

## EPH. 5:25 – 6:24

By Ashby L. Camp

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B. Husbands love your wives (5:25-33) – <sup>25</sup>*Husbands, love the wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her,* <sup>26</sup>*that he might sanctify her, cleansing [her] by the washing of the water with a word,* <sup>27</sup>*that he might present the church to himself [as] glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but in order that she might be holy and blameless.* <sup>28</sup>*In the same way, the husbands [also] ought to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself,* <sup>29</sup>*for no one ever hated his own flesh but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ also [does] the church,* <sup>30</sup>*for we are members of his body.* <sup>31</sup>*"For this reason, a man will leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."* <sup>32</sup>*This mystery is great, but I am speaking with reference to Christ and to the church.* <sup>33</sup>*In any case, you also, one by one, let each love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she fears the husband.*

1. Husbands are to love their wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her.

a. Given the exhortation to wives to submit to their husbands, first-century readers probably expected husbands to be exhorted "to rule" their wives. Instead, Paul commands husbands "to love" their wives. Love is an essential quality in the lives of all Christians (1:4, 3:17, 4:2, 4:15-16, 5:2), but here it is specifically required of husbands in relation to their wives.

b. The very fact he commands it shows that it involves an act of will. Biblical love is not infatuation; it is a self-giving commitment to another person's welfare. Of course, in a marriage this love exists in a context of natural affection and sexual intimacy.

c. The model for this love is Christ's love for the church. The husband is to view his relationship with his submissive wife, not in terms of what he can demand from her, but in terms of how he can give to her. He is not to seek to harm or exploit her but to bless her.

d. A husband's commitment to his wife is to be so great that there is no sacrifice he is unwilling to make for her *genuine* welfare. Christ gave himself up on a cross for the church!

2. Having spoken of Christ's love for the church, Paul elaborates on its purpose (not intending this as part of the husband's responsibility for his wife). The purpose of that love, supremely expressed in his death, was:

a. To sanctify her – This means to consecrate her to God, to set her apart for a special relationship with him. Best remarks (p. 542), "Those whom God sanctifies are separated from the secular sphere and brought within that of his holiness (cf Eccles 33.12; 45.4), and are therefore acceptable to him." This sanctification was achieved by Jesus' atoning sacrifice on the cross, the cleansing effect of which is appropriated "by the washing of the water with a word."

(1) This is almost certainly a reference to baptism and is recognized as such by the vast majority of commentators. As Markus Barth acknowledges in *Ephesians 4-6*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 692: "Practically all interpreters in the East and West, in ancient, medieval, Reformation and modern times, agree in explaining [Eph.] 5:26 as a reference to baptism." Recent commentators sharing this view include A. Skevington Wood, "Ephesians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 11:77; Bruce, 388; Lincoln, 375; PHEME PERKINS, *Ephesians*, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 134; Best, 542-543; Muddiman, 265.

(2) Best writes (p. 542), "As soon as the readers began to believe and were baptised they were saints, i.e. sanctified; sanctification and baptism are connected in 1 Cor 6:11, a connection brought out later in our verse."

(3) The "with a word" is either the confession of the baptized person or the formula pronounced by the baptizer. A less likely possibility is to take "by the word" with "cleansing" (i.e., cleansing by the word through the washing in water). It would then be a reference to the gospel message.

(4) This allusion to baptism is particularly apt to the bridal imagery Paul is employing. Jewish marital custom employed a prenuptial bath, and the marital imagery of Ezek. 16:8-14 refers to God washing his bride.

b. To present the church to himself as glorious, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing – The bridal imagery comes to the fore. Christ died to make the church fit for him as a bride. Her splendor is not flawed by any physical defect (spot, wrinkle, or any such thing). The next clause makes clear that this is a metaphorical reference to her being holy and blameless.

c. To make the church holy and blameless – Purity is the distinguishing mark of the church Christ died to form. As I said with reference to 1:4, we are now without fault or blemish, not in ourselves but because God in his grace has made us that way, and we will be declared as such when we are presented before him for judgment (Col. 1:22; Eph. 5:27). And on that Day, at the consummation of the kingdom, our transformation into his image will be completed so that we will be in nature and practice what we have been by God's merciful decree.

