

## Read Ephesians 6:10-20

(Paul says;

*“Finally, be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.”*

**Ephesians 6:10-11**

### **We Are at War!!!**

As Hitler’s appetite for power and territory grew, his army began to march across Europe. In some cases, the fight could hardly be called a battle. The German army advanced, with its tanks and with technologically advanced weapons. In some of the underdeveloped nations, their armies made a futile effort to resist Hitler’s aggression, fighting back with spears and even rocks. It was no contest at all, because these nations were not equipped for the battle, “they lost”.

The same could be said of believers, under attack by Satan and his hordes of hell. Many of Satan’s victims do not even know there is a war going on, and therefore make easy prey. Christians should know that we are in the midst of a great spiritual war, a war for our soul, although many seem not to believe it, or refuse to fight in it. And even more distressing is the fact that many who consider themselves “in the war” do not understand the nature of Satan’s schemes, or the weapons of warfare that the Lord has given us, to defeat the enemy. Many are simply not prepared for war!

When we came to faith in Christ, we became a danger to the kingdom of darkness, and Satan will do everything he can to stop us. And he will stop us, if we do not understand our position in Christ. All too often, when men write about spiritual warfare, too much importance is given to Satan and his demons. Not so in Scripture, and certainly not so in our text. Paul sees to it that it is Christ who is preeminent, because the victory is already won in Christ.

We may ask ourselves why is Satan, who has been defeated, still attacking us who have believed in Christ? Because God is testing us and teaching us warfare. (Judges 3:1-2) “Now these *are* the nations which the LORD left, that He might test Israel by them, *that is*, all who had not known any of the wars in Canaan “The Promised Land”. Just like our Lord defeated Satan through total obedience to the Father, we must also learn to defeat Satan and the hordes of hell through total obedience to the Father, in the power of the Spirit of Christ.

It is not we who defeat Satan, but Christ in us, as we learn to live in Him. I hear Christians speak of “binding Satan” This can only happen when the light (life) of Christ is turned on (put on), darkness then must flee. I know of many Christians who act as though, we in our own strength, can “run Satan out of town” and continually walk in defeat, and then wonder why they are so defeated. We simply need to walk in the light “Christ”, for He has defeated the armies of darkness.

Father, rip away the deceptive veils by which I have allowed myself to be rendered powerless in this great battle. Help me to understand that the battle is the Lord’s and He has already won, and I only need to stand strong and mighty in obedience to Him, against the spirits of darkness, that bring death to my soul.

**Life Application:** Choose today to let the Lord fight the battle through you, by standing strong in Him and the power of His might. Learn how to turn on the light!

## **Ephesians 6:10-11**

### **Be Strong and Mighty**

Paul says, be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. He does not say to attack and defeat the enemy, the enemy is defeated. We are told to “stand against him”, to stand against the invader that comes to rob us of the blessings of heaven and render us useless for the kingdom. The enemy will do everything to turn off the light in us, the life of Christ, “the anointed one”.

We must know that we have been equipped to stand firm against his attack. The Christian’s weapons have been divinely provided. We have in Christ all that we need to stand against the trickery of the enemy. Christ is our full armor. (Romans 13:11-14). “The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts”. If we are going to stand against the devil’s schemes, we need to abide (stand) in the Spirit of Christ.

Paul is saying here, finally, now that you know the hope of your calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and the greatness of His power that is at work in you, be strong and mighty in the Lord. God said basically the same thing to Joshua as he was preparing to enter the promised land (Joshua 1:7) “Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go”. They had to remain strong and of good courage, for the Lord had already given them the land and had promised that He would be with them. We have been seated in the heavenly, bless with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

To be strong in Hebrew “Chazaq” means to “fasten upon, to seize” and courageous, “amats” means to be “alert, steadfastly minded”. Remember that The enemy is like a roaring lion looking for whom he may devour, (1 Peter 5:8) and he will devour anyone that is not strong and mighty in the Spirit of the Lord.

The enemy knows your past, your failure, your struggles, and he will attack you in those areas. He wants to create strongholds of unbelief in your life. A stronghold is a mindset, filled with hopelessness, that causes you to believe something that is contrary to the will of God for you. Stronghold of doubt.... in the hope of your calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in you, and His power that is at work in you who believe. Example of a stronghold, “I am just a sinner saved by grace” instead of “I am a saint, empowered by the grace of God, who sometimes misses the mark of the glory of God, I am the righteousness of God in Christ”. Another stronghold “I will never be able to.... Instead of “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”.

