mean to blow out the other guys' light so that ours will shine brighter. The third chapter of James gives us God's thoughts concerning the misuse of the tongue.

How to Squelch Some Divisions

Matt. 18:15-17 tells us how to impede much of the progress of this type of problem. If the brother trespasses against you, talk to him privately (v.15). If he will not hear, take one or two more to be witnesses (v.16). If he still will not hear, take it to the church (v.17). If he still refuses to hear, he should be functionally treated as an unsaved person. We love the unsaved (Eph. 4:15). Part of the intent of Church discipline is the objective of restoration of the sinning believer. This will not always work because you cannot force your will upon someone else. You are accountable for your obedience, not his. If Church discipline were more often applied in a Biblical manner, there would be much less need for Church discipline to be applied. "*And above all things have fervent charity (love) among yourselves: for charity (love) shall cover the multitude of sins*". (I Peter 4:8). "*And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.*" (Eph. 4:32).

Psalm 133:1; "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*"

Part Six The Believer's Armor and the Spiritual Battle Ephesians 6:11

Wile #5, Encouraging Worldliness Among Believers

1 John 2:15-17

15 *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

16 *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

17 *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.*

What are the thoughts that come to mind when we hear of "the world" or "worldliness" presented in the religious context? Likely, the answer to this question depends upon our religious background and experience. My experience in this area probably was not the most desirable. I have heard well-meaning preachers pronounce judgment upon worldliness and those who are worldly, but who also fail to give us a Biblical background of what God means when he tells us not to love the world. We are too often seized up

into our own personal convictions, prejudices, or superstitions which are then presented as dogma for others, a standard to which we hypocritically require their rigid adherence in order to maintain our standard of spirituality.

There are three Greek words in the New Testament that are translated as “world” in the KJV:

“Oikoumene, (οικουμενη)

The inhabited earth, sometimes used as the portion of the earth inhabited by the Greeks in distinction to the barbarians, i.e. the Roman Empire. (world 15, earth 1).

Matt. 24:14. “... gospel...shall be preached in all the world.”

Luke 2:1. “...that all the world should be taxed.”

Romans 10:18. “...their words went unto the ends of the world.” (literally, extremities or limits of the inhabited world).

“Aion” (αιων)

A period of time, an era, an age. With the word “into” (εις) is translated “forever.” A variation of this word is translated as “eternal” or “everlasting.” (Used 128 times, 71 forever, 38 world, plus others). This is where we get our word “eon.”

Matthew 28:20. “...lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world.”

Mark 10:30. But he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, ...and in the world to come everlasting.”

Romans 12:2. “and be not conformed to this world...”

II Cor. 4:4. “the god of this world hath blinded...”

Gal. 1:4. “deliver us from this present evil world...”

II Tim. 4:10. “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...” (Literally, “the now age”).

Titus 2:12. “. . .that we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” (literally, “in the now age).

“Cosmos” (κοσμος)

Order, orderly arrangement, ornament. This word is transliterated into English and means the orderly arrangement or adornment of the universe. This is also where we get our word “cosmetic” or “cosmetology” which has to do with a women trying to get her face in order. I Peter 3:3,4 tells us that the adorning (kosmos) of the godly woman should not be the external but of internal qualities (also I Tim. 2:9).

From the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament: (world 186, adorning 1; 187)

- 1) an apt and harmonious arrangement or constitution, order, government
- 2) ornament, decoration, adornment, i.e. the arrangement of the stars, ‘the heavenly hosts’, as the ornament of the heavens. 1 Pet. 3:3) the world, the universe
- 4) the circle of the earth, the earth
- 5) the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human race
- 6) the ungodly multitude; the whole mass of men alienated from God, and therefore hostile to the cause of Christ
- 7) world affairs, the aggregate of things earthly
 - 7a) the whole circle of earthly goods, endowments riches, advantages, pleasures, etc., which although hollow and frail and fleeting, stir desire, seduce from God and are obstacles to the cause of Christ
- 8) any aggregate or general collection of particulars of any sort
 - 8a) the Gentiles as contrasted to the Jews (Rom. 11:12 etc)
 - 8b) of believers only, John 1:29; 3:16; 3:17; 6:33; 12:47 1 Cor. 4:9; 2 Cor. 5:19

Examples:

In Gospel of John “world” is used 78 times, 76 of them “cosmos,” 20 times in chapter 17, in Jesus’ intercessory prayer for the believers.

Examples of “kosmos” used as the people of the world system.

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world...”

John 3:17 probably uses it in both senses.

John 4:42. "the Christ, the Savior of the world."
John 15:18. "If the world hate you..."
John 16:8. "will reprove the world of sin..."
Romans 3:19.. "...all the world may become guilty before God."

Examples of "kosmos" used as the world system:

Matt. 13:38. "The field is the world..."
Matt. 16:26. "...if he should gain the whole world..."
Mark 16:15. "Go ye into all the world..."
John 12:26. "...he that hateth his life in this world..."
John 1:10 probably uses it in both senses.
John 16:33. "...In the world you shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."
II Cor. 2:12. "...not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God;..."
I Tim. 6:7. "we brought nothing into this world..."

According to some of these verses there are actions and philosophies that we are to avoid in this world, both of this age and of this world system.

I John 2:15, tells us not to love the world. Does this mean that we are not to love the people of this world system? Obviously not. God so loved the world, the people of the world (John 3:16). In John 13:34, we are told to "*love one another.*" Ephesians 4:15, exhorts us to "*speak the truth in love.*"

The balance of I John 2:15, explains what we are not to love. The subject in view is the materialistic philosophies of the world. We are not to love the "things" of the world. One reason according to verse 17, is that they are not eternal. Why put such high value upon temporary things and neglect eternal values such as doing the will of God?

See I Cor. 1:18-31, v20, God has "*made foolish the wisdom of this world.*" I Cor. 2:12 contrasts the spirit of the world and the spirit which is of God. I Cor. 7:31 speaks of the fashion of the world which passes away. Eph. 2:2 speaks of the course of the world in which we once walked, which is further explained as being of the Devil. Verse 10 tells us how we are now to walk. James 4:4 tells us that whoever is "*a friend of the world is the enemy of God.*" This is not an enviable position in which to willingly place yourself.

I suggest that worldliness is not necessarily participating in whatever a religious system or culture thinks to be unacceptable. (e.g. smoking, drinking, movies, dancing, certain types of dress or hair style). But that it may be accepting the world system as ours. Any philosophy or action that Satan, the god of this world (II Cor.4:4), would propose to thwart God's cause or glory may, in effect be worldly and must not be accepted by the believer.

This opens a new outlook on what may be worldly in my own life. What God calls worldliness may be acceptable in the world and sometimes even in the Christian community. In some ways, it is much easier to make up a set of rules that we suppose to constitute spirituality than it is to diligently study God's Word for proper direction in a moment-by-moment obedience to God's Holy Spirit.

James 4 gives us some thoughts on worldliness:

4:1 *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?*

"Wars and fightings" lit. "wars and disputes or contentions" (a continuation of the topic discussed in 3:14-16). "Lusts" ("ηδονη) comes from the Greek word from which we get "hedonism;" the philosophy that makes sensual pleasure or gratification man's chief end. Does this sound like the predominant position of our world system today? This word is referring to more than simply a desire for something which is not necessarily wrong. Compare I Tim. 2:4, "will" (θελω), to desire or wish; I Tim. 6:9, "will" (βουλομαι) to determine or decree, as also in James 1:18.

4:2 *Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.*

“Lust” (epithumeo, επιθυμew) earnestly desire, covet. “Desire to have” (zeloō, ζηλωw) ardently devoted to, to aspire eagerly after, zealous - in a good or bad sense (I Cor. 12:31; 14:39; 13:4). “Fight and war,” words correspond to v1. Wars are the fruit of our illicit desires. A major reason we do not have answered prayer is because we do not pray.

4:3 *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.*

“Lusts” (hedone, ἡδονη). This is another major reason we do not receive answers to our prayers. We ask with the wrong motive. “Consume” (δαπανaw), translated elsewhere as “spend.” It could have a neutral sense as in Mark 5:26; “Physicians... she had spent all that she had.” Or it could mean in the sense of “waste” or “to consume by extravagance” as in Luke 15:14; where the Prodigal son had “spent all.”

4:4 *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world (kosmos) is the enemy of God.*

“Adulterers and adulteresses:” The people addressed had committed adultery in their hearts because of their lust (Matt. 5:28) and possibly even the physical acts, but this is likely not the full meaning of this uncomplimentary designation.

Adultery is not necessarily sexual, though in practice, it frequently is. (Fornication, by definition is sexual sin, but is not necessarily adultery. For example, the subject does not have to be married. In the Old Testament fornication covered a wide range of illicit sexual activities). The essence of marriage is a covenant of companionship. The essence of adultery is unfaithfulness to that covenant or relationship.