3. In the same way as Christ, who loves the church as his body (5:23, 30), husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. Just as a husband cares for his

body's needs, so his love for his wife should be the sort that cares for her needs and facilitates her growth and development. This makes perfect sense given that the husband and wife are "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). After all, no one ever hated his own flesh; instead, he nourishes and cherishes it.

4. One nourishes and cherishes one's own body as Christ also nourishes and cherishes the church, *for we are members of his body*. There is an intimate union between Christ and his disciples.

a. Paul elaborates on the Christ-church relationship by citing Gen. 2:24 without any introductory formula indicating that he is citing Scripture (e.g., "It says"). He simply begins the citation with its opening words, "For this reason," the immediate antecedent of which in Ephesians is "for we are members of his body." It seems he is saying, "*Because we are members of Christ's body*, men and women unite in the one-flesh relationship of marriage." If that is correct, he is saying that marriage was instituted in part to serve as a type for Christ's relationship with the church. O'Brien states (p. 438), "Indeed, it was God's intention from the beginning when he instituted marriage to picture the relationship between Christ and his redeemed people."

b. He says "This mystery is great" (or profound), and then he clarifies that the mystery to which he is referring is Christ's relationship with the church. The mystery of Christ's relationship with the church is another aspect of the one grand mystery God has now revealed in Christ, and it is that mystery of which the intimate union of marriage is to be a type. Lincoln writes (p. 381), "Both the OT passage and the marriage relationship of which it speaks are connected with the mystery, but their connection is that they point to the secret that has now been revealed, that of the relationship between Christ and the Church." O'Brien adds (p. 434), "The mystery is not any particular marriage or marriage itself; it is the union of Christ and the church which is reflected in a truly Christian marriage. Such a mystery is indeed 'profound'."

c. As an intended type for Christ's relationship with the church, Christian marriage is to live up to that role. It is to reflect Christ's loving relationship with the church. So marriage is a type for Christ's relationship with the church, and Christ's relationship with the church sets the standard for how it is to function in that capacity.

5. The bottom line, given in v. 33, is that, even if one does not grasp the full import of marriage's relationship to Christ and the church, husbands are to love their wives as themselves, and wives are to respect (fear) their husbands.

C. Children obey your parents (6:1-3) – *Children, obey your parents in [the] Lord, for this is right.* <sup>2</sup>"Honor your father and mother" – *which is [the] first commandment with a promise* – <sup>3</sup>"that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."

1. The children are here commanded to obey their parents as an element of their Christian discipleship. They are to obey them "in the Lord," meaning as an aspect of their (the children's) being "in the Lord." (This phrase appears in 2:21, 4:1, 4:17, 5:8, 6:10, 6:21.) This parallels the motivation of a wife's subordination ("as to the Lord") and a slave's obedience ("as to Christ").

2. In Rom. 1:30 disobedience to parents is cited as a sign of Gentile depravity, and in 2 Tim. 3:2 it is cited as a sign of the evil of the last days.

3. The term "child" primarily denotes relationship rather than age and can be used of adults. The context suggests that these children were old enough to be conscious of a relationship to their Lord and to be appealed to on the basis of it, but young enough still to be in the process of being brought up (6:4). According to C. L. Mitton, this exhortation "could only refer to older children (perhaps what we should call teenagers) who were of an age to make a personal commitment to Christ, but still young enough to be living at home with their parents" (quoted in Lincoln, 403).

4. For this is right – Paul appeals to them not only on the basis of their Christian commitment but also on the basis of what is right. It was common practice (e.g., Stoics) to appeal to what was generally recognized as right.