**Life Application:** Learn to grab hold and never let go of the truth in Christ. Know who you are and what you have in Him. Remember that all God’s promises, are yes and amen in Christ for you. (2 Corinthians 1:20) It is done, you are child of the living God, you have His D.N.A., the Spirit of Christ. You have therefore the rights of a child of God, with all the blessings of heaven.

## Ephesians 6:12

### “Our enemy”

Paul tells us that we never fight against flesh and blood, but against the power of darkness.

(1) We never, never fight against flesh and blood, for any reason or at any time. The enemy will use people to cause us to stumble in our walk with the Lord. The devil loves to see the children of God fight amongst themselves. This is why it is very important to always be on guard and forgive each other when we do stumble, leaving no room for the enemy to enter our hearts.

Jesus did not send us out to condemn the world, He sent us out to set the captives free. That is why Jesus said, if we do not forgive others their trespass, He will not forgive our trespass. Not to forgive someone is to say to Jesus, “Your sacrifice of love, to set me and others free, is not worth my pain and suffering”. We must remember, that if we are not willing to go to Calvary with our cross to identify with Jesus in His death, we remain open to the consequences of our own sin. We become unable to experience the freedom of His resurrection life, a life of peace and joy.

(2) Our enemy the devil, has no power on earth, except the power we give him as we submit ourselves to his lies and attacks. Consider the following strategy planning council: The devil called a meeting of his servants to talk about how they could make Christians sin. One demon said, “I’ll make him sin by setting the pleasure of sin before him. I’ll tell him of sin’s delights and the rich rewards it brings”. “That won’t work” said Satan. “He’s tried sin and know better than that” Then another demon said, “I’ll make him sin by telling him of the pain and sorrows of virtue. I’ll show him that virtue as no delights and brings no rewards.” “That won’t do either” cried Satan “for he walks in virtue and knows wisdom’s ways *“are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace”* (Proverbs 3:17) “Well” said another demon, “I’ll make him sin by discouraging his soul.” “Ah, that will do it” cried Satan. “We’ll conquer him now!”

Each one of us experiences times of discouragement, anxiety, conflict, confusion, fear etc..... Maybe at work, at home, with our children, our finance, sickness, or simply with life itself. It is at this point that our response is crucial. Will we seek the wisdom of the Lord and trust in Him, or will we fall pray to the devil and take matters into our own hands, our own wisdom. (Read, James 1:2-5). This is where we must turn to the Lord and cast all our cares upon Him (1 Peter 5:6-7) “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”. When we look to him in humility for help he will help us. (Psalm 3:6) “In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths”.

**Life Application:** Do not let the enemy take control of your mind, for then he will take hold of your heart. Instead cast down every imagination that would raise its head against the truth in Christ, there you will find salvation for every situation of life.

## **Read: Ephesians 6:13-18**

### **Putting on our Armor “Christ”**

Paul sees a picture. All this time he was chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier. Night and day a soldier was there to ensure that he would not escape. As he is writing, the soldier's armor suggests a picture to him. Paul takes the armor of the Roman soldier and part by part describes the armor that we have in Christ.

The nature of our armor tells us a great deal about the nature of the war we are in. As we proceed with our study of each element of our armor, we will see that the armor which God has provided in Christ, is precisely what destroys the schemes of Satan. To know the armor, which God has provided, is to know the ways in which Satan seeks our downfall.

(1) The belt of truth: The belt of truth was designed with hanging strips of leather to protect the lower body, the loin. It also carried the scabbard (sword covering) and held in place the breast plate. Paul is telling us that we need to gird our loins. Definition; The region of the lower abdomen, groin and hips.

a) Lower abdomen: The human abdomen is where most of the alimentary tract is placed and so most of the absorption and digestion of food occurs there. The belt of truth allows our inner men (our Spirit men) to keep what is of the Lord and eliminate what is not.

b) The groin: is regarded as the seat of strength and procreative power. The truth allows us to produce the life of the Spirit, fruits of righteousness, peace and joy.

c) The Hip: The hip joint is one of the most important joints in the human body. It allows us to walk, run, and jump. It bears our body's weight and the force of the strong muscles of the hip and leg. The belt of truth allows us to sit, stand and walk in the righteousness of Christ bringing peace (salvation) to the world.