Israel committed adultery with idols. (Jer. 3:8,9, Eze. 23:37) This was nonsexual adultery. It was also an abomination to God for them to share with another an intimacy or relationship that belonged only to Him. Though God was gracious for many years, Israel’s continued disobedience demanded judgment.

How does all this apply to us? When we, as the Bride of Christ, entertain friendship with the world we are breaking our marriage vow with Jesus. He bought us and owns us (I Cor:6:19,20). He is the only One who is due our allegiance and intimate worship. Friendship with the world causes us to be an enemy of God. This is a tragic but common position in which Christians place themselves.

Romans 12:1:2 tells us, among other things to “*be not conformed to this world.*”

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world (aion): but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

The choice is ours. “...Choose you this day whom you will serve;... but as for me and my house we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15: Romans 6:16)

Part Seven **The Believer’s Armor and the Spiritual Battle** **Ephesians 6:10-20: (Vs 10-14)**

The Text

10 *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

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

12 *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.*

13 *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.*

14 *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

Brief Recapitulation

Verse 10 tells us the source of our strength. It is of the Lord. We are to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We are to be obedient to Him. As we are faithful to God, we may make the same claim that David did to Goliath the Godzilla as he approached him with a slingshot, five stones, and the power of the Lord, "...The battle is the LORD's..." (I Samuel 17:47).

Verse 11 gives the command to appropriate the resources and the purpose for their application. We are to put on the whole armor of God. If we do not employ the complete armor, our cruel and cunning adversary will make the most of the weakest area. This lack could possibly ensure our defeat. The purpose of implementing the armor is in order that we may be able to stand against Satan's wiles or treachery.

Verse 12 relates a description of the enemy with whom we battle. Our foes (plural) are: spiritual, not physical, governments, authorities, world rulers of this darkness, and the spiritual things or forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (lit. "in the heavenlies," (same phrase found in 1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10). It does not take a rocket scientist to realize that we do not want to face this type of opponent in battle in our own strength.

Verse 13 reiterates the command to appropriate the resources in light of the description given in verse 12. It also tells the purpose of our armor in light of the magnitude of the enemy. The purpose is that we would be able to stand in the evil day. What is the evil day? Possibly it is referring to the day in which we are attacked. The attacks could be more or less vicious on various days.

Verses 14-17 describe the resources: Stand therefore—
Having your loins girt about with truth,
Having on the breastplate of righteousness,
Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,
Taking the shield of faith,
Take the helmet of salvation,
Take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

Verse 18 speaks of prayer, the way to apply the resources. Praying is what we are to do in conjunction with putting on the armor and during the battle. Therein lies the source of our power.

Verses 19 and 20 present the ultimate goal in the battle; to faithfully proclaim God's message of salvation (John 15:8; I Thess. 2:4; Gal. 1:10).

The description of the enemy with whom we battle:

12 *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.*

This is a spiritual battle. We cannot use physical armour and weapons against a spiritual foe. We cannot even become completely knowledgeable of our enemy. We can choose to be obedient to the One Who has chosen us to be a soldier (II Tim. 2:4). He has divine knowledge of the enemy and his strategies. We can apply God's infinite knowledge and wisdom as we obey His word. We need to put our armour on and not get improperly involved in a dominion in which we are ill-suited to survive. Some have fooled around with the occult and suffered greatly for it.

Though this battle is against our spiritual adversary, it can manifest itself in the physical realm. To discover God's good and acceptable and perfect will, we must still present our bodies a living sacrifice, and not be conformed to the world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:1,2). Though Satan is much more powerful than we are, we have no need to fear. "...Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." (I John 4:4; See also James 4:7).

The reiteration of the command to appropriate the resources, and the purpose of them in light of the magnitude of the enemy.

13. *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.*

The “wherefore” refers back to the description of our enemy in verse twelve. Since the enemy is spiritual, powerful, evil, etc. we need the benefit of the whole armor of God. The implication of this verse is that if we do God’s work God’s way, then we have done all that is required of us. The results are up to the One who has chosen us to be a soldier (II Tim. 2:3,4).

The description of the resources (vs 14-17).

14. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

Verses 11 and 13 both tell us to take the whole armor of God so that we will be able to stand in this spiritual battle. Starting in verse 14, we are commanded to stand, and are given details concerning each piece of armor that we are to put on. We are told to make use of each piece of armor then we are given the particulars how we may obey this admonition. The armor is individually explained in some detail.

The first piece of armor that we are to appropriate is “...*having our loins girt about with truth.*” “Loins” is used in the KJV Bible to describe the part of the body between the ribs and the hip bones. It is the place where the girdle was worn (Exodus 12:11; II Kings 1:8; Jer. 13:1; Matt. 3:4), and the sword was fastened (II Sam. 20:8). Since Oriental garments were worn ungirded about the house, to gird up the loins signified preparation for vigorous action (Exodus 12:11; I Kings 18:46; Job 38:3; Prov. 31:17; Luke 12:35; I Peter 1:13). (The New NIV Dictionary of the Bible).

The same was true of a Roman soldier. He would pull his tunic so that his garment would not be in the way when he was in battle. Paul is telling us that we must be prepared and committed for battle.

The command to have our “loins girt about with truth” probably has reference to at least two facets of the Christian’s life: truth in content and truth in character.

Truth in Content

In Jesus’ intercessory prayer He stated to His Father “*Thy word is truth.*” (John 17:17). We are born again by the “*word of truth.*” (James 1:18). We are also told that we should be “*rightly dividing the word of truth.*” (II Tim. 2:15).

God’s Word is “*quick (living), and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow.*” (Heb. 4:12). It is “*given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*” (II Tim. 4:16,17).

Jesus said that He Himself was the Truth. “*...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*”

We are to be “*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith*” Heb 12:2). “*...Our sufficiency is of God*” (II Cor. 3:5).

We are told to “*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ...*” (Romans 13:14). We shall later see more parallels between Jesus and the items of armor.

Truth in Character

“*...Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*” (Romans 12:17).

What is the number one excuse given by people for not coming to church? The church is full of hypocrites. (Hypocrite was the term used for a play actor, hence, one who acts falsely). Though that is probably a true statement, (the church is full of sinful people like you and me, Jer. 17:9), the same can be said of the shopping mall, our place of work, the people who manufacture our TV shows, etc. This fact does not seem to hinder our attendance in other areas. I have, on occasion, told a person giving that excuse that they should come to church anyway, because we could always use one more hypocrite.

Because there is validity to the criticism, we should look at ourselves (I Cor. 11:31) and see if we are contributing to the problem. We are not talking of getting more people on the church rolls, but of people not trusting Christ on account of our poor example. Let us not rationalize away our sinfulness.

Many religious groups and individuals have practically adopted the world's philosophy of, "The end justifies the means." This mentality was dramatically manifested in the actions behind the term, "Jesuit Casuistry." In the 1500's, the Roman church tortured and murdered thousands of Christians because they stood for God's word and would not submit to the Pope's authority. The justification used for this was that it was for God's glory that people should come into the Roman church, by force, if necessary.

Do we exhibit the same mentality, but on a different scale and in a more "acceptable" manner? Have you ever been seriously offended by a believer who was unethical toward you? If so, you should be forgiving and continue to grow through this (Eph 4:32; Matt. 18:21,22). Many people do not make that choice and become casualties in the spiritual battle. We should evaluate our lives in the light of God's word (honestly), and make serious choices in our lives to right any area in which we are "fudging."

We are to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15). Jesus came to bear witness (testify) unto the truth (John 18:38). We do the same (Acts 1:8).

Some Verses Concerning Truth

God's Spoken or Written Word is truth

Joh 17:17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

The Gospel is truth

Ga 2:5 To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

Eph 1:13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Ga 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Col 1:5 For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel;

We are saved by belief of the truth.

2Th 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

1Ti 2:4 Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Jas 1:18 Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

God's Living Word (Jesus) is Truth

Joh 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

2Co 6:7 By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

Joh 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Joh 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Jesus and Truth

Joh 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Joh 1:17 For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

Eph 4:21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

We are to:

Worship in Truth

Joh 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

Joh 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Rejoice in truth

1Co 13:6 Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;

Speak the truth

Eph 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

Eph 4:25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.

Rightly divide the truth

2Ti 2:15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Walk in Truth

2Jo 1:4 I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

3Jo 1:3 For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.

3Jo 1:4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

And Obey the truth

1Pe 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

God's Holy Spirit is truth

Joh 14:17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

Joh 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

Joh 16:13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

1Jo 5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

**Men suppress and disobey the truth
(Believers and Unbelievers)**

Ro 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Ro 2:8 But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,

Ga 2:14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

Ga 3:1 O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

Ga 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

1Ti 6:5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

2Ti 2:18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

2Ti 3:7 Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

2Ti 3:8 Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.

