**STRONG IN THE LORD**

**TAKE AND KEEP YOUR STAND**

Ephesians 6:11-15 “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to **stand** against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to **withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, to **stand**.  **Stand** therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.”

When we think in terms of the warfare that we are in, the word ‘stand’ is very important to being strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. We are told that we are to resist the devil and he will flee. When we take our stand - this is exactly what we are doing.

We saw that one of the ways that we can be strong in the Lord is to consider the promises that He has given us. However, what sometimes happens is that rather than standing on the promise that He has given we flee or turn away.

We have the flesh, the world and the devil that we contend with and God has given us three ways that we are to fight. When it comes to the flesh, Paul told the young man Timothy to flee youthful lusts. So, when it comes to the flesh instead of trying to resist we must FLEE. With the devil we are to resist and **he** will flee. Often, we get the two mixed up - we try to fight the devil like we fight the flesh and it does not work. We will lose every time. When it comes to the world we are told not to be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

In the Greek, the word to stand brings out the idea pulling ourselves together to be ready for conflict. Peter said: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.”  (1 Peter 4:12) We need to recognize that trials, tribulations and conflicts will come our way. This is life here on planet earth until Christ comes and makes all things new. When these trials do come we need to make sure that we do not give in to thoughts of self-pity that come crowding into our minds and hearts, like, “Why me, Lord?”

We see this in Matthew 16 when Jesus asked his disciples who He was and Peter said “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Later Jesus said that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer and die on the cross and Peter rose up and said, “Forbid it Lord.” What he was really saying was ‘pity yourself, why should you die, what have you done wrong?’

But Jesus rebukes Peter that this type of thinking was of the enemy – Satan – and then He said: “Pick up your cross and follow me!” Instead of *pitying* ourselves we need to *deny* ourselves and follow Christ. I would say that one of the greatest sins is self-pity, being sorry for oneself and allowing to enter into the mind thoughts which cast down what God’s love, goodness, care and His great promises are for us.

So when the problems, trials, persecutions, etc. come because of the spiritual warfare that we are in we should not be surprised, but also at the same time we should not be frightened either. The one who is frightened is the one who will flee. We are to stand. Peter said: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, **standing firm in the faith**, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.” (1 Peter 5:8-10) Paul was saying the same thing to the Christians at Philippi: “…and **not in any way terrified** by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.” (Philippians 1:28)

In this spiritual battle or in any battle we cannot be half-hearted; we cannot be ‘straddling the fence.’ If we are uncertain in the fight – we will lose. Being doubtful we will fight badly and we know from James that a “double minded man is unstable in all of his ways.” (James 1:8) To be honest, if we find reading the Word of God is a task that must be performed or prayer being a drudge instead of a joy in having communion with the Ruler of the universe then I would say that we are already defeated because of half-heartedness in the battle that we are in.

**We are in this battle to win and win we will if we take our stand and not give up.**

So we are to take the position that God has given us. A good example of this is in 2 Chronicles 20 where Jehoshaphat the king of Israel heard that a great multitude was coming against him. He sought the Lord and said: “we do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you.” Later he was given the instructions that they would go down to the Valley and told that they would not need to fight in this battle, but position themselves, stand still and see the salvation of God.

**This is a battle between God and Satan and God will win, but will we; will we lose more than we should?**

**YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH**

John 8:32 “You shall know the **truth**, and the **truth** shall make you free."

Ephesians 6:14 “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with **truth.**”

When it comes to the armor of God the first thing that we put on is the “belt of truth,” because the armor that is put on after is dependent on the belt. It holds everything else in place. But what is meant by ‘truth’ here? Some say that we need to have a spirit of sincerity and truthfulness in us, and this is important, but is this the “belt” that we are to put on, the *belt of sincerity and truthfulness*?

I know that the Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, but could the Word of God be the “belt of truth” as well? Comparing Scripture with Scripture seems to bring this out. The text above about truth setting us free in John 8 is referring to His Word of Truth and continuing in His teaching.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13 “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave and be strong.” The word ‘faith’ brings out the idea of the truthfulness of God: His Word. We are to stand fast in His Word. This is important because truth here is dealing with the Word of God; we are to be mastered by this truth because this is what holds us together in this battle that we are faced with, and that also holds in place all the other pieces of armor that we are to put on.

Again, I reiterate the importance of the Word of God and so we can understand why the enemy wants it out of the way. This is why it was banned from schools and is now becoming banned from public offices, etc. This is the reason why the enemy wants to take down the Ten Commandments from the public square. The battle today is a battle over the Word of God. The enemy will try to confuse us, create uncertainty to weaken and hinder God’s people in this battle. The devil is a liar, murderer and will do all that he can to discredit the Word of God.

Throughout church history we can see how the enemy is always trying to work doubt in our minds, just like he did with Eve when he asked: “Did God really say?” We saw how important the promises of God are, but this is where Satan comes to bring doubt. We must always remember that "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19)

When Jesus closed his Sermon on the Mount, He brought out the example of two men and two houses. One built his house on the sand (without a firm foundation) and when the storms of life began to blow – that house did not stand. The other man built his house on solid rock (Christ’s teaching, the Word of God) and in the storms of life that house stood firm.