(2) The breastplate: The breastplate is what guards a soldier's vital part like his lungs, his digestive system, especially his heart. Without the “breastplate of righteousness” we become vulnerable to the enemy's attack. The soldier's breastplate was secured by his belt, just like our breast plate of righteousness must be secured by the truth in Christ. That is why scripture tells us to guard our heart with all diligence, for out of it is the issue of life. (what we will procreate, produce in life). Living (walking) in truth is what keeps our breastplate in place.

**Life Application:** Knowing the word of God and living in obedience to the truth “Christ”, will always produce fruit of righteousness, peace and joy.

## **Ephesians 6:13-18**

### **Our Armor “Christ” (continued)**

(3) The sandals: The Sandals were the sign of one equipped and ready to move. The sandals for a disciple of Christ means, that he is no longer a slave of Satan, but a child of God (slaves always went barefoot). The sandals mean that the child of God is equipped to be on his way to share the good news with others who have not heard, and set the captives free. It is the sandals of sons/daughters of God, peacemakers of Righteousness. Someone that will never compromise truth at any cost. He is a minister of reconciliation between men and God and men with men.

(4) The shield: The word Paul uses, is not the one used for the moderately small round shield; it is the one used for the great oblong shield, which the heavily armed roman warrior wore.

a) One of the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with tow (coarse short hemp or flax fiber) dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked tow was set on fire and the dart was thrown. The great oblong shield was made of two sections of wood, glued together. When the shield was presented to the dart, the dart sank into the wood and the flame was put out. Faith can deal with the darts of temptations, discouragement, anxiety and so forth. With Paul, faith is always complete trust in Christ. When we walk in the strength and power of the Lord, we are safe from the enemy’s attack. The shield of faith enables us to stand and quench all the fiery darts of the enemy. They can no longer burn us (pun intended).

Paul says in Hebrews 11:1 “That faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen”. That substance is Christ, the evidence is Christ, the living word of God “our shield”; the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrew 12:2). The enemy’s attack is always to cause us to remove our eyes from Christ, by looking at our circumstances, causing us therefore to accept his lies in our mind and doubt the “Word of God”. Who we are in Christ, what we have in Him, and what we can do in Him. The enemy wants to bring discouragement, anxiety, fear and so forth in our lives. The enemy knows that if he controls our thinking it will affect our hearts (emotion) and therefore our actions. We must turn (put on) the light, for light is what always destroys the darkness. And the light switch is our faith in the word of God “Christ”.

Let’s turn the switch on, and declare truth that is ours in Christ. He is the way to the Kingdom of God our heavenly Father; He became the way at the cross through His blood. He is the truth, everything else is a lie; let His word be declared as our testimony of who we are in Him, what we have and what we are able to do in Him. He is our new life; let’s put the old life away, and consider it to be dead. (Revelation 12:11) “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death”.

**Life Application:** We are at war, but we already have the victory in Christ, let His life that is now your life, SHINE!

## **Ephesians 6:13-18**

### **Our Armor “Christ” (continued)**

#### **The Shield**

b) If you’ve seen Roman armors, you may know that the Roman shield (‘scutum’) was designed so that, when the troops formed a line, the shield would protect not only the person holding it, but would lock in to protect the persons on either side as well. If you’ve ever seen how the Roman soldiers used to form ‘turtles’, you’ll know how they arranged these shields to protect each other from missiles coming in from above as well. Fighting, for the Roman soldier, was always a ‘team’ experience. They didn’t just fight as individual’s side by side. Their whole style of fighting was dependent on the presence of their comrades.

Fighting, for the Roman soldier then, was always a group effort, and Paul’s image of the Christian at battle is likewise not one of the individual warrior maintaining his or her individual spiritual integrity in the face of overwhelming odds, but it’s an image, rather, of a regiment of troops holding their line against oncoming forces. Protecting therefore each other. This was their strength!!