2Ti 4:4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

1Jo 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

We are to live honest lives.

Ro 12:17 Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.

Ro 13:13 Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.

2Co 8:21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

2Co 13:7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

Php 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

1Th 4:12 That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

1Ti 2:2 For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.

Heb 13:18 Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

1Pe 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Part Eight
The Believer's Armor and the Spiritual Battle
Eph. 6:10-20: (v.14, "Breastplate of Righteousness")

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;
Verses 11 and 13 both tell us to take the whole armor of God so that we will be able to stand in this spiritual battle.

The second piece of armor that we are to appropriate is "...*having on the breastplate of righteousness.*" The word "breastplate" (Greek, thorax), refers to the area between the neck and the visceral area; the chest and back. The Roman soldier used two different types of breastplates, one was of heavy linen covered with thin slices of animal hooves or horns. The type more familiar to us is the molded metal chestplate that covered the vital areas of the torso from the base of the neck to the top of the thighs. They were in two pieces and covered the front and the back. Injury to these protected areas could be fatal to a soldier in combat. God intended for this spiritual "breastplate of righteousness" to be part of our protection during our imminent battle with our spiritual foes.

In application to us we will discuss three aspects of righteousness:

1. Righteousness in Premise. Already established in Jesus, who is the basis of all righteousness.
2. Righteousness in Position. Required for salvation. The new birth is necessary before one begins to grow (John 3:5; I Pet. 2:2).
3. Righteousness in Practice. The command to and the responsibility of the believer.

Righteousness in Premise

We are told "*Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ...*" (Romans 13:14). Each piece of the armor has some reference to Jesus. He is sufficient. I Cor. 1:31, tells us, "*But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption.*" In I John 2:1, He is called "*Jesus Christ, the righteous.*" I Pet. 2:22 tells us that Jesus, "...*did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.*" He was the only One who has lived a perfect life and He was the only One who could make a perfect payment for our sin (Heb. 10:10-14). The very basis of our righteousness, either in position or practice is in the One who was perfect in our place.

Righteousness in Position

We cannot properly apply the commands that God gives to a believer (much of the New Testament) until we receive His righteousness by faith and, in fact, become a believer. II Cor. 5:21 explains the process of our salvation. It can be summarized in one word — substitution. He took our place. "*For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*" (II Cor. 5:21).

This is not a new idea. The Old Testament affirms the same principle of substitution: "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all*" (Isaiah 53:6). Abraham was justified in the same manner as we are, by faith (Gen. 15:6). Jesus has paid for all our sin (Titus 2:14) and has taken our place in order that we may stand before Him in His righteousness, not our own. Isaiah 64:6, graphically portrays God's assessment of our righteousness; "...*all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...*" There is nothing of our corrupt works that we can add to God's

perfect payment for our sin. Our “righteousnesses” (filthy rags) can only corrupt that which is perfect. God tells us that *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

The one who applies the truth of this passage and believes in Christ is now eternally saved (I John 5:13; John 10:28; I Pet. 3:1-5) and can now fulfill his purpose as a believer stated in the next verse: *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* This leads us to the aspect of righteousness that we as believers are commanded to apply.

Righteousness in Practice

“Having on the breastplate of righteousness” does not refer to the imputed righteousness of our justification. The ones who are exhorted here already have *“the righteousness which is of God by faith”* (Phil 3:9; also II Cor. 5:21). We have been saved because of Christ’s righteousness (Rom. 5:17; 10:4,6; Gal. 2:21).

I believe that *“having on the breastplate of righteousness”* is referring to the sanctifying righteousness of Christ in the believer’s life; obedience to God, being Holy Spirit controlled. This manner of life would present a proper example to others. The world frequently expects a Christian to act like one. Our God who redeemed us also does (Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; II Cor 6:17).

Our eternal life is sure and secure through God’s power (I Pet. 1:3-5). Our salvation rests upon what God has done for us, not upon our works that we are trying to do for Him: (Titus 3:5) *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us...”* *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”* (Eph. 2:8,9). The Bible is very clear that salvation is received by faith, plus or minus nothing. Eph. 2:10, adds, in relation to our Christian life, *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”* (“ordained” is not the Greek word which refers to God’s divine decree. In this passage it means to “prepare or make ready beforehand”) This verse does **not** say or mean that we are not saved if we do not fulfill God’s purpose for us as believers. Those to whom it is speaking are already saved, (v.8).

What do we do about unrighteousness in the Christian’s life? This pattern of compromise and worldliness is prevalent in Bible-believing circles today as it has been in the early church. See the Corinthian letters. The action of the majority does not make it right. God is the Authority, not our humanistic and selfish philosophies.

If this pattern prevails in our own life, it is prudent to heed God’s admonitions; judge our own sin so that God will not have to (I Cor 11:30-32), confess our sins for cleansing and forgiveness, then start walking in the light (I John 1:6-9). This verse has nothing to do with obtaining salvation. It is speaking to those who are saved concerning their walk with God.

It must break the heart of every sincere Pastor when he sees many in his flock living in various states of rebellion against God. The response to this problem by some Christian leaders is to start preaching a “gospel” message that contains some sort of “discipleship” commands as a requirement for salvation. This doctrine is commonly called, “Lordship salvation” or “discipleship salvation.”

One line of reasoning that is frequently used to justify this line of teaching is to quote verses having to do with discipleship and misapply them as a requirement for salvation. The following are examples: Jesus said, *“So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple”* (Luke 14:33), and *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples”* (John 15:8). A disciple is one who learns from someone, with the implication of following after him. This is not salvation, but service. Judas was a disciple but was not saved. Salvation and service should come together but they are two entirely different things. Why impose a requirement upon an unbeliever that even those with the Holy Spirit’s indwelling find to be difficult.

Error cannot be corrected by more error. Salvation is either by God's grace or we earn what we deserve. The issue in salvation is either grace or works, but cannot be by both (Romans 11:6). If we choose to be justified by our works, we get what we deserve (Rom.4:5). We cannot "turn from sin" to be saved. How many sins would we have to turn from?

What about repentance? Isn't that required for salvation?

Many claim that it is. The Greek word (metanoeo, μετανοεω) means a change of mind. If we use the *correct* meaning of the word we might grant that a change of mind is necessary in order to believe in Jesus. Today, the word is often defined as "turning from sin" or "sorrow for sin." The act of repentance may or may not include these responses but the word does not mean that. This may surprise many who have heard a plethora of modern-day "evangelistic messages, but of the sixty-six times the word "repent" (or variations) is used in the New Testament, not once is an unbeliever told to, "repent of sins" to have eternal life. In spite of how often it is taught, the term "repent of sins" is not even found in the New Testament. This fact should cause us to question why we even use such terms in evangelism.

Although the term "repent of sins" is not found in the New Testament, the principle is found, but is primarily directed to those who already have eternal life in order to correct a sin and fellowship problem.¹

In Acts 8:22, a believer (v 13) is told to "*repent of this thy wickedness,*" referring to a particular sin in which he had just participated. In II Cor 12:21, Paul laments that the Corinthian believers may not have repented of several sins that he lists. In Revelation 3:19, the lukewarm believers are told to repent, by implication, concerning their prideful and materialistic attitudes. These are all believers who are being exhorted to change their mind about their sin and start living an obedient life.

The Gospel of John is sometimes called, "The Gospel Tract of the Bible" because of its very purpose, "*But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*" John 20:31). The word, "repent" is not even mentioned in John. The Gospel of John repeatedly states that the *one* requirement for receiving eternal life is belief (John 3:16, et al). It *never* says to believe and repent or to believe and anything else to be saved. If that be so, and it is, how can we go beyond God's word and add other requirements for eternal life? If repentance is necessary in order to receive eternal life then John and the Holy Spirit sure missed a great opportunity to let us know about it.

Why make the word "repent" (or any other addition) an issue if it only confuses the one who is already blinded by Satan? He needs to understand and accept the Gospel in order to be saved, and then hopefully, to grow as an obedient believer.

The New Testament is replete with exhortations for the believer to be a disciple, to submit to Jesus' Lordship. Let us not resort to unbiblical means in an effort to stem a common problem. Let us use God's Word in an honest and profitable manner. (I Tim. 1:8; cf. Rom. 3:19,20; Gal. 3:24,25).

Some Reasons To Obey God And Do Good Works:

Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14. It is one reason that God saved us.

Matt. 5:16; I Pet. 2:12. It Glorifies God.

Titus 3:5-8. It is good and profitable to men.

II Cor. 5:10; I Cor 3:11-15. We will be judged by our works for reward or loss of reward.

