



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 6: 10-24

Spring 2024

"The Secret Theater"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. Well, we are finishing our studies in the Book of Ephesians this morning, and I've taken a rather long section, but it's all pretty much one section, at least verses 10-20, the spiritual warfare—and then some concluding remarks that Paul makes to end this great study in the Book of Ephesians. But we're going to begin with verse 10, of Ephesians 6, and read through verse 24,

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. ¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. ¹³ Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; ¹⁶ in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, ¹⁹ and *pray* on

my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

²¹But that you also may know about my circumstances, how I am doing, Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make everything known to you. ²²I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know about us, and that he may comfort your hearts.

²³Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible *love*.

Ephesians 6: 10-24

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, we do thank You for this time together, and this opportunity to take up this great passage of Scripture. It tells us of this unseen world in which we operate, and yet have no vision of it, no personal sense of it—but it's there, and very influential in the events of life around us and our own lives.

And so LORD, teach us and instruct us through the Spirit, that we might be wise about the things that are taking place around us—and what we are experiencing, what we encounter even though we may be unaware of it. Make us aware, and help us to put on the full armor of God as Paul instructed the Ephesians and all of the saints through the ages.

So bless us, LORD, with an understanding of the things we've read. And as we consider them in some depth, we pray that You would make the proper applications to each one of us—galvanize us and give us incentive to live in this world as spiritual soldiers, as warriors for You.

We pray for our material needs, LORD, we have them. We all have a desire for good health, and that comes from You. We live and move and exist in You; You give us every breath of life that we take, it's a gift from You; every moment of life is a gift. And health is Your gift to us—and we pray for that. We ask for it and pray that we will have it and use it to Your glory for Your service. Life is brief, may we use the time that we have and serve You faithfully—and we pray for health for that reason. And we pray for the health of others, Father. We pray that You would care for them and give them speedy recoveries as well.

LORD, You bless us in so many ways that we are not even aware of it, so we give You thanks. Thank You for the good things You give us, for every moment of life You give us. We thank You for that, and pray again we'll serve You faithfully. May this text that we consider this morning alert us to the dangers—but also motivate us to serve You as soldiers for Christ. And we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) John le Carré was an agent in British Intelligence, a spy before becoming a writer of spy novels. He described espionage as, "The secret theater of our society." It's unsettling to think enemy agents are moving among us unseen and wanting to do us harm.

But there's something more unseen and nefarious than that: Not flesh and blood—spiritual forces. Paul calls them "rulers", "powers", "forces of this darkness", and "wickedness in heavenly places." Martin Luther included them in his great hymn, *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*;

"And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us;"

That's a nice summary of Paul's instruction in Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10-20, where he moves from the subject of marriage and the Christian home to the subject of the spiritual conflict.

He begins it in verses 10 and 11 with a call to arms: "Be strong," he wrote; "Stand firm against the schemes of the devil." That's a real challenge. John Calvin saw that; he recognized the difficulty of it; he wrote, "Our difficulties are far greater than if we had to fight against men." That's true. We're fighting an invisible war; so Paul tells us how to do that. It's not, 'be strong', or 'strengthen' *yourselves*, but, "be strong in the Lord...", and to do that he added, "...in the strength of His might." (vs10).

We're no match for the evil one; he could sift any one of us like wheat, just as he did Peter. But we're not alone, we're not in this by ourselves. We are, "in the Lord", and have His strength and His might—which is *Almighty*.

So we're *fit* for conflict, but we're also *equipped* for conflict—and in verse 11, Paul tells us to, 'Use our weapons': "Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil."

The LORD has not put us on the battlefield weak and unarmed. He has called us to fight, and He has made generous provision for that. So we're to take up those weapons, and we're to stand firm, and we are to fight the devil. Specifically he wrote that we are, "...to stand against the *schemes* of the devil." (vs11b). His *schemes* are temptations, they are lies. The Lord called him, "a murderer from the beginning", and, "the father of lies." (Jn 8:44). He is the master of the lie, he is the great counterfeiter. Luther called him, "God's ape"; he imitates the Lord. He disguises himself as "an angel of light", Paul told the Corinthians. (2Cor 11:14).