This is the image that Paul is giving us (Paul being no stranger to ancient warfare). He’s not imagining a singular commando taking on the enemy alone. He’s envisioning the church, God’s army, lined up like a regiment of legionaries, each with his shield of faith locked in to that of his companion, digging in and holding the line against the enemy and his schemes.

When we see the enemy attacking “shooting fiery darts” of discouragement, accusations, temptations etc... we are to guard each other from those darts, we are not to let our brother/sister alone in the battle. Unfortunately, those fiery darts come too often from within the church. The worst thing is that, the enemy does not stop because you are wounded, he is the originator of “kick them while their down”. He will pour on accusation, condemnation, rejection upon the wounded. Then we wonder why so many simply leave the army (the body) to isolate themselves. No, we are to stand in the gap, raise our shield over them and encourage them with the word of faith, in who they are, what they have and what the Lord can do for them, and through them, as they are healed by the grace of God. This is how the world will know that we are Christians, by the love we have for one another, specially our wounded.

**Life Application:** This is why the body of Christ must always stand together, united in the Lords strength and might, in order to defeat the enemies attack. For he will always attack the vulnerable, and we are all vulnerable when we walk alone.

## **Ephesians 6:13-18**

## Our Armor “Christ” (continued)

5) The helmet: The helmet of salvation represents the mind of Christ, “loving humility”, that leads to total dependency and loving obedience to the Father. (read. Philippians 2:5-8) This is what brought Jesus to earth, and has the power to destroy the works of the enemy and bring salvation to mankind. This helmet allows us to be protected in our thought life.

The enemy knows that if he can enter our mind, with doubt like he did with Eve in the garden; we will take matters into our own hands. We then become our own God, (pride) putting our faith in our wisdom for our own interest (self-centeredness) eating from the tree of death. This is why scriptures tell us to cast down every imagination that raises its head against the knowledge of God. (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) “For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”,

(6) The sword of the Spirit which is the word of God: There are two words used in Scripture for the “word” of God. There is the familiar word, “logos”, which is used in the opening verse of John’s gospel: “In the beginning was the Word (logos), and the Word (logos) was with God, and the Word (logos) was God” (John 1:1). Then there is another word, “rhema”, which is different in meaning. Logos refers to the total utterance of God (Christ himself). Rhema means a specific utterance of God, given in a very specific situation for His will to be accomplished. Rhema is the word used here. The sword of the Spirit; is the living word of God, empowered by the Spirit of Christ for a specific situation, as to bring the life of the Kingdom of God and defeat the works of the enemy.

This is one of the great weapons placed in the hands of a believer. Perhaps all of us have had some experience with this in some moment of temptation or doubt, when we were assailed by what Paul calls here, the flaming arrows of the evil one. But it has been answered immediately by a passage of Scripture that flashed to our mind, something we had not been thinking of at all, but became alive in us and supplied the needed answer. That is why this is called the sword of the Spirit, because it is not only originated by Him as the author of the Word, but it is also recalled to mind by the Spirit and made powerful by Him in our lives to destroy the forces of darkness. Jesus said in John 6:63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life”. As we speak His “rhema” word, the light comes on and darkness must flee.

This is the word that defeats the attack of the enemy, who comes to discourage us, defeat us, lure us aside, deceive us, or mislead us in some way to depart from truth in Christ. The more we are exposed to Scripture, the more the Spirit can use His mighty sword in our lives. When we live (abide) in Him, The Holy Spirit will breathe on His word causing His word to abide (become alive) in us and bring forth God’s will in any situation. (John 15:7) “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you”.

**Life Application:** Our life must always be hidden in Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. Then the light is always on, no darkness can enter. This is what we are aiming for, His glory.

## **Ephesians 6:13-18** (continued)

### **“Our Mighty Weapon”**

Finally, Paul comes to the greatest weapon of all--and that is prayer.

(1) I think most Christians would confess that they are dissatisfied with their prayer life. They feel it is inadequate and perhaps infrequent. Sometimes we struggle to improve the quality, as well as the quantity of our prayer lives. Sometimes we adopt schedules we attempt to maintain or long lists of names and projects and places we try to remember in prayer. In other words, we begin with the doing, but when we do this we are starting at the wrong place. The place to start is not with the doing, but with putting on the mind of Christ.