II John 6. It shows our love for God.

¹ An excellent and in-depth study of this and related issues is found in the book "Harmony with God, A Fresh Look at Repentance," by Zane Hodges, available from <http://www.faithalone.org/bookstore/books.html> or can be read online at:

Part 1 http://chafer.edu/journal/back_issues/v8n3_1.pdf

Part 2 http://chafer.edu/journal/back_issues/v8n4_3.pdf

Part 3 http://www.chafer.edu/journal/back_issues/Vol%209-1%20ar2.pdf

Titus 3:14; Col. 1:10. It is essential for our fruitfulness, reproducing new believers.
James 2:17,18; II Cor. 3:2. It is what others see to know that we have faith.
James 1:25. It is a way to being blessed (happy).
II Tim. 3:17. It is one object of God's revelation to us.

Part Nine
The Believer's Armor and the Spiritual Battle
Ephesians 6:10-20:
(v.15, "Feet Shod With The Preparation Of The Gospel Of Peace")

Ephesians 6:15: "*And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.*"

Originally, shoes were used primarily for **protection**. Today, with our paved streets, clean floors, carpeted homes, etc. there is not as much need for protection. Since we do not spend a lot of time walking over rough stones, wading through mud, or strolling across thorny bushes, protection is not quite as vital an issue that it once was. Shoes have become somewhat of a cultural and fashion item.

A second purpose for shoes is for **stability**. Different shoes are designed for different purposes. The readers of this epistle were familiar with the Roman soldier. Not only did his shoes have to provide protection from sharp rocks but he needed traction for stability in battle. It could mean a lost battle if he were to slip around while engaged in combat with an enemy.

The believer derives both of these benefits, **protection** and **stability**, from having his feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Preparation:

In Luke 12:42-48, we read the parable of the faithful and wise steward. A "steward" meant a "house administrator" and was used of a trusted servant whom the master of the house would leave in charge during the master's absence (v42). He was expected to make decisions just as the master would if he were present. We are expected to do the same as Christians. When we are told to pray in Jesus' name (John 14:13,14; 15:16; 16:23), it does not mean to just stick a trite phrase onto the end of our prayer. It probably means to pray as Jesus, our Master, would pray if He were here praying. That takes knowledge. We have His Spirit and His Word to guide us in His will (Rom. 8:9; Phil. 1:19; II Pet. 1:4; and Col. 3:16; John 8:31; Acts 19:10; Rev. 1:2,9; II Tim. 3:16,17).

We are required to be faithful stewards (I Cor. 4:2). We have been entrusted with the Gospel and should therefore speak to please God and not men (I Thess. 2:4; Gal. 1:10). Jesus has left us on earth to do just as the servants are told in Luke 19:13, "Occupy till He comes." ("Occupy" here means "to carry on business"). We, like Jesus, should be about our Father's business (Luke 2:49). It is God's desire that all men should be saved (I Tim. 2:3,4). Jesus died for just that reason (Mark 10:45). Our priority should be to glorify God by bearing much fruit (John 15:8).

The faithful and wise servant is promised great blessings for his obedience (vs 42-44), and the unfaithful (and foolish) servant is assured of great loss if he is disobedient (vs 46b-48). Please note in verse 47 the severe chastisement that awaits the servant who knows his lord's will but does not *prepare* himself.

How can we apply this to our lives? We have no excuse for not knowing God's will for us. Most of us live in homes that have several Bibles that are seldom opened. With some effort, a Bible teaching church can frequently be found and attended. There is an abundance of good Bible teaching available on radio, television, and the internet. (There is also an abundance of *error* available from these sources. Be careful). We are accountable to use whatever resources that God has made available to us. If we take advantage of the resources that are available, it is likely that God will provide more to be used for His glory (Luke 16:10).

When speaking of God's will for our lives, we are not referring to wondering if God wants me to be a missionary in Africa ten years from now. We are talking simply, "obeying what God tells us to do right now." When we do what He tells us in His Word to do right now, we can know His will. That is because we are, at that point, obeying God and are in His will. Romans 12:1,2 tells us, "*I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect, will of God.*" ("Prove" here means "to discern after testing"). This verse is *not* telling us to try to find out God's will so that we can decide whether or not to obey it.

If God tells us to do something, it is folly (and sin) to ignore His plain commands and then to piously ask God what His will is for us. When we start to obey, He may lead us into various areas, but one cannot steer a car that is not moving. His leading is also never contrary to His Word. When we are moving in accord with His word, we can determine which of two "right" directions to follow by the peace that He gives us (Col. 3:15). If we are truly yielded to God, it is up to Him to lead us into specific areas. When we lack wisdom, let us ask of God in faith (James 1:5,6).

It may be inferred from this parable that perhaps we may be held accountable for something that we do not presently know how to do but should have learned, i.e. prepared for. Are we allowing God to "stretch" us so that we may fit into His plan for our lives? Is His will even a priority for decisions in our lives? If not, we are missing great blessings and causing grief to the One who loved us enough to pay for our sins and give us the gift of eternal life?

Some commentators assume that this "*preparation of the gospel of peace*" relates to Romans 10:15 which quotes Isaiah 52:7, "*And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and glad tidings of good things!*"

There is no doubt that the good news (gospel) should be proclaimed, but it is doubtful that the context supports that idea in this verse. The issue is not concerning attacking the enemy or advancing. We are being exhorted to use the armor in order to stand against the onslaught of the enemy (v. 11,14). If we are not sound in the gospel, we will be unstable in Satan's attacks. We see this Satanic victory prevail in Christian circles today. The vast majority of those to whom I have witnessed over the years had previously heard some form of the false gospel; Christ-plus-works for salvation. This comes in many forms and sounds appealing but is spiritually deadly. (Read Galatians 1:6-10; 2:16,21; 5:1). We need the protection and stability that is found in the clear understanding and application of the gospel as presented in God's Word. (I Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 1:16, John 3:16; Eph. 2:8,9). As we have our "*feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*" we are then prepared to not fall into the category of believers who are, "*...children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love...*" (Eph. 4:14,15). We can then stand our ground in our conflict with Satan's forces and need not be slipping and sliding. Having our "*feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*" truly gives us protection and stability in the ongoing battle.

Some notes on "The Gospel of Peace"

The word "gospel" (euangelion,) simply means "good news." When the angels brought the shepherds "*Good tidings*" of Jesus' birth, they were literally "evangelizing" or "good newsing" them (Luke 2:10). When Paul told Timothy to "*do the work of an evangelist*," he was not telling him to buy a tent and learn how to scream at people. Literally, he was telling him to do the work of a "gospelist, or "good newsist." The good news we are to share is *not* that we need to try real hard and maybe make it some day. It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus that paid for all my sin. I receive Him by faith (John 1:12). Jesus is not only necessary for my salvation, He is sufficient.

In the passage being studied, the gospel is called "the gospel of peace." The following are some of the other Biblical designations given to the gospel:

The word is translated “gospel” 104 times in the New Testament. Several times in Matthew and Mark, the Gospel of the Kingdom is mentioned and may be something that is to Israel and has been postponed because of their national rejection of the King. The vast majority of times “gospel” is mentioned it is simply referred to as “the gospel” and usually the context is stating that it was or should be preached or believed.

It is described as “the gospel of the grace of God” once; “The gospel of God” seven times; “The gospel of his Son” once; “The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” once; “The gospel of Christ” ten times; “The glorious gospel of Christ” (lit. the good news of the glory of Christ) once. It is mentioned as the “gospel of your salvation” once and “the everlasting gospel” once; “The gospel of peace” twice; “My gospel” three times and “our gospel” by Paul twice. Why does he call it “his” gospel? Probably because of his commission from God concerning the gospel as mentioned in I Tim. 1:11, “*the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.*”

Galatians 1:5-9, mentions “*another gospel: which is not another.*” It is a false gospel with a mixture of grace and works. A curse is pronounced upon those who proclaim this error. (See also II Cor. 11:3).

6. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel:*
7. *Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*
8. *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*
9. *As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

All the above terminologies used with “gospel” seem to refer to *the gospel*” with the possible exception of the “Gospel of the Kingdom” for Israel, and of course, the false gospel mentioned in Galatians, chapter one.

Part Ten
The Believer’s Armor and the Spiritual Battle
Ephesians 6:10-20
(Verse 16, “Taking The Shield Of Faith”)

Ephesians 6:16:

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” (Lit. “the wicked one”).

The term “above all” probably does not mean that this is the most important item in our armor. Each item is essential, as we are told to “Put on the whole armor of God.” Probably a rough modern paraphrase would be, “On top of all these things... .” Other translations have it as “Withal” (meaning, besides, therewith) ASV; “In addition to all this” NIV; “Besides all these” Darby. ²

We are told four times that our goal in this battle is to be able to stand (v11; v13 twice; v14). With the application of this particular piece of armor we are also told of a specific area in which it helps us to stand; “*wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*” The shield helps us to stand by quenching Satan’s continuous barrage of fiery darts.