It's a mistake to think of the devil as some ghoulish figure with horns, a tail, and cloven hooves—just the opposite. He enlists in his service the winsome—people who are clever and attractive—and he inspires them.

He does it from the beginning; we see that from the very outset—from Genesis, chapter 3. He used the serpent, who is described as, "...more crafty than any beast of the field...". (Gen 3:1). And through it he posed as Eve's friend to gain her confidence, and then cast doubt on God's Word; "...Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?' " (ibid)... 'Is He that uncaring and that stingy that He would do that?'

Well, 'No, he didn't say that. He said, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely..."', 'except one tree', "...the tree of the knowledge of good and evil...for in the day you eat of it, you shall surely die." (Gen 2:16-17).

And so the devil, the serpent, continued denying that truth, casting doubt on the LORD'S Word—and then denying the penalty: "You surely will not die!" he says. (Gen 3:4). And you can see that in all of this what he's really saying is, 'God wants to rob you of the best. He wants to rob you of enlightenment and fulfillment—and deny you an authentic life. Trust me, I want your best! Eat! Go ahead, Eve, eat!' And ever since he's been tempting people to taste 'forbidden fruit'—temptations of pleasure that result in moral ruin and enslavement.

Isaiah said, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil..." (Isa 5:20). That's satanic. Isaiah also said, "Woe to those...who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness." (ibid.). It's the allure of various things: Of intellectualism for some, the temptation to professionalism for others, and the temptation of ambition. Now there's nothing wrong with being eager to succeed in whatever field you're in, and desiring to do the best; that's good. But ambition for selfish reasons, that's the allure that Satan brings into the lives of individuals. It's just a variation on his original *scheme* in Genesis chapter 3—distorting God's Word, (and casting doubt on it), and then giving an attractive alternative that pleases self and puts self, first.

He has lots of schemes; but basically his design is to deceive and destroy. He is clever and evil; and the only answer to the counterfeit is the authentic. The only answer to the lie is the truth; it's the Word of God—and we must know it. And what we learn from the outset, (from the beginning of the Bible), is...'he is'; the devil is real; he exists. And that's important because one of the cleverest schemes he's ever devised is to convince people that he doesn't exist.

In C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*, (which I commend to your reading it), is an excellent, insightful description of the very thing we're studying here, the spiritual battle. In it, Screwtape, (who's the master demon), explains to his nephew, Demon,

(who's just learning the practice), the policy that, (as he put it), 'Comes down from high command', that for the moment, "We are to conceal ourselves."

"Of course," Screwtape states, "this has not always been so. We are really faced with a cruel dilemma, when the humans disbelieve in our existence, we lose the pleasing results of direct terrorism—and we make no magicians. On the other hand, when they believe in us, we cannot make them materialists and skeptics."

Satan has certainly succeeded in achieving that, "making skeptics and materialists." People aren't aware of his existence and they, as a result, can't fight against him. And as a result, he can take them captive. That can even affect Christians in this world, in this life in which we live—very much so.

Bunyan saw that. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, (that's another book I can recommend if you want to know about the spiritual battle), Bunyan had such insight on the various things that the believer faces. And so, early on in Christian's pilgrimage, in his journey to the heavenly city, he's traveling through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, and he got confused. Bunyan said, "He didn't know his own voice."

And that's when, as Bunyan puts it, "One of the wicked ones got up behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many blasphemies to him, which he thought were coming from his own mind." Well that brought him to a very low state, but Bunyan said, "He had not the discretion either to stop his ears or to know from whence those blasphemies came." And so he struggled.

It's a *scheme* of the devil. He is able to place doubts in people's minds; and they wonder, 'Where is this coming from? What kind of a person am I?' And it's very discouraging in the Christian life.