So, we must ask ourselves: What ‘belt’ do we have girded around our loins? Is it the belt of truth, the Word of God? Or is it the fads of today, being ‘our truth,’ or whatever the ‘power to be’ might tell us what truth is? It is of utmost importance to make sure that we have the right answer to this question.

We live today in a postmodern world where there is no absolute truth. A book written by Sharyl Attkisson called THE SMEAR shares how shady political operatives and the “fake news” control what you see, what you think and how you vote. This has become a billion-dollar industry employing thousands of people to do one thing and one thing only and that is to smear one another’s opponent and in the process – truth be dammed. So truth has become what **people** think it is.

What happens when God’s truth is cast aside? One: words have no meeting. Things made out of words such as our laws, vows, contracts, etc. have no true meaning.

Two: Values have changed. Sacrifice, loyalty, morality, accountability, has changed to independence, personal happiness, tolerance, comfort, instant gratification, and the right to make one's own choices.

Three: We see that image is more important than substance.

Four: Character is not important anymore.

Five: There is no such thing as evil.

Six. We make decisions by following our heart, which the Word of God says is deceitful, no one knows their own heart like God. (Jeremiah 11:8)

Seven: There is no real story giving us the *beginning and end*. Nothing makes sense. Everything is in bits and pieces.

In this spiritual battle, we see the importance of the BELT OF TRUTH. It holds everything else in place.

**RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Ephesians 6:14 “….put on the breastplate of righteousness.”

Another important piece of our armor is the breastplate because it protects the vital organs of the body. Often the Old Testament writers would use the names of different organs to express feelings, affection, etc. This is the reason why the breastplate of righteousness is so important in this conflict that we find ourselves in, this wrestling with the world, the flesh and the devil, because what we need to protect is our feelings, affections, desires, our will and conscience.

The conscience is very important. We see that Paul puts the conscience second only to our faith in

1 Timothy 1:19 “….having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected.” We see in the rest of this passage that this rejection of protecting one’s own conscience affects one’s faith. The Word of God describing it as having “shipwrecked their faith.”

The conscience is very important and the devil will attack us in this area, and many are held captive by the devil at this point. We also have desires and there is nothing wrong with desires. God has given us desires and many of them are good. They are part of life as well as who we are, however, what the devil tries to do is bring us inordinate desires, or to inflame the natural desires we have. Through all of this the will is affected and that is the reason why the breastplate of righteousness is so important.

What do we mean by righteousness? Are we talking about moral rectitude, or should it be translated as integrity? Or could this be a righteousness that is provided by God Himself? I think so. For example, consider the apostle Paul. He was a man of integrity as well as self-righteousness, but like we read in Philippians 3:7-9 “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the **righteousness which is from God by faith.”** So this is the breastplate of righteousness that we need to put on.

Another example of this is found in Luke 18 where the Pharisee talks about his [self] righteousness. Listen to what he says: “I fast twice a week, I give a tenth of all that I have.” Yet it was the sinner that said: “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13) And the sinner went home justified.

500 years ago Martin Luther discovered this righteousness of Christ and by starting the reformation he changed the course of history. The question that comes is: What can we do? We can do nothing and that is probably one of the first things that we need to learn. This is why God sent His Son so that we might receive His righteousness, because God is pleased with His Son.

2 Corinthians 5:21 “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

One of the great verses in the Bible is Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”

Now that this righteousness has been imparted to us we are to work this out in our daily lives. Doing this we will find that this righteousness protects our heart, our mind, our conscience as well as our desires, emotions and will.

It is important to see that the breastplate protects our emotions. Human emotions and desires are real and can be good, they play a great part in our life, but unless kept in check can lead us into a lifestyle that is detrimental to our being holy unto the Lord. We can feel so strongly about something that it can replace the rational thought. Praise God for this breastplate that protects us and keeps us strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

At the time of this writing we have just had one of the biggest gun massacres (Las Vegas, California U.S.A.) in our history. There has been no destruction like this since 9/11 with New York’s Twin Towers. Without knowing all of the facts - immediately we see coming out over the airwaves, through media, twitter, Facebook, etc. emotional responses exploiting the situation to back up everyone’s theory about their “political agenda.” This is the time for rational thinking, not emotional outbursts!

Those of us who know Christ have the breastplate of righteousness that protects the emotions so that rational thinking can occur and right decisions can be made. We are living in days of unprecedented evil and ***this is the time for the ‘sons of God to rise’ and be a solution*** and not add to the problem. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9) We do not need to act like emotional children. We need to act like God’s sons who are strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

**OUR FEET**

Ephesians 6:15 “…and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”

Have we ever thought about the important role our feet play in everyday life? Our feet touch the ground whenever we are standing, walking or running and they are an extension of your legs, which help move you. They are the foundation of your body and keeping them healthy can help keep you healthy.