² Note on “above all:” The phrase in the Greek is used 23 times in the Majority Text Greek New Testament which is the text used for the KJV and NKJV. There are some minor variations in several portions of the Critical Text, the one used for almost all English translations since the late 1800’s. A helpful way to find the intended meaning of an unclear word or phrase is to see how it is used in other passages. The passages are: Matt. 24:47; 27:45; Luke 2:20; 3:20; 4:25; 9:43; 10:19; 12:44; 13:17; 16:26; 24:45; Acts 2:17; 8:27; Romans 1:18; 2:9; II Cor. 1:4; 7:4; Eph. 6:16; Philp. 1:3; Col. 3:14; I Thess. 3:7, 9; Rev. 13:7. It is translated several different ways in the KJV but seems to refer to being “upon or above all things” in the sense of being all-encompassing, not in the sense of being superior.

The term “the wicked” is literally “the wicked one.” We are not in battle with just some evil concepts but with an evil and clever personality, the Devil himself, and also with those whom he delegates (principalities, powers, rulers of darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places, v.12).

The Shield

There were two major types of shields used by the Roman soldier of that era and locale. One was a small round shield, curled at the edges and strapped to the left forearm of the foot-soldier. It resembled a giant Frisbee. This shield was light and maneuverable and was used by a warrior during hand-to-hand combat to block the blows of his opponent. In his right hand he would then utilize the short two-edged sword mentioned in the next verse for offensive combat. This is *not* the shield referred to in verse 16.

The shield referred to in this passage was a large wooden plank about four and a half feet tall and two and a half feet wide. It frequently had a metal and leather covering on the front. This type of shield offered complete frontal protection from incoming arrows. The Greek word actually comes from a word meaning “a stone or other material used to cover a doorway.”

The combat strategy often employed was to advance with a wall of shield-bearers at the front line. Behind the shield-bearers were the soldiers with swords and arrows. The shield bearers were almost immune to the barrage of fiery arrows aimed at them as they inched their way toward the enemy. At an expedient time the soldiers with the swords and arrows would then engage in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy.

We as believers, are the object of Satan’s attack of fiery missiles. We need the protection and extinguishing effect of this type of shield. But why the shield of *faith*?

Faith

What is faith and what does God’s word say about it? In order to realize the importance of “the shield of faith,” let us consider the following four areas concerning faith.

1. The Definition of Faith
2. The Description of Faith
3. The Demonstration of Faith
4. The Development of Faith

The Definition of Faith

Heb. 11:1, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” (The confident assurance, assured expectation of things hoped for.) “These faithful ones of God mentioned in chapter eleven honored Him because their faith motivated them to action. The general theme of the chapter is summarized in verse six, “*But without faith it is impossible to please God...*” See also Romans 14:23, “*whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*” These two verses tell me at least two things. One, an unbeliever can do nothing to please God except to become a believer. This helps me to understand God’s viewpoint of Isaiah 64:6, “*...all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...*”

These verses also convict me in my own spiritual pilgrimage. Col. 2:6,7, tells me, “*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: rooted and built up in the faith...*” II Cor 5:7, “*For we walk by faith, not by sight*” (Also Gal. 3:3). Is my walk with God characterized by faithful obedience to God or by my own human wisdom? “*It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful*” (I Cor. 4:2).

The words “faith” and “believe” (noun and verb) both come from the same root word in the Greek. It means “to trust, to rely upon, to be fully persuaded.” The meaning of the word does not, in any way, include a requirement for good works, good intention, or sorrow for sin. Ephesians 2:8-10, tells us we are “*saved by grace through faith... not of works...*” We are then reminded that God has prepared us that we should walk in good works (our everyday pattern of life).

The Description of Faith

Rom. 4:21. “*And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*” Chapter four of Romans begins by telling us of Abraham, a faithful man (Gal. 3:9). A dichotomy is explained of how that he could have been justified in man’s sight by his works (v2; Gen. 22; also James 2:21) and in God’s sight by his faith (v3, Gen. 15:6; also James 2:23). Then in verse 5, is presented the means of our justification before God; “*But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*” (Please note that this verse negates the common teaching that those who believe will necessarily do good works or they are not really justified).

Paul then reiterates and expands on the account recorded in Genesis of the promise to Abraham of the birth of a son and eventually, the coming Redeemer. The promise is given to him and Sarah that they would have a child in their advanced age. This would have been unlikely to happen as it naturally defies human logic and wisdom. But Abraham was “*strong in faith, giving glory to God*” (v.20). When faith is exercised in our life it gives glory to God.

And then in verse 21, comes our description of faith; “*And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*” Abraham simply believed that God would do what He said. He acted on God’s promises as if the results had already been seen.

Can we do the same? Why can we trust God for our eternal salvation, but we cannot seem to trust Him for a hamburger or our other everyday affairs? I been told that God can provide a hamburger for us because He owns “*the cattle upon a thousand hills*” (Ps. 50:10). My further study has enlightened me to the fact that He also owns the hills (Ps. 24:1). When it comes to our provision, we truly have an omni-competent God. Phil. 4:19 states to the believers who are sacrificially giving to the ministry, “*But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*” Accepting and acting on this promise and others can save us much anxiety in our lives.

The Demonstration of Faith

One of many examples of faith given in the Bible is found in the book of Judges, chapters 6 and 7. Gideon was told by the LORD that he was to be the one to “*save Israel from the hand of the Midianites*” (6:14), whom had oppressed them severely due to Israel’s disobedience to God (6:1-7). He did not think himself to be a likely candidate for this assignment (6:15), but God told him, “*Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man.*”

After a few lapses in faith, Gideon believes God and decides to act on His Word. He assembles an army of 32,000 to go against the Midianite troops who were “*like grasshoppers for multitude and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude*” (7:12). That does not seem like fair odds to me.

Well, God did not think so either. He told Gideon that his army was too large (7:2). The glory for the victory was to go to God, not Gideon. That is our purpose as believers also, to glorify God. So he trimmed the army down to 10,000 (6:3). There were still too many soldiers (6:4). Gideon then pruned the number down to 300 serious soldiers (6:6). *That* was what God had in mind (6:7). Could it be that the Christian Church has about the same percentage of serious soldiers?

God then provided a battle plan. God’s strategies did not coincide with latest battle-tactics manual of B.C. 1250. Gideon’s men were to take a trumpet and an empty pitcher with a torch inside to the battle. Proper use of these non-conventional weapons would generate confusion to the enemy and cause them to destroy themselves.

Gideon went into battle with three hundred men and the Lord on his side. That constitutes a decisive majority. The tactics that God told him to use were unorthodox and, humanly speaking, ridiculous, but they worked. Gideon was faithful to God and therefore, was victorious for God. We can do the same. It is

wisdom for us to choose to take God at His word, the only One who has never been untruthful or mistaken. Please prayerfully read the Bible account.

The Development of Faith

Rom. 10:17. *“So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”* We see from this verse that there is a direct connection between faith and God’s word. From God’s word we can know Who should be the object of our faith and what we should believe. It would be useless to trust a powerless idol to do something it is unable to do. It would also be useless to trust an all-powerful God to do something that He said that He would not do. Faith is not the power. The power is in the object of our faith, God Himself.³

How much faith is necessary for a person’s salvation? The answer is; any amount that constitutes faith. The amount is not the issue. The issue is whether a person has faith or not. It is not our faith that saves us, it is God’s grace. Our faith appropriates God’s grace. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works lest any man should boast”* (Eph. 2:8,9) This verse sets no requirement for the amount of faith or strength of faith required to have eternal life. I Pet. 1:4,5 tells us that believers have *“an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* Notice that we are not kept saved by our faith or our power, but *“by the power of God through faith...”* We are *“born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever”* (I Pet. 1:23).

But does the Bible speak of degrees of faith? Yes, it does. We are to be trusting God after we are saved also. *“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith...”* (Col. 2:6,7) Paul told the Corinthian Church that he walked by *“faith and not by sight”* (II Cor. 5:7).

Jesus admonished those with “little faith” in the following verses: Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; Luke 12:28. He was obviously pleased with those commended in the following verses who exhibited “great faith.” Matt. 8:10; 15:28; Luke 7:9. The first New Testament martyr, Stephen, was “full of faith,” and God used him for His glory (Acts 6:8). Though we all are to be trusting God in our walk with Him, apparently God gives some the gift of faith which would manifest this quality in a special way for God’s glory (I Cor. 12:9).