Well, Paul wants us to understand clearly the devil's schemes so he won't snare us in his traps. He has help, "wicked ones", as Bunyan called them. Paul describes them as an invisible army, verse 12, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*." This is a well-organized force

that fills the air. Demons are like those that Jesus dealt with throughout His ministry: Those that Jesus cast out of Legion and out of Mary Magdalene—and out of numerous other people.

Evil angels in a hostile spiritual army—but also a defeated army. Christ crushed Satan under His feet on the cross, and He captured the demonic forces, ‘disarming’ them, and ‘displaying’ them in ‘His triumph’. That's how Paul describes His triumph in Colossians chapter 2, verse 15. Nevertheless, though Satan's doom is sure, he's still in the air with a hostile host of devils which, as Luther said, “threaten to undo us”. They can still do harm.

So we must be ready, and we must be active. That's Paul's instruction in verse 13, "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm." It's the “armor of God”, not *our* armor, the “armor of God”. —It is His power and His enablement.

But it requires our response, our cooperation with Him; we are responsible to act and take up the armor. And the reason is, “the evil day” is coming.

Well what is *the evil day*? Paul doesn't define it for us, but it seems to suggest a specific day of special pressure, of intense testing. Not every day is like that, (well, it may be, but we don't sense it). Most days in the Christian life are often routine and maybe peaceful, (hopefully peaceful). —then suddenly, unexpectedly, things change. Trials occur that can't be anticipated and that shake us to the core. We can't predict it, so we must always be prepared for it, always ‘standing in full armor’, ready for the battle, ready for the evil day.

William Gurnall was a Puritan who wrote a large book on this passage, almost 1500 pages on 11 verses. I have it in my library; it sits up there on my shelf. I've had it for 30 years or 40 years—and I say, ‘Someday I'm going to read that book!’ [*Laughter*]. Well, I've read some of it, (it's a classic), where he states, "In heaven we will wear robes of glory, but now we must wear armor at all times. We must be ready at all times..." he said, "...the saints' sleeping time is Satan's tempting time."

And that's true. Look at Peter and James and John in the garden at Gethsemane, when the Lord said, 'Guard and watch with Me while I pray'. But they fell asleep...and they weren't ready for the army that came.

Well Paul describes the armor in the next verse that, 'We are to be wearing at all times', as Gurnall said. He lists six pieces in verses 14-17. Then in verses 18 and 19, he added, "prayer." Prayer is not listed as one of the weapons, (one of 'the tools'), but it certainly is part of the necessary arsenal that we have. —It's the seventh weapon, I would say; and all of these are what enable us to "stand firm".

The first piece of armor listed is, 'the belt of truth'. (vs14). 'Put it on, gird yourself with it. Put it around your waist.' This was the essential piece of equipment for a Roman soldier. The belt was leather, and it kept the armor in place. The breastplate and sword were attached to it, and so first of all, the belt must be on so that the armor is in place. And the significance of that should be very clear: This is the belt of *truth*.

Truth comes first. Not truth in general, not the truth of mathematics or biology or any list of those kinds of subjects, but this is the truth of the Gospel specifically—the doctrines of the Word of God...they hold everything in place. Before we can ever act or think correctly, we must understand the situation and the perspective of the problem—we must have the truth 'buckled on'.

So, we begin with faith in God; we begin with faith in His revelation; we begin understanding and knowing the doctrines of the faith. We cannot measure error unless we have the measuring stick, which is *the truth of God*; that's essential.

And that's the reason Satan's first *scheme* was to attack God's Word, "Indeed has God said?"... 'Has He really put this onus burden on you of not eating any fruit? How unfair!' Satan's always doing that. If he can't get us to doubt its truth, if he can't get us to doubt the goodness of God's Word, the goodness of God and His revelation, he tries to keep us out of His revelation. He tries to keep us too busy to read our Bibles and meditate on it.