There is a strong and powerful relationship between putting on the armor of God and praying. These two things belong together; in fact, one grows out of the other. It is not enough to have the armor of God on; we must also pray. It is not enough to pray; we must also have the armor of God. It is impossible to divide these two. Putting on the armor “Christ the light of the world” is essentially something that begins in our thought life. It is aligning our thinking to His word so as to adjust the attitude of our heart to His will. What Paul is teaching us is; if you are going to defeat the enemy, you must know the will of God in every situation, so that you may speak His word, therefore defeating the enemy with the sword of the Spirit.

(2) We note four things that he says about prayer.

a) It must be “always”: Our tendency is so often to pray only in the great crises of life; but it is from continually praying (seeking God’s will, His Kingdom, in every circumstance) that we will continually walk in His will, under His rulership in our lives receiving the blessings of Heaven.

b) We must pray with “perseverance and supplication”: like our lives depended on it, because it does. Outside His will we find death. Death to the spirit of righteousness peace and joy, and all His promises.

c) We must pray for all the saints, we are in battle together against the force of the darkness, if one is wounded we become vulnerable. The Jews had a saying, "Let a man unite himself with the community in his prayers." We form one body in Christ and each part must be protected. No soldier can fight properly if he is wounded, he must be protected so that he may heal.

d) Above all pray “in the Spirit”. Remember to pray abiding in Christ so that His word may be in you as you make your request known to God our Heavenly Father, for His Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

**Life Application:** Prayer is total communication at all time with our heavenly father, where we seek His will and yes make our request known to Him. We will find more and more that our will and our requests will align more and more with Gods will for us. His desire for us leaves us with the best in all situation of our lives.



## **Ephesians 6:19-20**

### **“In Need of Prayer”**

There are two weapons God has given to engage the enemy. The first is our defensive weapons. Vs 13-18. The second weapon is how to call down air support from heaven, so as to weaken the enemy and fortify our own soldiers in this battle. Too many of us neglect this weapon in the battles against the force of darkness.

Imagine if you were a soldier fighting ISIS, or part of this global war on terrorism, and you were given the mission to retake the land and set the captives free. Can you imagine how difficult this would be without air support? There is no army that can defeat the enemy without dropping bombs, to weaken the enemy before the attack. Paul is calling for spiritual air support.

(1) He says pray for me, I need your prayer so that utterance (logos), the bombs of heaven may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel. What Paul is saying is, I need Christ “the anointed word of heaven”. It is not that Paul did not know the gospel but He knew that only the words empowered by the Spirit of Christ, can touch the hearts of men and at the same time empower him with boldness. (I give thanks to all intercessors that pray for the foot soldiers – Jacques Côté).

Satan knows the power of the word of God to transform life. He does not care about all the salesman strategies. He will try to get believers to learn to be salesmen (which turns people off) instead of servants of the living water of life, causing thirsty people to drink.

(2) Charles Spurgeon is considered to be one of the most eloquent and bold preachers who ever lived. He lived in the nineteenth century, and all of his sermons were drawn from Scripture. He preached so well, they called him the prince of preachers.

There were five young college students who came to spend Sunday in London, so they went to hear the famous C.H. Spurgeon preach. While waiting for the church doors to open, the students were greeted by a man who asked, “Gentlemen, let me show you around. Would you like to see the heating plant of this church?” They were not particularly interested, for it was a hot day in July, but they did not want to offend the stranger, so they consented. The young men were taken down a stairway. A door was quietly opened, and their guide whispered, “This is our heating plant.” Inside, the students saw 700 people bowed in prayer, seeking a blessing on the service that was soon to begin in the auditorium above. Softly, the gentleman then introduced himself. It was none other than Charles Spurgeon himself. Spurgeon always credited his success to his praying church members. He was able to wield the Sword of the Spirit with boldness, clarity, and accuracy because the people of his church prayed constantly for him.

**Life Application:** War against the enemy can never be carried out in the flesh, only in the spirit of Christ. Our fleshly works will never change the heart of men. Christ alone can set the captives free and build His Church. May we always seek Him (abide) and His will (His word) for only then can the enemy be defeated and the captives set free.