It seems that God not only wants to strengthen our faith through hearing His Word but also to grow through seeing God be faithful and then applying these lessons from the past events to a present crisis. In Matthew 16:8, Jesus admonishes the disciples for being of “little faith.” The reason that the disciples doubted (the opposite of faith), was that they had found themselves without food, hungry, and far from the local Burger King. After Jesus’ remark about their little faith, he advises them to remember that He had recently fed the five thousand and the four thousand and had had plenty left over both times. Wake up, guys. We are dealing with the all-powerful, all-loving God.

The other side of the same coin is; be careful about experiences. Experience is subjective and can be deceptive. We must remember that Satan is a master counterfeiter. His workers can do wonders also (Matt. 7:21-23). Experience can be a valuable teacher and encourager but our experience must always be judged by the Word of God, not the other way around.

³ Note on “Is faith a gift of God?” There is a portion of Calvinistic doctrine that teaches that some people are predetermined by God to believe and therefore, do not have a free will to trust in Christ. In other words, they will believe, whether they choose to or not. Some teachers of this persuasion use Eph. 2:8, 9 in an attempt to establish Biblical grounds for this teaching. The logic used is the claim that “It is the gift of God” refers to “faith” not the whole package of eternal life, such as other verses declare (Rom. 6:23). This rationale is stretching the context in the English translation and is unacceptable in the Greek. There must be gender agreement between the pronoun and its antecedent. The only pronoun in the verse is neuter and both “faith” and “grace” are feminine. “Gift” is neuter. (Rom. 6:23)

Which leads us to the opening verse of this section, *“Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.”* It is difficult, if not impossible, to have a strong Biblical faith when one does not know the Word of God. One will not know the word of God until he is diligent in its study. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (II Tim. 2:15). When viewed in the light of harsh reality, this knowledge is not absorbed by us through osmosis. A price must be paid, both in time and diligence, for this blessing.

The Fiery Darts of the Wicked

Of what would you suppose composes the “fiery darts of the wicked one?” If the defense is the “shield of faith” it is likely that we are talking of the opposite of faith; doubt and discouragement bred by unbelief. Both of these are effective tools in Satan’s arsenal. When we let these powers prevail in our mind, we are greatly weakened in the battle. The shield of faith is the effective counter-offense. *“...Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17).

Where does faith originate? It seems that it is God, our Creator, who gives us the ability to believe (Rom. 12:3). It is God’s Holy Spirit who convicts the world of the sin of unbelief (John 16:7,8). It is God’s Word that makes it clear what and in Whom we are to believe (I Tim. 3:16,17; John 3:16). But the decision of whether or not we believe and what we believe is a choice of our own will. This decision is made in our minds. The Bible is replete with exhortations for us to do or to believe the right thing.

Could it be that Satan gains or loses victories in our mind? Is the realm of our mind a major battleground? *“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...”* (II Cor. 10:3-5). Please note in this description of the spiritual battle the reference to “imaginations” and “thought.” (Imagination = reasoning, reckoning, computation. Verb form used in Rom. 8:18). It is our responsibility to bring *“into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”* What we allow our selves to think upon comes out in our words and actions (Prov. 23:7). Bob Jones, Sr. is quoted as saying, “It is not sin when the birds fly over your head, but it is sin when you let them nest in your hair.”

Yes, there is a battle in and for our minds. Satan battles for the mind of the unsaved person in order to keep him from receiving the Gospel. *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: 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* (II Cor. 2:3,4; also Matt. 13:19).

What about the believer? Satan is not powerful enough to make a born-again person become “unborn.” Our salvation is secure in Christ. What he *can* do is to influence us so that we will be unprofitable servants for God. In the Book of Romans Paul clearly establishes our justification by faith (3:20-28; 4:5; 5:1,8-11; 6:23; 8:1; 8:38,39; 10:4,13; 11:6). Then in light of all this blessing he tells us, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: **but be ye transformed by the renewing or your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God”* (Rom. 12:1,2). According to this verse, one of the key prerequisites to finding God’s will is the achievement of the appropriate condition of our mind.

A brief synopsis of this verse:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren,” In light of what has been previously said, a pleading or an exhortation to believers.

“By the mercies of God,” by means of His mercy or compassions.

“That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice,” In contrast to the slain sacrifice of which the Jew was familiar, He wants us to live for Him. A sacrifice exercises no will of its own.

“Holy, acceptable unto God,” We are more usable in His service as we live a holy life. This is well-pleasing to God.

“Which is your reasonable service.” This is reasonable service because He bought us and we belong to Him (I Cor. 6:19,20).

“And be not conformed to this world:” Do not be fashioned after, in accordance with this age. The word “conformed” carries with it the sense of something transitory, changeable, or unstable. The word was used of a candlemaker forcing wax “through a mold” to adjust the shape of the wax to the shape of the mold. Do not be forced through the world’s mold. It will misshape us.

“But be ye transformed,” In contrast to the negative, be ye transformed. This word is transliterated as “metamorphosis.” It implies a thorough change in form, such as we use in the changing of a caterpillar into a butterfly.

“By the renewing of your mind” The way we achieve this transformation is by the renewing (renew, to make different) of our mind (the seat of our perception and thinking).

“That ye may prove” The end result of these actions are so that we may discover God’s will. (Prove: discover after examination or trial)

“What is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God” Do we believe that God’s will is really the best. If we think that God knows what He is talking about then we should act upon His Word by faith.

*“Wherefore gird up the loins of your **mind**, be sober,...”* (I Pet. 1:13)

*“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound **mind**”* (II Tim. 1:7).

*“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually **minded** is life and peace”* (Romans 8:6).

*“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and **minds** through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **think** on these things. Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of Peace shall be with you”* (Phil. 4:5-7).

*“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose **mind** is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee”* (Isa. 26:3).

Part Eleven

The Believer’s Armor and the Spiritual Battle Ephesians 6:10-20 (Verse 17, “The helmet of salvation”)

Ephesians 6:17. *“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

In our study of the Believer’s armor, we have seen that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare against spiritual adversaries. The helmet, like the breastplate, covers vital areas of the soldier’s body. The stakes are high and eternal values are in view. We are exhorted to take on the whole armor of God so that we may be able to stand against the strategies of the devil. We cannot be victorious in our own strength and wisdom. The next item of our spiritual armor that we shall consider is the “helmet of salvation.”

I once thought that this verse (i.e. the helmet of salvation) was a challenge not to be a “typical” Christian. He is one who got saved (took the helmet of salvation) and did not bother getting dressed with the rest of the armor. The “helmet of salvation” is all that he is wearing. He is not armed or protected against the adversary, let alone the elements. This would leave him in an embarrassing and vulnerable position.

Though it appears that this statement typifies many Christians today, that is not what the verse is saying. It certainly is true that wearing only one piece of armor leaves us only minimally protected, but Ephesians is written to people who are already saved. We, as believers, do not automatically have the “helmet of

salvation” as we are told to “take” it. Paul is not telling us to become strong in the Christian life and victorious in the spiritual battle and then get saved. But how *should* we apply this?

I Thess. 5:8, tells us, “*But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation*” (cf. I Cor. 13:13). Those who choose not to receive Christ are the ones without hope (Eph 2:12; I Thess. 4:13). (“Hope” in the NT means a joyful and confident anticipation).

Apparently, the helmet has something to do with our assurance of future blessings, both eternally and temporally. We are not running a race with no finish line. If Paul could say “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*” (Rom 8:18), then not only is there a time coming when this assurance will be realized, but we can now *know* that it is coming.

And in the same context, Rom. 8:28 also gives us some temporal hope. “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” Everyone of us has need to apply this verse at some time in our life. Please note what this verse *does* say and what it does *not* say. It does not say that all things are good in themselves. Sin and tragedy are not good. They *work together* for good. It does not say that we know *how* all things work together for good. We may not see or understand it at the time of trial. Let us not wonder why God is “not working” when the truth is; we just do not see Him working when He actually is or maybe He is not working according to our shortsighted agenda. Do we really believe that the Omniscient God knows what is best for us?

James 1:2-4 gives us some keen insight concerning how to view and handle some of the testings that come into our lives. Verse 2 tells us to count it all joy when (not “if”) we fall into various testings. Why? How can we do this when it hurts? Verse three and four tells us. Because we know something. Because we know that it is making us more like Jesus wants us to be. The next few verses then gives us a surefire formula on how to find Divine wisdom concerning our trials. God intends for trials in our life to “work together for good.” Such hope we can have that the world and carnal believers do not understand.

The helmet protects a vital part of the body. Just as the Roman soldier’s helmet protected him from the deadly blow of the broadsword, the helmet of salvation can protect us from Satan’s attacks of doubt and discouragement. We can know now that we have eternal life based on the authority of God’s Word (I John 5:13) and with that assurance, we can focus better on the temporal battle and the eternal joy that awaits us. Let us be able to say with Paul, “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.*” (I Tim. 4:7).