And we are busy; I know that. I'm not busy like you are. My days are to be dedicated to reading and studying this Book, and you don't have that opportunity like I do; I'm aware of that. But nevertheless, it is essential that you study the Word of God, for Satan will feel he's been triumphant over you if he keeps you out of Scripture. We need it; we need to meditate on it daily.

A few years earlier, before writing this letter from Rome, Paul met with the Ephesian elders for the last time at Miletus, (which is just south of Ephesus, and it's recorded in Acts chapter 20). He reminded them that when he was with them ministering in Ephesus for two and a half to three years, (from roughly AD 53 to 57), that 'He did not shrink', he said, 'from declaring to them the whole counsel of God.'

I think that word *shrink* is significant because what he's saying is that there are doctrines that preachers and teachers would like to maybe, not speak about too much—'they shrink away from It', knowing it's going to be offensive...people aren't going to like it; people are going to challenge them on that. And Paul says, 'I didn't shrink away from any of it. I gave you the whole counsel of God in that two and a half, three year period.'

And then he warned them that, "savage wolves would come in among them", (vs29) —men who would introduce error and undermined the Gospel...that's Satan's way. Only truth, only pure doctrine will answer that.

And when we come to the end, (as we all must do), on our deathbed, and the devil steps up softly behind us and 'whispers terrors in our ear', nothing will calm and give hope like the truth of God and the promises of God.

So Paul begins here with the thing of first importance: "Stand firm...having girded your loins with truth...", (vs14), having buckled the belt of truth around your waist. That will keep everything in place.

The second piece of armor is "the breastplate." (14b). On a Roman soldier, this was a metal piece that covered the front of his body and protected the vital organs from a thrust of a sword or spear. So for the Christian soldier, the spiritual warrior, it is "*righteousness*". (vs14b). Now that could mean 'righteous behavior',

'righteous obedience'. The conduct that's 'righteous'; that is the view of some. Paul used the word, (*righteousness*), in that way in chapter 4, verse 24, and chapter 5, verse 9. So that would be solid reason for taking it that way.

But generally Paul used this word "*righteousness*", of 'imputed righteousness'—the imputed righteousness of Christ that a believer receives at the moment of faith, *Justification*. And that makes good sense here; Paul was telling the Ephesians, and us, 'to remember that they were justified', 'remember that they were forgiven fully, that they possessed the righteousness of Christ, that they were accounted by God to be *right* with Him...and reckon it to be true!'

That is essential to understand. That is essential for our practical behavior for our life. God the Father accepts us as righteous. He accepts us as perfect—not because of anything that we have done or will do, but what Christ did...what His Son did as our substitute in death. At the cross, all of our sins were laid on Him. He suffered the complete penalty for them and paid up our debts in full. That payment for that punishment is ours the moment we join ourselves to Him in faith. The moment you put your faith in Christ, you are considered righteous by Him—and forever. There's not any more for us to do! The work of salvation is finished. We are fully and forever received by God into His family as His son or daughter.

And that's the basis for Christian assurance. And Christian assurance is essential for a healthy, active Christian life; it's the basis of Christian behavior. Since we are children of God forever, we don't need to strive to gain God's acceptance. Instead, we '*reckon*' ourselves to be children of God...and we behave like it. Well I say, 'It's the basis for proper behavior.' Proper behavior is essential in the Christian life. Those who are born again, who have a new nature, (or new heart), are going to live that way.

And the thing that should stimulate that kind of life is an understanding of what Christ has done for us. 'The love of Christ compels me, controls me', the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14. As he understood God's love for him and Christ's love for him, the love of the Triune God for him, it moved him to serve, and sacrifice, and live a pure

and godly life. So, we're to, "reckon ourselves dead to sin". (Rom 6:11). We're to reckon ourselves righteous with God—and behave like it.

Satan tries to draw us away from our assurance. He doesn't want us to have that healthy understanding of who we are and what God's done for us; and how we're to live. And so, he seeks to frustrate us in that way and leave us in this kind of confused condition—not understanding that we're completely accepted with God. And as a result, what does a person do? 'Well, I'm not completely accepted, therefore I must do some things', and he or she then begins to live a legalistic kind of futile life, (and not a life of joyful service). That is an *ineffective* Christian.