5. Paul reinforces his command by an appeal to Scripture. He cites the fifth of the Ten Commandments from Deut. 5:16 (see also, Ex. 20:12). He notes that it is the first commandment with a promise, and then gives the promise, to emphasize its importance, not necessarily meaning that the promise is applicable to their context. On the other hand, he may be applying the promise to their context in the sense that, as a general rule, those who heed the instruction of godly parents live well and long.

D. Fathers do not anger your children (6:4) – <sup>4</sup>*And fathers, do not make your children angry but bring them up in [the] training and instruction of [the] Lord.*

1. Fathers are commanded not to make their children angry but to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Fathers are specifically addressed because, as the head of the household, they have the primary responsibility for training the children. What is said to them, however, naturally applies to mothers as well.

2. Parents are not to provoke anger, meaning justifiable anger, in their children. This rules out excessively severe discipline, unreasonably harsh demands, abuse of authority, arbitrariness, subjecting a child to humiliation, and all forms of gross insensitivity to a child's needs and sensibilities.

3. Positively, fathers are to supply their children with Christian instruction.

E. Slaves obey your earthly masters (6:5-8) – <sup>5</sup>*Slaves, obey the masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling, in sincerity of your heart, as to Christ, <sup>6</sup>not by way of eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ doing the will of God from [the]*

soul, <sup>7</sup> *servicing with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men, <sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good each person may do, this he will receive from [the] Lord, whether slave or free.*

1. Christian slaves are to serve their earthly master wholeheartedly because that service is part of their discipleship, part of their service to the Lord.

2. They are to do so knowing that Christ rewards faithfulness, whether in a slave or a free man.

F. Masters treat your slaves properly (6:9) – <sup>9</sup> *And masters, do the same to them, giving up threatening, knowing that the Master, both of them and you, is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.*

1. Christian masters are likewise to make their service of the one heavenly Master determinative of their actions.

2. They and the slaves they own are fellow slaves of Christ. This will keep them from abusing their slaves. O'Brien states (p. 456), "Christ's lordship over the lives of both slaves and masters has the effect of changing the dynamic of the relationship between them and lifting their mutual attitudes and behaviour to a new plane."

#### Excursus on First-Century Slavery

Slavery was a basic social institution in the ancient world. S. Scott Bartchy writes in "Slave, Slavery" in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1098: "As many as one-third of the population of the empire were enslaved, and an additional large percentage had been slaves earlier in their lives."

The Bible does not endorse or assume the goodness of slavery; it simply tolerates it. It takes slavery as a fact of life and regulates people's involvement in it. Unlike marriage and parent-child relationships, Scripture nowhere suggests that slavery was ordained or instituted by God; it was a product of sinful humanity. This is evident from the fact that in 1 Cor. 7:21 Paul urges, "Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you -- although if you can gain your freedom, do so." He would never give such advice to spouses or to parents and children. In this regard, it is probably more than coincidental that, from all indications, neither Jesus nor the Apostles owned slaves.

The seeds for slavery's dissolution were sown in texts like Phlmn. 16 ("no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother"), Eph. 6:9 ("Masters . . . do not threaten [your slaves]"), Col. 4:1 ("Masters, provide your slaves what is right and fair"), and 1 Tim. 6:1-2 (masters are "brothers"). (Note also that Jesus' teaching about mercy and forgiving debts [e.g., Mat. 6:12, 18:23-34] implies the inappropriateness of debt-slavery.) As has been said, where these seeds of equality came to full flower, the very institution of slavery would no longer be slavery. That this took so long to happen is a result of Christian dullness to the implications of the gospel.

The fact God did not forbid Christians in the first century from owning slaves but rather tolerated a regulated form of first-century slavery does not mean that was his ideal for mankind. His ideal is brotherhood and equality, but it is possible that the world had gotten so twisted that he was willing to tolerate less than his ideal as a concession to the hardness of men's hearts, similar to what he did, through Moses, in permitting divorce (see Mat. 19:3-9).