Gal. 6:9 encourages us to, “*...not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*” There is an implication here that we may lose some of our reward if we quit before the finish line. Don’t give up. The victory is in Jesus. “*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*” (I Cor. 15:57,58).

There are three “hopeful” aspects to our salvation: past, present, and future. “Past” is that we have been saved from the *penalty* of our sin (Rom.5:1; Titus 2:14). “Present” is that there is provision to be saved from the *power* of sin (I John 1:9; 2:1,2) and “future is ”that we will be saved from the *presence* of sin (I Peter 1:3-5; Rev. 21:27). Those who believe on the name of the Son of God may know that they have eternal life. (I John 5:13). “*Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech*” II Cor. 3:11).

Part Twelve
The Believer’s Armor and the Spiritual Battle
Ephesians 6:10-20 (V. 17, “*The Sword of the Spirit*”)

Ephesians 6:17. “*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*”

In order for us to stand in this spiritual battle, we are told to take several pieces of armor which cover various parts of our body. The Sword of the Spirit is unique, in that it is an item that we think of as being a weapon more than being armor. It is the only offensive item mentioned in our list so far. In warfare, sometimes the best defense is a good offense.

The recipients of this letter were familiar with the armor of the Roman soldier. The sword that is mentioned here is not referring to the large unwieldy sword that was sometimes used in battle. This verse is referring to a practical tool about 18 inches long which was carried by every soldier. It was not just a weapon of the soldier but was apparently a common tool of the population (Matt. 26:51; Luke 22:36). It was kept on the belt and was a functional device to be kept accessible for ready use (Cp. Ps. 1:1-4; 119:11).

Why the allegory of the word of God being the sword of the *Spirit*? Perhaps because God inspired the transmission of His word through His Holy Spirit (II Pet. 1:20,21).

God places a high value upon His word, and makes some formidable claims concerning His Scriptures (Psalm 138:2). The following are four areas of which we will consider.

God's Word is Precise
God's Word is Permanent
God's Word is Powerful
God's Word is Profitable

God's Word is Precise.

God says what He means and means what He says. "...*Thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). We can trust God for exactly what He says. He does not fudge when pinned down to what He says. He never has to retract a statement because it was not true or made rashly.

Isaiah 48:3-5 gives us one reason for prophetic statements that God has made. We are so obstinate that God has told us ahead of time what is going to happen. When it comes to pass as He says, we can be convinced that He is the True God.

In all the hundreds of prophetic declarations of God, He gives precise details that can accurately pinpoint the fulfillment. He is not vague and ambiguous as are some of our modern-day fortune-tellers.

God's Word is Permanent.

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:18).

For an explanation of a "jot" and "tittle," look in Psalm 119. In most Bibles the Hebrew letters of the alphabet letters preface each section of eight verses. This is because this Psalm was written in acrostic form. That is, the first eight verses began with the first letter of the alphabet, the second eight verses began with the second letter, and so on.

Verse 73 begins with the letter "Jod." This is a "jot" and is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Verse 25 and verse 153 shows us a "Daleth" and a "Resh." Please note that these letters appear identical except for the slight difference of the stroke at the top corner. This differentiating factor or small stroke is called a "tittle."

God is trying to tell us that His Word is everlasting and not even the smallest detail will ever fail. We can count on it. *"For ever, O LORD, they word is settled in heaven"* (Psalm 119:89).

God's Word is Powerful

“For the word of God is quick [living], and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12)

What if we are sharing the Gospel with someone and they tell us that they do not believe the Bible? Do we then throw away our sword? No! It is still a sword and it is still powerful whether or not someone believes that it is. Truth is objective and is not determined by whether or not someone believes it. In Matthew. 4:1-11, Jesus effectively used the Word against the attacks of His adversary. We should do the same. We cannot effectively do that unless we diligently study it (II Tim 2:15). It is powerful. Let us make use its power for God's glory.

We also see here that God's Word is penetrating. We are to present God's truth but it is God's Holy Spirit who will convict the person. It is penetrating also in that it has the answers for life's deepest problems. The promises in God's Word are a great comfort while we are working through some of our trials.

God's Word is Profitable

“All scripture is given by the inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (II Tim. 3:16-17)

The middle part of this verse makes a claim, the first part gives basis for the claim, and the last part gives the intended result of the claim.

The claim is that the Scripture is profitable for doctrine (teaching, instructing in God's truth), for reproof (rebuking those in sin), correcting (those in error), and instruction (Lit. child-training) in righteousness (guiding new believers in God's ways).

The basis for the claim is simply that Scripture is given by inspiration of God (lit. God-breathed). If God said it, that is all the basis we need.

The intended result is that the man of God be perfect (not sinless, but complete), thoroughly furnished (completely furnished or fitted out) unto all good works.

I infer from this verse that I cannot be completely equipped for good works (necessary to glorify God, Matt. 5:16) without knowing God's Word. According to Ephesians 6:17, I must take the “sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” in order to be victorious in the spiritual battle. Let us diligently study His Word so that we may effectively stand.

Part Thirteen

The Believer's Armor and the Spiritual Battle Ephesians 6:10-20 (Verse 18, “Praying Always...”)

Ephesians 6:18-20

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.

Up until this point in our study we have learned that in order to stand in this spiritual battle we are to:

- Have our loins girt about with truth (v14),
- Have on the breastplate of righteousness (v14),
- Have our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace (v15),

Take the shield of faith (v16),
Take the helmet of salvation (v17), and
Take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God (v16).

Some sermons on this topic have required the application of these six items of armor, then assumed that that is the conclusion of the matter. To be properly equipped we must also consider verses 18-20, as they include important resources and purposes necessary for the inclusion of the armor and the promise of victory.

“Praying” is not individual piece of armor that we stick on at the end. It is an operation which bathes the whole process of putting on the armor and standing in the battle. Praying should be a pattern of everyday life for the Believer. The word “praying” in this verse is a participle, not a verb. This clause of a long sentence (v14-20) starts in verse 17 and literally is telling us to take these items mentioned and while taking them to be in the process of prayer and watching.

What is prayer? The Greek word comes from two words that simply mean, “toward a wish or desire.” In its simplest definition it means, “asking God for something you want.” Prayer in the Bible is talking to God (silently or out loud) and asking for desires or needs of ourselves and others. We are also told in various places to praise Him, offer thanks and to confess our sins. If prayer is asking for something, then answered prayer is receiving that for which you asked.

Since we have access to this power to use for God’s glory we should then seek God’s wisdom in what to ask and how to pray (See Ps. 106:15 and context). His instructions to us are found in His Word. We are commanded to be controlled by God’s Holy Spirit (Gal.5:16; Eph. 5:18). He always leads according to His Word and never contrary to it. We should then diligently study God’s Word (II Tim. 2:15) for the assurance that we are not being influenced by spirits that are not of God (I Tim. 4:1). One precious promise concerning prayer and God’s Holy Spirit is found in Rom. 8:26, where we are told that He helps together with us in our weakness and makes intercession for us because we do not know for what we should pray.

Two major reasons for unanswered prayer are given in James 4:3,4. *“Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”*

The two reasons addressed here are for unanswered prayer are:

1. We do not ask.
2. We ask for the wrong motives.

We not only have access to this power but we are commanded to continually engage in prayer. In Luke 11:1, one of Jesus’ disciples said to Him, *“Lord, teach us to pray...”* Part of Jesus’ answer was to start praying. He then presented two parables with lessons concerning the necessity of consistency in prayer and the qualities of the One to Whom we pray. In Luke 18:2-8 Jesus tells a parable which illustrates that *“men ought always to pray and faint not”* (v 1). We are told in I Thess. 5:17, to *“Pray without ceasing.”*

Why the emphasis on constant prayer? *“Without faith it is impossible to please God...”* (Heb. 11:6:), and *“...whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Rom. 14:23). This may be a major reason for prayer. Prayer is not only an act of obedience but an act of faith. God has bought and paid for us (I Cor 6:19,20) and He now wants us to be God-sufficient for His glory, not self-sufficient for our glory (II Cor. 3:5; 12:9). This is contrary to human nature and all the humanistic philosophy which is dumped upon us today.

In my own Christian growth I frequently can visualize results of eternal value when I diligently study God’s Word, sacrificially give to minister to other believers, or boldly share the gospel with an unsaved person. Though this is certainly an accurate assumption and we cannot underestimate or detract from obedience to clear admonitions such as these, why do I sometimes not feel the same about prayer as I do about other forms of service?