Understanding justification gives freedom to live for the Lord out of love, not fear—to be single minded in the fight, and not distracted or self-absorbed with false worries.

The third piece of armor equips us to *stand firm* as well; it's the soldier's war boot; "... having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" (vs15). The boots of Roman legionnaires were half-boots made of leather with an open toe, and were tied at the ankles and then at the shins with leather straps. The soles were heavily studded to keep the soldier from slipping. Battles often involved hand to hand combat and so firm footing was essential in order to *stand firm* and fight.

The Christian's boot is the "gospel of peace"; the peace we have through the Gospel. Romans chapter 5, verse 1, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." 'Having been justified, we're at peace.' We're at peace with God; there is no longer this conflict that existed. And because of that peace we have *with* God, we have the peace *of* God, inner peace—that which Paul told the Philippians, (4:7), "surpasses all comprehension", and 'guards our hearts and minds.'

Now, that gives stability of mind and purpose in the heat of battle—the spiritual conflict. It was the greatness of the Gospel that caused Paul to ask, in Romans chapter 8, verse 31, "If God is for us, who is against us?"

But he doesn't mean that '*no one*' is against us. We have a whole array here of beings, spiritual beings, that are against us—and human beings that are against us. Paul certainly knew that—but what he's saying is, 'It doesn't matter because, "We overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." ' (Rom 8:37). So we have the peace in the midst of battle knowing that He's defeated the enemy and we are fighting for the One who has already conquered them—and that no one can overcome Him or us. So we *stand firm* and fight on.

The next piece of armor is "the shield of faith" to, 'quench the fiery darts of the evil one.' (vs16). The Roman soldier often fought with a large, rectangular shield; and it could cover most of the body. It was designed to protect from this very thing, from flaming arrows that were dipped in pitch, lit, and then shot at the opposing army, (arrows that could cause a great deal of damage, as you can imagine). But these shields were able to form a wall of defense and gave the army good protection by catching the arrows and extinguishing them.

"Faith" is the Christian warrior's shield—the act of believing in God, trusting in Him, and trusting in His Word. Proverbs chapter 30, verse 5 says of the LORD, "He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him." The devil's "flaming arrows" are different types of things, all kinds of things; like horrible thoughts that cannot be accounted for with one's normal mental action. We wonder, 'Where did these thoughts come from?' Like those blasphemies that *Christian* heard in his head, and now he's confused; 'Is this the way I think? Where is this coming from?'

Well, 'other arrows' may be *doubts* about God's goodness; about His love for us when trials come. I think that is a very common one that the devil uses—that's a fiery dart...that stings...that hurts...that damages and leads one to think, 'God has failed you.' (That's what he'd like you to believe.)

The arrows may come from unexpected places, like other Christians. Job's friends came to him and seemed very sympathetic. I think they were sympathetic; and they gave him counsel that they thought was good counsel. They weren't trying to hurt him,

but it caused great damage. They didn't understand the situation. And their counsel was terrible.

So, these '*arrows*' come in various forms and in different ways. He hits us with thoughts that inflame passion, excite ambition, generate pride or anger. We can think of something that happened to us in the past and get angry about it, all over again. The only protection is *faith*; looking to Christ, seeking His help, believing His Word, believing His promises.

The next piece of armor is, "the helmet of salvation." (vs17). The helmet of the Roman soldier was made of metal, either bronze or iron, with guards at the back of the neck and the sides of the face. It was impervious to most weapons and gave a soldier vital protection.

The Christian's helmet is salvation—and we "*receive*" it. That's really the word that Paul used here. It's translated, at least in The New American Standard Bible, as "*take*". (vs17). It's translated a little differently in others, "*take up*." This is simply "*take*", but here it's a different word from these other words that are used earlier. This really means "*receive*". And Paul used that word for a reason: This is not for style, but doctrine. Salvation is a *gift*; it's not the result of our initiative. We don't 'take it', we *receive* it through faith alone.