Or maybe he tolerated it because mandating the release of slaves in that social context would have caused anarchy and consequent suffering as the gospel exploded across the Roman world. In other words, perhaps the thorn of slavery needed to be removed slowly; perhaps society first needed to be altered under Christianity's influence to be able to handle such a change without overwhelming adverse side effects. James D. G. Dunn states (*The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 699):

[S]lavery was an established fact of life in the ancient world. As many as one-third of the inhabitants of most large urban centres were slaves. The economies of the ancient world could not have functioned without slavery. Consequently, a responsible challenge to the practice of slavery would have required a complete reworking of the economic system and a complete rethinking of social structures, which was scarcely thinkable at the time, except in idealistic or anarchic terms.

In the context of this regulated form of first-century slavery that God tolerated, if release was desired it needed to be worked out on an individual basis consistent with the principle of brotherhood. But as long as the relationship remained, the slave could not take advantage of having a brother for a master, and the master could not mistreat the slave.

That God tolerated a regulated form of first-century slavery does not mean he would tolerate that same form of slavery under different social conditions or tolerate other forms of slavery, such as the slavery that existed in early America. Slavery in the first century was a very different institution from early American slavery. S. Scott Bartchy states in "Slavery (Greco-Roman)" in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 6:66-70 (paragraphs are not continuous in original):

Central features that distinguish 1st century slavery from that later practiced in the New World are the following: racial factors played no role; education was greatly encouraged (some slaves were better educated than their owners) and enhanced a slave's value; many slaves carried out sensitive and highly responsible social functions; slaves could own property (including other slaves!); their religious and cultural traditions were the same as those of the freeborn; no laws prohibited public assembly of slaves; and (perhaps above all) the majority of urban and domestic slaves could legitimately anticipate being emancipated by the age of 30.

It must also be stressed that, despite the neat legal separation between owners and slaves, in none of the relevant cultures did persons in slavery constitute a social or economic class. Slaves' individual honor, social status, and economic opportunities were entirely dependent on the status of their respective owners, and they developed no recognizable consciousness of being a group or of suffering a common plight. For this reason, any such call as "slaves of the world unite!" would have fallen on completely deaf ears. (From p. 69: "The great slave rebellions, all of which were led primarily by prisoners of war between 140-70 B.C.E., never sought to abrogate slavery. Rather, these rebels sought either escape or to turn the tables by enslaving the owners.")

Furthermore, by no means were those in slavery regularly to be found at the bottom of the social-economic pyramid. Rather, in that place were those free and impoverished persons who had to look for work each day without any certainty of finding it (day laborers), some of whom eventually sold themselves into slavery to gain some job security.

Large numbers of people sold themselves into slavery for various reasons, e.g., to pay debts, to climb socially (Roman citizenship was conventionally bestowed on a slave released by a Roman owner), to obtain special jobs, and above all to enter a life that was more secure and less strenuous than existence as a poor, freeborn person.

Slaves were used for "an enormous variety of functions in enormously different circumstances," some of which when compared to New World slavery seem astonishingly responsible: "doctors, teachers, writers, accountants, agents, bailiffs, overseers, secretaries, and sea-captains."

Since slaves represented a substantial investment by their owners . . . , they could at least expect to receive enough food to keep them alive and working. Manumission could mean the end of that security. Epictetus [a first-century philosopher], himself an ex-slave, took pleasure in pointing out that the slave who thinks only of gaining his freedom may be reduced, when he is manumitted, to "slavery much more severe than before."

For many, self-sale into slavery with anticipation of manumission was regarded as the most direct means to be integrated into Greek and Roman society. For many this was the quickest way to climb socially and financially. As such, in stark contrast to New World slavery, Greco-Roman slavery functioned as a process rather than a permanent condition, as a temporary phase of life by means of which an outsider obtained "a place within a society that has no natural obligations of kinship or guest-friendship towards him."