Maybe it is because of my pride. Prayer is hard work but I do not seem to be accomplishing anything by *my* power. When *I* am doing something, I may think that I am kind of helping God along with my “marvelous” efforts and talents. When I pray, it seems that *I* am not doing anything. I am seeking God to do something. That offends my sinful pride because I am then trusting God, instead of me. Except for the emotional crutch value, upon which I would rather not depend, humanly speaking, prayer is a waste of time. That is *not* God’s assessment of prayer.

When viewed in the light of harsh reality, I must accept the fact that God got along fine before I came along and He will do fine when I leave the scene. It is only because of His grace that I can have the gift of eternal life and share the privilege of serving Him. He does not need my faithless efforts to further His cause. He wants His Spirit-controlled children to be yielded to Him. In His grace He promises the gift of eternal life to those who will trust Him (Eph. 2:8,9; Rom. 6:23) and He promises great blessings in addition to the gift of eternal life to those who will serve Him (Luke 18:29,30).

We have guarantees of answered prayer. These promises are conditional. The first condition is listed above in the comments about James 4:2. We do not have answered prayer because we do not pray. Assuming that we *do* pray, the following are several of the conditions listed in God’s word for assurance of answered prayer:

I John 5:14,15, “*And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.*”

The condition listed here is that we ask according to His will. That may entail some searching of God’s Word and being yielded to His Holy Spirit. I infer from this verse that if it is right to do or have, it is right to pray for it.

John 14:13,14, “*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it.*”

The condition given here is to ask in Jesus’ name. Does this mean that if we stick the well-worn phrase on the end of our prayer that this promise applies? No. It means that we must ask something that Jesus would ask. This could be an allusion to the requirement God puts on believers if they are to be faithful stewards. I Cor. 4:2, “*Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*” A steward was a trusted house-servant whom the master put in charge when he was to leave town. The steward was assigned great responsibility and authority. He was to make decisions just as the master would if he were there. When Jesus left He said that He would send the Comforter to be with us and in us, but we, as faithful stewards, were to be doing Jesus’ business just as He would if He were bodily present. We can pray in Jesus’ name by praying for what He would if He were here. This condition is similar to the first.

Psalms 37:4, “*Delight thyself also in the LORD, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.*”

The condition given here is to delight yourself in the LORD. If our delight is to do what God wants us to, the rest of the verse applies. One fringe benefit that may not be obvious is that as we put God first in our lives, not only does He give us the *request* of the desires of our heart, but frequently, He will give us the desires themselves, then the fulfillment of them. That is a neat deal.

OK, I need to pray. I prayed once last week after I went to bed (sometimes called “sack religion”) but I now realize that that is not what God requests of me, either for His glory or for my benefit. What now? How can I start a meaningful prayer life and see more of God’s blessing flowing in me and through me?

Some helpful suggestions:

1. Determine, with God’s help, to start praying, as Jesus admonished His disciples in Luke 11:1. Realize that praying is not a formal speech with a bunch of “thee’s” and “thou’s.” It is just talking to someone who loves you more than you can grasp and with Whom you can grow to love as you become closer to Him.

Satan does not seem to mind a believer's "Christian" activity, as long as it is not done "in the power of His might" Eph. 6:10).

2. Set aside a time to pray that works for you. Make it a priority. We all have busy schedules but we also all have 24 hours in a day. We end up doing what we choose to do during this time. Evaluate how you spend your time. Whatever is of lesser value or importance, discard. This will take self-discipline. It is foolish to spend most of our time and energy on efforts that will mean nothing a thousand years from now. One pastor was convicted about the amount of time that he spent watching TV. He chose to start praying during the same time. This was a turning point in his life. God has since used him in a ministry that has affected many thousands of people (See "The Cross and the Switchblade" by David Wilkerson).

3. Set aside a place to pray, preferably without too many distractions. This suggestion, along with setting aside a time is to be made in addition to consistent, brief, prayers necessary throughout the day.

4. Make a study of prayer. See what God has to say on the subject. Follow the footnotes or study guides in your reference Bible, or get a good book on prayer in the Bible book store. Read biographies of faithful servants of God.

5. Make some sort of list of prayer requests with notations of the time of answers to these prayers. Update as needed.

"Praying always" is an essential ingredient for victory in our spiritual battle. Verses 18 and 19 will tell us for what we need to pray and in verse 19 and 20 we shall see the ultimate goal in our battle; to make known the gospel so that we may glorify God by bearing much fruit (John 15:8).

Part Fourteen **The Believer's Armor and the Spiritual Battle** **Ephesians 6:10-20 (Verse 18, "Praying Always...")**

Ephesians 6:18-20

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

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.

For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We see from this verse and our previous study that God wants us to be "praying always." Praying is simply the asking of God for something we desire. Verse 18 adds more information to this exhortation. We are to be, "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.*"

What is "all prayer and supplication?" "Supplication" is similar in meaning to "prayer." It is something "wanted, requested, or needed." "Watching" literally means "without sleep," or "attentive and ready." "Perseverance" is a good one-word translation and means "to continue steadfastly and with unremitting care." "Saints" just means "holy ones;" the believers who now have Christ's righteousness by trusting in Him (II Cor. 5:21).

Verse 18 is telling us, "Through (or by means of) all (or all forms of) praying (asking) and requests, [to be] praying (asking) in every point of time (continually)" in spirit (no article, could mean the Holy Spirit or the human spirit) in or by means of perseverance for requests or needs of all the believers. This sounds a lot like we ought to be praying for things that we need and for the needs of others. This is commonly called intercessory prayer.

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority..." (I Tim. 2:1,2). We are told that Jesus intercedes for us (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; Isa 53:12) and also that His Holy Spirit intercedes for us (Rom. 8:26,27). These are

Divine examples of what we should be doing for others. New Testament believers are called priests (I Pet. 2:9). One of the major functions of the Jewish priests to intercede for the people. Can we do any less for others?

In verse 18, Paul tells us that we should be praying for all the saints. In verse 19, he makes a more specific request. He now seeks prayer for himself, and in a particular area.

He implores the church to pray for him that he may be able to boldly open his mouth and clearly proclaim the Gospel as he ought (lit. as is necessary). The word “boldly” in both verse 18 and 19 is full of meaning. It is the same word as “plainness” in II Cor. 3:12. “*Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech.*” Definitions of the word include, “boldness, fearless confidence, openness,” but also entail “plainness, clarity, unambiguousness.”

The Apostle, Paul put a high priority on presenting the Gospel as God would have him to do (I Thess. 2:4; Gal. 1:10). This included the clarity and purity of the Gospel. In Gal. 1:6-10, he emphasizes the necessity of proclaiming the true Gospel and pronounces a Divine curse on those who propagate a perverted message. The criterion for distinction is the “grace of Christ” (v5), which is emphasized throughout the rest of the epistle (2:16, 21; 3:22; 5:1-13).

In II Cor. 12:3, he gives us a warning concerning this issue, “*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*” He follows this with more warning about the false gospel and a defense for his proclamation, then in verses 13-15, he describes the false apostles who proclaim this false gospel that has been corrupted from “*the simplicity that is in Christ.*” “*For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed into the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*” We see here that these false apostles are deceitful, appear as true apostles of Christ as teachers of righteousness. This is the issue with the Gospel, *grace or works* (Rom. 11:6). If we add man’s righteousness to God’s perfection, we pollute the whole thing (Isa. 64:6). Please note also that these false apostles have Satanic power behind them. We are truly in a spiritual battle. We need the spiritual armor in order to stand.

Paul was an “*ambassador in bonds*” at the time of the penning of this epistle. Why was he in jail? Because he had been doing the very thing for which he is asking for prayer; boldly proclaiming the Gospel. He tells us in Philippians 1:12-18 that this “jail time” was working out for “*the furtherance of the gospel*” (v12), and that because of his bonds and testimony, many more were becoming bold (fearless) in their proclamation of the Good News (v13-18). Oh, that we could get the spiritual vision that he had. He served, sacrificed, and suffered, for such a short time with eternal values in view (Rom. 8:18). May we confess our shortsighted and selfish values and rearrange our priorities in order to be victorious in the spiritual battle before us with and for the One who did so much for us (I Cor. 15:58).

Brief Overview of Ephesians 6:10-20

- V.10 The source of our strength.
- V.11 The command to appropriate the resources and the purpose for their application.
- V.12 The description of the enemy with whom we battle.
- V.13 Reiteration of the command to appropriate the resources, and the purpose of them in light of the magnitude of the enemy.
- 14-17 The description of the resources.
- V.18 Prayer, the way to apply the resources.
- 19-20 The ultimate goal in the battle; to proclaim God’s Good News of Salvation (John 15:8; I Thess. 2:4; Gal. 1:10), and to glorify God by bearing much fruit (John 15:8)

Ist Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.