Salvation is a completed work. It is salvation *past, present, and future*. And it keeps us safe from the enemy's whacks and attacks—all of that. The believer in Jesus Christ is absolutely secure. No one can snatch us out of the Son's hand or the Father's hand. Nothing can separate us from the love of God—and there are so many places this point is made by the Lord Himself, and by the apostles. We are absolutely secure in the Lord. That fact, and the realization that our salvation was settled at the cross, gives great confidence and joy in the spiritual life—and in the spiritual battle, confidence, even in the face of death.

Now to this point all the equipment Paul has listed is defensive. The sixth piece of armor given is the only weapon of attack, as well as defense. It's "the sword." Roman soldiers used a short, double edged sword that was very effective in close, hand-to-hand combat. And that's what Paul is thinking of here. He called it, "the sword of the Spirit", (vs17b), because it comes from the Spirit. He gives us "the sword". And Paul defines *the sword* as "the Word of God."

So our *sword* is the Scriptures, which had been given to us by the Spirit of God through inspiration. "All Scripture is inspired by God...", Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16; meaning, 'It is God breathed': It comes out of the Spirit of God, and into the authors of Scripture. And since He is the Spirit of truth...it is truth. It "is the word of God." (vs17b). The word Paul used here for "*word*" is not the word that we're so often familiar with, *logos*. But here it's the word, '*rhema*', which refers to individual words or particular texts. So Paul was not referring to the general knowledge of Scripture as in, 'the belt of truth', 'the sweep of Scripture', or, 'the doctrines of Scripture.' Rather, *rhema*, refers to specific texts of Scripture used precisely for the occasion that may be at hand—to cut through error or problems. It's knowing specific *promises* that help in time of trial, or the right text in giving the Gospel in the work of evangelism. It takes a great deal of knowledge of Scripture and then the wisdom to know how to use it and apply it. That's what he's speaking of here; that's the exhortation that's behind it: 'Know the Scriptures, and use the Scriptures wisely, and well, and skillfully.' It's our sword: It is a weapon for defense, and a weapon of offense. It is the only effective way to fight error, or temptation, or to spread the Gospel.

Jesus is the great example of it. When tempted by the devil, He answered with Scripture. He didn't reason with the devil; go back to Matthew chapter 4, and read it. And that sheds a great deal of light on passages like James chapter 4, verse 7, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you." That's what Jesus did. He answered every temptation of the devil, all three of them, with Scripture. And after the third temptation, what did the devil do? He left. He left, defeated. Our sword is a powerful weapon.

I often come to a passage like this and think of, what was it, the sixth, seventh century, when the armies of Mohammad came off the deserts of Arabia, and they spread through the Middle East and North Africa. And within a generation they had established themselves all over that part of the world, and were even pushing, in the eighth century up into France when they were stopped. What was the method of their evangelism...the means of it? The sword—the literal sword...‘You convert or you die!’

Our sword is something completely different, but it is infinitely more effective. It is by preaching the Word of God that we achieve great victory for the Lord—in our own lives, and in the lives of others.

So again, that's what Satan seeks to frustrate. That's what he seeks to take away from us, the trust in the Word of God. When we preach it, things happen. When we preach it, revival occurs like the Day of Pentecost—or the Reformation, or the Great Awakening. Now again, that's why Satan's schemes are to cast doubt on the Word of God and try to move us to seek other things, other means—more ‘rational’ means.

No, we need to stick with the Word of God. We need to know it, we need to trust it, we need to use it, personally and publicly.

There are six pieces of armor; he's listed them here. But as I mentioned earlier, and as we see in verse 18, there's also the need of prayer. It's not listed as a weapon, but it certainly influences every aspect of the spiritual battle. Paul commands it in verse 18, "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints..." , (vs18).