Andrew Lincoln writes in his commentary (p. 418):

Many slaves in the Greco-Roman world enjoyed more favorable living conditions than many free laborers. Contrary to the supposition that everyone was trying to avoid slavery at all costs, it is clear that some people actually sold themselves into slavery in order to climb socially, to obtain particular employment open only to slaves, and to enjoy a better standard of living than they had experienced as free persons. Being a slave had the benefit of providing a certain personal and social security.

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**XIV. Stand firm in spiritual warfare** (6:10-20) – <sup>10</sup>*Finally, be strengthened in the Lord, that is, in the power of his strength.* <sup>11</sup>*Put on the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.* <sup>12</sup>*For our struggle is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-controlling powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.* <sup>13</sup>*Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done all things, to stand firm.* <sup>14</sup>*Stand therefore, having wrapped your waist with [the belt of] truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness,* <sup>15</sup>*and having fitted the feet with the readiness of the gospel of peace;* <sup>16</sup>*in addition to all these, having taken up the shield of faith, by which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.* <sup>17</sup>*And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is [the] word of God,* <sup>18</sup>*with every kind of prayer and petition praying at all times in [the] Spirit, and to this end keeping alert, with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,* <sup>19</sup>*and for me, that a word may be given to me in [the] opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,* <sup>20</sup>*for which I am an ambassador in chains, so that I may speak boldly about it as is necessary [for] me to speak.*

A. Be strengthened by the Lord for the battle (6:10-13)

1. The righteous living Paul has been urging on them since 4:1 is not without opposition. So Paul urges them to be strengthened in the power of the Lord's strength.

a. O'Brien remarks (p. 458), "Christ's triumph over the powers has 'already' occurred (1:21), so believers no longer live in fear of them. But the fruits of that victory have 'not yet' been fully realized, so Christians must be aware of the conflict and be equipped with divine power to stand against them."

b. Taking the first imperative as a passive (be strengthened), Paul is commanding them to lay hold of the strength Christ provides. He will make them strong for battle, but they have a role to play in that process. They must appropriate the power the Lord provides.

2. They must appropriate the Lord's power because they are not fighting mere men. Rather, they (and we) are engaged in a deadly war against evil spirit beings that are under the devil's leadership.

a. The Hebrew name "satan" derives from a verb meaning to be or act as an adversary. The Greek word "Satan" is a transliteration of the Hebrew name. The most common Greek word for Satan is "the devil" (*diábolos*), which may have come from a verb meaning to separate. If so, it implies the idea of one who separates humans from God. Other terms used of him include: "accuser" (Rev. 12:10), "tempter" (Mat. 4:3; 1 Thess. 3:5), "Beelzebul" (Mat. 10:25, 12:24, 27; Mk. 3:22; Lk. 11:15, 18, 19), "evil one" (Mat. 6:13, 13:19, 38; Jn. 17:15; Eph. 6:16; 1 Jn. 2:13, 3:12, 5:18), "Belial" (2 Cor. 6:15), "enemy/adversary" (1 Pet. 5:8), "deceiver" (Rev. 12:9, 20:3), "great dragon" (Rev. 12:3), "father of lies" (Jn. 8:44), "murderer" (Jn. 8:44), and "Destroyer" (Rev. 9:11).

b. Satan, and implicitly his minions, employs a multitude of deceptive schemes and stratagems to lure and trick his enemies, to turn them away from God and his purposes. Klyne Snodgrass writes (quoted in O'Brien, 464):

Mention of the "schemes" of the devil reminds us of the trickery and subterfuge by which evil and temptation present themselves in our lives. Evil rarely looks evil until it accomplishes its goal; it gains entrance by appearing attractive, desirable, and perfectly legitimate. It is a baited and camouflaged trap.

c. Paul has already referred to Satan in 2:2 as the ruler of the domain of the air, the spirit who is now at work in the sons of disobedience and warned them in 4:27 not to give the devil an opening he can exploit.

d. It is clear that Satan and his minions are able to manifest in this physical reality, in the human experience, their opposition to God's purposes, but Scripture does not spell out the means by which they are able to do so. In 1 Tim. 4:1-2 Paul attributes to demons the false teachings of certain people, but we are not told how the demons got their doctrine into the human stream. In 2 Cor. 4:4 he says that Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers, but again the mechanics of that process are not specified.

e. As an aside, demons can take possession of people, we see that in a number of places in Scripture, but there are a number of questions about this.