## **Ephesians 6:21-22 “Caring for each Other”**

An 11-year-old girl and her 8-year-old brother bickered and fought over the slightest thing. Their father was surprised when the girl made an artistic card for her brother’s birthday. Inside she wrote, “Happy birthday to my nine-year-old brother. I am so glad to have a brother to love. So God gave me you. P.S. Don’t read this out loud or I will twist your head off.”

Here, we learn three things about Caring for each other:

(1) We are to be beloved brothers/sisters: Paul refers to Tychicus as a beloved brother. He could have called him just a “brother,” but he adds this word, beloved. It shows that Tychicus was a warm relational man. When Paul used that word to describe Tychicus, everyone who knew him would have probably nodded and thought, “Yes, he is a dear, loving man. Would people describe you as a beloved brother, or a beloved sister? Are you friendly? Do you go out of your way to meet new people and make them feel welcome? Do you take a genuine interest in others?”

(2) We are to be faithful ministers (servants) in the Lord: It means that Tychicus was trustworthy. He did with integrity what he had been assigned to do. In a day when it would have been easy to mishandle the large gift for the Jerusalem saints, Tychicus could be trusted to deliver it all without pocketing some of it for himself. He could be trusted to deliver safely the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. He didn’t know that they would become a part of Scripture, but we have them in our New Testaments today because Tychicus was a faithful man.

At the Judgment seat of Christ, the words that we want to hear from Jesus Christ are “Well done, good and faithful servant. You were faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” (Matthew 25:21) To hear those words we must be faithfully serving Him now.

(3) We are to be an encouraging brother or sister: Paul says that he is sending Tychicus so that “he may comfort their hearts.” In Colossians 4:8 it is, “that he may encourage their hearts.” It is the Greek word “parakaleo”, which means to come alongside to help. Paul knew that the Ephesians were prone to lose heart over his trials (Ephesians 3:13). If Tychicus had been a gloomy, negative sort of guy, he would have told the Ephesians about how dismal Paul’s circumstances were. But he wasn’t that sort of man. Paul knew that Tychicus would convey to the church Paul’s spirit of trust in the Lord, even in the midst of his difficulties. This cheerful report would encourage them.

What a ministry there is for a person who learns to be an encourager! This doesn’t mean that you put on rose colored glasses and deny the reality of problems. Nor does it mean that you never acknowledge and confront wrongs. Rather, it means that you get people to see things from God’s perspective, which always brings hope and encouragement. No doubt, Tychicus would have conveyed Paul’s perspective: “Sure, Paul is in prison and his living situation isn’t exactly the best. But you wouldn’t believe the ministry that God has given Paul with the soldiers. Every time they change the guards, Paul gets a new opportunity to share about Christ. Now there are believers all through the praetorian guard and even in Caesar’s household!” That was God’s perspective, and it would have brought encouragement and hope.

**Life Application:** Let’s learn from this beloved brother, how to be caring godly brothers and sisters in Christ.

## **Ephesians 6:23-24, “Caring through Blessings”**

We’re probably tempted to skim over these benedictions without much thought, but there is a lot of solid theology here. This benediction varies from Paul’s usual form, which suggests that it was not just an afterthought in closing this letter. Usually, Paul’s closing words are in the second person (“you”); but this is in the third person. Also usually, grace comes first; but here peace, which is usually last, is first.

A. Skevington Wood (theologians) writes “This is more than a farewell greeting; it is a prayer for reconciliation. Paul longs to see the whole brotherhood of believers in Ephesus and its environs—Jews and Gentiles alike—at peace with each other in the one body of Christ.” Four key words in Paul’s benediction have played a key role in the message of Ephesians. They are more than Paul’s wish; they are also his prayer, and therefore should be our prayer:

(1) Paul prays for peace for the brethren: One of the main thrusts in Ephesians, is that through the cross of Jesus Christ, we have peace with God and peace with those from whom we formerly were alienated (2:11-22). Drawing near to God is not a matter of being religious. The Jews had been as religious as anyone could be, but their religion was not good enough to reconcile them to God. Also, the good news is that being a sinful pagan, who has never darkened the door of a church, has the same hope for reconciliation with God. As Paul has shown, the blood of Christ has made it possible for both non-religious pagans and religious Jews to draw near to God and each other through faith in Jesus.