Prayer and petition are not the same thing. Petition is specific; it refers to requests that we make. Prayer is more general; it refers to requests, but also for help, and confession of sin, and praise and thanksgiving. And we are to be at it, “at all times”, he said; meaning, ‘Make it the regular, daily pattern of your life—not just in a crisis...be praying at all times.’

And pray “in the Spirit”; He directs our prayers. You wonder, ‘How is that?’ Well, I think George Müller, the great man of faith, the man who started the orphanages. [You

hear about him much from us. I have great admiration for Müller, a man of faith.] He discovered that beginning the day reading and meditating on Scripture, 'Got his soul right, and led to informed prayer.' He wrote that his primary business was, 'To have his soul happy in the LORD.' And as we study the Word of God, the Spirit brings the truth of God to our mind, and communicates His will, and enlightens us and directs us in how to pray. And so, to be praying, "in the Spirit", is praying under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; and the Spirit guides us through the Word of God. So that's how Müller began the day; it's good, wise counsel for us.

And we're to be praying "at all times", and "for all the saints". Paul was asking for prayer for himself; verse 19 and 20, "...and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

Speak boldly to whom?; he's a prisoner in Rome. Well, to the Roman soldier that he was chained to, (and was probably his model for the Christian's armor). And he did that; he spoke to the rotation of soldiers that he met. We know from Philippians chapter 1, verse 13, that some of the praetorian guard believed—and even some in Caesar's household. Prayer is effective. We all need it. Even the apostles needed the prayers of the saints, and Paul was asking for that. And their prayers were answered.

Now, there was lots of news that Paul could have told them about, some of those things that he wrote to the Philippians, (one of his other prison epistles), things about what he's doing in Rome, and what had happened, and what was going on in prison. He didn't have space in this letter for him to write these things for them; 'but Tychicus would take care of that', he says in verse 21. 'He who delivered this letter would then inform them of all that was happening there in Rome.'

What was important for the apostle, as he concluded this magnificent letter that extolled the sovereign grace of God is, 'We must be people of prayer, persevering in prayer; it's God's means of blessing.

Paul then concluded the letter with a prayer, a benediction, verse 23, "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Peace, love, and faith is what Paul wants for the brethren. And since it's the brethren he was praying for, the '*peace*' of his request is here, again, not peace *with* God, (they had that in justification), but the peace *of* God—personal peace that gives stability in the Christian life, and joy. We can have that at all times. We can have joy and peace in the storms of life as Paul did in Rome, there in a prison, chained to a Roman guard.

And ultimately, that's the gift of God's grace—and that's where the letter ends. Verse 24, "Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ, with incorruptible *love*." "*Incorruptible*" is the last word of this book, and has the idea of, '*imperishable, immortal, undying love*.' It cannot be moved by another. That is a love that is strengthened as we know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as we understand our Triune God, who He is and what He has done for us in grace.

Now that's what Satan wishes to draw us away from through the spiritual war, "The Secret Theater" which is 'on'—playing all around us. So Paul prayed earnestly for grace, sovereign grace for the brethren.

Are you one of them? You are if you're a believer in Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote earlier in this book, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God." (Eph 2:8). If you want the free grace of salvation, you can only *receive* it. You can't work for it, you can't earn it. Christ has done it all. It's only for us, now, to receive that work that He has achieved, that salvation that He has obtained, by believing in Him.

So, if you've not done that, trust in Him. Join the brethren, the forgiven, the society of the redeemed, and have eternal life. May God help you to do that.

(Closing prayer) Father, we look forward to that day when He comes and we do stand with Him in glory.

In the meantime we're in this world; it's fallen, and we're in this spiritual war that Paul has described in Ephesians 6. May we heed his call to arms; may we be wise and put on the armor of God and know that we fight daily. But we do so in Your power and Your strength; so we thank You for that. We pray that You'd give us wise and triumphant lives in the day-to-day affairs of life; and may we live to Your honor and glory.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace.
In Christ's name, Amen.

(End of Audio)