(1) Compared to the rest of the Bible and to modern western society, demons took possession of people with astonishing frequency during Jesus' ministry. In *Angels and the New Spirituality* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 31, Duane Garrett offers several possible explanations for this:

First, demon activity may have been more common when Jesus was on earth because of the spiritual conflict surrounding the incarnation. Second, perhaps demon possession is still common but we do not recognize it as easily as Jesus did. Third, Jesus happened to come during a time that was politically, socially, and religiously unstable when people

embraced strange new types of spirituality. Thus, demon possession was more common. On the third view, demonic activity waxes and wanes in different times and different places in proportion to the behavior of the society. Personally, I think there is truth in all three explanations.

(2) But whatever the overall level of demon activity, I am convinced that a Christian who is faithfully abiding in Christ cannot be demon possessed in the sense of being indwelt by a demon.

(a) Paul says in Rom. 8:9 that the Christian is controlled by the indwelling Spirit of God. Our body is the "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:19), and there simply is no agreement between the temple of God and idols (2 Cor. 6:16).

(b) Christians are told to resist Satan, standing firm in the faith, and that he will flee from them (1 Pet. 5:9; Jas. 4:7). Since fleeing is the opposite of possessing, it seems the faithful Christian is immune to demon possession.

(c) The fact there are no examples in Scripture of a faithful Christian being indwelt by a demon reinforces that conclusion.

(3) This is not to say that Christians are immune to demonic *influences*. The issue is one of the nature and degree of that demonic influence.

(4) Of course, it goes without saying that we should absolutely avoid any occultic practices such as contacting spirits or dead people and exploring such things as psychic powers, mystical experiences (e.g., soul travel), and fortune telling. We likewise should avoid the objects connected with these things, such as tarot cards, crystal balls, ouija boards, love potions, charms, and occult symbols (e.g., 666, pentagrams, and upside-down question mark with a cross [a Satanic symbol]).

3. The way in which they are to appropriate the Lord's power is by putting on the full armor of God, meaning the full array of offensive and defensive equipment that God supplies. The threat is so serious that they need to don the *whole* armor to be able to stand their ground so as to prevail in the fight, so as to resist a time of particularly severe assault, which he labels "the evil day."

B. Stand firm having put on God's armor (6:14-17) – Paul here specifies the divine armor they need to put on if they are to stand firm.

1. Belt of truth – This probably refers to the leather apron that hung under a Roman soldier's armor and protected the thighs (O'Brien, 473). The Christian must be a "man of truth." A passion for truth will protect one from Satan's schemes, which routinely depend on some compromise or distortion of the truth (e.g., I deserve to do this; this is unfair; I need this; God wants me to be happy; God doesn't care; it hurts no one).

2. Breastplate of righteousness – The breastplate covered the Roman soldier's chest to protect it against blows and arrows. A commitment to righteousness is a protection against Satan. If one becomes lax with regard to righteousness, with regard to doing what is right and just, one's vital organs are exposed, and Satan will exploit it.

3. Feet fitted with the readiness of the gospel of peace – Readiness for battle comes from an appreciation of the gospel as the gospel of peace, as the source of our peace with God and with one another. If we undervalue this peace, this reconciliation, we will more easily be influenced to disrupt it.