This means that a racist church is not compatible with the New Testament church! If you have trusted in Christ as Savior and Lord, every other person who has trusted in Christ is your brother or your sister. Our church should reflect the racial makeup of our community. As various races live in visible peace with one another in the church, it is a testimony to the world of Christ’s saving grace.

(2) Paul prays for love for the brethren: As we have seen, peace and love go hand in hand. Our homes should radiate the self-sacrificing love of Christ between husbands and wives, and parents and children, and in the family of God. Our love for God will compel us to love one another, because we will love and seek peace with whom He loves.

(3) Paul prays for faith for the brethren: Paul prays for “love with faith,” as the two qualities are closely connected. In Galatians 5:6 Paul writes, “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.” To paraphrase, “the outward keeping of religious rituals is not the main thing, but rather, faith (in God’s love for us revealed in Christ) will always works itself out in loving Him and therefore loving what he loves. (Read 1John 4:7-21).

(4) Paul prays for grace for all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity: This is Paul’s second benediction, that God’s grace would be with those who love the Lord in sincerity, “aptharsia” meaning genuine, incorruptible lovers of Jesus Christ. We saw that the only way we can serve Christ is because of His grace. God’s grace is a never-ending storehouse for those that love Him. We need therefore to pray continually for each other that we may grow more and more in love with our Lord.

**Life Application:** May we be a praying church, praying for others, what we would want for ourselves. Peace, love, faith and specially grace. God loves those type of prayers.

## Summary and Review

The great theme of Ephesians is the eternal purpose of God, to sum up all things in Jesus Christ. Chapters 1-3 Teaches us to rest and stand by faith in the heavenly realm in Christ. Chapters 4-6 shows us how to walk with Christ in this world, as we stand firm against the evil forces of darkness. These things demonstrate God's wisdom, power and glory.

Here are four main practical lessons from Ephesians:

(1) The gospel is a life-transforming message: Whether you are from a religious background, as the Jews in Ephesus were, or from a pagan background, as the Gentiles were, believing in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord drastically changed your life. Granted, this transformation works itself out gradually, as we lay aside the old life, and are renewed in the spirit of our minds, to put on the new life (4:22-24). But those who have been saved by grace embark on this new life of transformation in holiness.

(2) What you believe is extremely important: Paul would not have spent the first three chapters of Ephesians laying the doctrinal foundation if doctrine were not crucial for your Christian life! What you believe determines how you live. If you claim to believe the gospel but live as the world lives, it proves that you really do not believe the gospel or you never really heard it.

(3) The church (gathering of His disciples) is extremely important to God: Ephesians emphasizes the vital importance of the church. As Paul said (1:23), the church is Christ's body, "the fullness of Him who fills all in all." The church is everywhere that Christ's life is revealed. If Christ loved the church and gave Himself for the church as His bride (5:25-27), then we must love the church and give ourselves for her. Yes, you will get wounded in the church. But still, you must commit yourself to that to which Christ is committed. You can't say, "I love Jesus, but I hate His bride." Or, "I love the Head, but His body stinks!"

(4) Relationships in the church are extremely important to God: This is the main thrust of Ephesians 2:11-22, 3:4-11, and 4:1-6:9. It's not a minor theme! Remember, in that culture, Jews and Gentiles were completely alienated from one another. But the church was to demonstrate the saving grace of God, who reconciled these two humanly incompatible groups into one new man. It is vital that we work through relational differences and show the world the love of Jesus Christ through our reconciled relationships.

Don't miss the fact that all of these truths are for those who are brethren (6:21, 23). You become a brother or sister through the new birth, when God's Spirit quickens you from spiritual death to spiritual life. So I close our studies in Ephesians by quoting again 2:8-9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." Above all, make sure you are being transformed into Christ likeness! If you are not sure, speak to someone that is manifesting Christ to you.

As I end these devotion/commentary, I would like to give thanks to the many teachers and theologians that have come before me, right back to the Apostle Paul. Many examples and much inspiration were taken from their writings. Above all, I thank my Lord Jesus Christ for giving me this great privilege of sharing what He has revealed to me through His word.

A special note of thanks to Pastor Roger March, of Seaway Christian Church, for encouraging and challenging me to prepare these devotions.

Grace, peace and joy be yours in the name of Jesus Christ as you run the race set before you.