4. Shield of faith – This refers to the large shield carried by Roman soldiers that covered their entire person. When soaked with water, this shield extinguished the flaming arrows (dipped in pitch and lit before firing) of an enemy. Satan's flaming arrows, his assaults, are extinguished by faith in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith one sees beyond the immediate and is able to put all temptations in their proper perspective. It is God who loves us, who has given us an inheritance in Jesus Christ, and who will deliver on his promises. Pleasing and honoring him is more important than any threat or bauble Satan may dangle before us.

5. Helmet of salvation – Accepting the fact of one's salvation both motivates (the love therein expressed) and strengthens (the certainty of the outcome) one in the pursuit of godliness. It also keeps one from being lured into sin by anxiety over one's salvation (as in Colossae).

6. Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God – This is the only offensive weapon mentioned. The sword referred to is a relatively short sword (or even dagger) which was an important weapon in close combat. The "word of God" probably refers here to the proclamation of the gospel of Christ, which is given its penetration and power by the Spirit.

a. O'Brien comments (p. 482), "In their warfare with the powers of darkness, they are to take hold of the word of God, the gospel (cf. 1:13; 6:15), and to proclaim it in the power of the Spirit." Fee states (p. 729), "[I]n urging them to take the sword of the Spirit and then identifying that sword with the 'word of God,' Paul is not identifying the 'sword' with a book, but with the proclamation of Christ, which in our case is indeed to be found in a book."

b. Sharing the gospel protects the Christian who is sharing it through strengthening his identification with that message. Speaking publicly about one's convictions reinforces those convictions. But sharing the gospel also is an assault on the enemy's realm. It is the means by which men and women come to faith and thus are delivered from Satan's grasp.

C. Watch and pray (6:18-20)

1. This spiritual combat, this standing firm in the face of demonic opposition, includes dependence on God in prayer. Christians are to pray "at all times," and their prayers are to be "in the Spirit."

a. Prayer is to be a frequent, regular part of our lives, a practice we never abandon or cease from engaging in because our struggle with the forces of evil will not end until the consummation. It is an ongoing feature of life in this overlap of ages.

b. Whenever we pray, it is to be as the Spirit would have us pray. We are to pray with a proper attitude and motives and in line with and in deference to God's will.

c. We, of course, pray for our own spiritual strengthening, but we also pray for all the saints.

2. For this type of prayer life one needs the alertness which keeps at bay spiritual sleep and complacency and the perseverance that overcomes fatigue and discouragement.

3. Paul asks that they also pray for him that he may boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which he is an ambassador in chains. It appears the result is expressed in 2 Tim. 4:16-17, a letter written during Paul's second Roman imprisonment shortly before he was executed. He writes there (ESV): At my first defense no one came to stand by me, but all deserted me. May it not be charged against them! <sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.

**XV. Closing** (6:21-24) – <sup>21</sup>*Now in order that you also may know the things concerning me, what I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will make everything known to you. <sup>22</sup>I have sent him to you for this very thing, so that you may know the things concerning us and [that] he may encourage your hearts.*

<sup>23</sup>*Peace to the brothers, and love with faith, from God [the] Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>Grace [be] with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptibility.*

A. Paul is having Tychichus deliver the letter so he can fill them in on Paul's situation and encourage their hearts. He commends Tychichus to them as the beloved brother and faithful servant in the Lord.

1. Tychichus also delivers the letter to the church in Colossae (Col. 4:7-8). Acts 20:4 identifies Tychichus as being from the province of Asia and someone who was with Paul in Greece and went with him to Troas at the end of his third missionary journey.

2. In 2 Tim. 4:12 Paul says that he had sent Tychichus to Ephesus, and in Tit. 3:12 he says he is planning to send either Tychichus or Artemas to Crete apparently to free the way for Titus to come to him.

B. He concludes by expressing his desire that God the Father and the Lord Jesus will supply his readers with a subjective experience of the peace that is already theirs in Christ and also will strengthen them in their love and faith. He wishes the blessing of God's grace on all who love the Lord Jesus with an undying love.