This third piece that we are to put on in order to be “strong in the Lord and the power of His might” has reference to our feet and shows that our entire personality is involved. Nothing is more important in the Christian life than balance. If we were to think through our life we would find that many of our troubles are due to a lack of balance and the enemy capitalizes on it. We must keep in mind that our Christian life does not consist of sections and portions, but our faith takes up the whole life, the whole man and we need protection at every point.

Paul, in Corinthians 12, shows us the unity of the body and how every part is important and we are to treat each member with respect. This is true with the Body of Christ, the true church. So just like the internal organs have their importance - so it is with the feet.

We know that in any physical warfare the feet are important. Soldiers in battle are always told to keep an extra pair of socks that were dry to be able to put on the feet in order that they might stand, run and fight.

Paul tells us here in Ephesians 6 that in this spiritual battle we are to have on our feet the preparation of the *gospel of peace*. But what does this preparation mean? A number of ways to interpret this word is: readiness, prepare, provide, equipment, etc. So, what does Paul mean here? The RSV translation brings out the idea of ‘equipment,’ so could this be what Paul is meaning here? We have the ‘right equipment’ on our feet to be ready with the gospel of peace. Titus 3:1 brings out the same idea. “Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be **ready** to do whatever is good.” The word ‘ready’ is the same word in our text for ‘preparation.’

So does this mean that we need to be ready to take the gospel of peace to the places where the gospel has not gone before? Does it mean that we are to be ready to preach and to evangelize with how we’ve been equipped by the Lord? Yes, we should be ready for all of this, but we must keep in mind that the footwear we put on is for battle. It brings out the idea of being firm in our standing, confident in what we believe – so that we stand strong.

1 Corinthians 16:13 says that we are to “stand fast in the faith.” *Faith* here could be translated ‘the truthfulness of God,’ keeping in mind that God is not a man that He should lie, or that He does not keep His promises.

The writer of Hebrews tells us in Hebrews 2:1 that we must be careful in paying attention to what has been said lest we drift or slip away. The reason for the footwear is to make sure that we do not *slip* in the battle that we are in. Here in this passage we see that many of God’s people are slipping, drifting, sliding - simply because they do not understand or know what to believe. Are we ready to stand on the Gospel?

In first Corinthians Paul spends 14 chapters telling the Corinthian Christians that they are standing on and dividing over the wrong issues. Finally, in chapter 15 Paul says: “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your **stand**.” What are we to stand on? The pure and simple Gospel! The question in this battle is: Are we ready to stand on the gospel that is outlined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4?

We have propaganda telling us what to stand on. For example, the modern fads for today, or what the powers to be tell us what to stand on. This is where political correctness has come in. We live in a world where there is a tremendous *spin* or *smear machine* telling us what is real and what is not.

What Paul is telling us is that we are to have our feet shod or equipped with the gospel of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. This is what we are to stand on.

**THE SHIELD OF FAITH**

Ephesians 6:16 “Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”

The words “above all” indicate that there is now a change in the armor that we are to put on. We are now coming to the fourth piece of armor wherewith we need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. The first three pieces were fixed, but now in this different transition we are told “to take up the shield of faith.” The fixed pieces of armor we have on all the time, but in times of emergency, or battle we take up the shield of faith.

The Roman shield that Paul is thinking about would be about four feet tall and two and half feet wide and held in front to protect the entire body. Paul speaks about the flaming arrows or darts of the enemy. One can imagine a barrage of darts or arrows falling down upon us that would bring in confusion, chaos, injury and then allow the troops to come in and finish the job.

We need to keep in mind that these darts are being thrown by the enemy, a.k.a. the wicked one or the devil. Paul told us that we do not fight “against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Vs.12. The world no longer believes that there is a devil and demonic powers and consequently when evil acts come they have no answers.  It is not flesh and blood that we fight, but a real devil that commands and controls a variety of infernal powers, devilish agents and spiritual entities.

When we think of these fiery darts or arrows we must realize that they can take different forms. Probably the most common would be in our thought life. Thoughts that would bring in doubt, despair, discouragement, especially when it comes to God’s promises, God’s love, God’s faithfulness and God’s Word. We see how Satan came to Eve in the Garden of Eden and said: “Did God really say?”

Also there can be blasphemous thoughts about God and the Lord Jesus Christ. When we get these thoughts we can begin to doubt whether we are even a Christian. Or we might find that the devil throws words or phrases, or oaths or some other form of horrible language at us.

Some of these darts can deal with our imagination where the enemy can conjure up scenes, or depict events and paint them very vividly and make them seem so real. This is why we “take up the shield of faith.”

Peter tell us in 1 Peter 4:12 that it is not “strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you.” Because Satan will use these things to try and alarm us into thinking that God does not love us or has forgotten us, or to bring in fear that would tend to immobilize us from moving in all that God has for us – we need to keep in mind what Peter said in 1 Peter 5:8, 9: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.”

John tells us in 1 John 5:4: “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.”

Attacks of persecution can come from many different forms and in different ways. We see what some Christians went through in Hitler’s Germany and even today in places like the Middle East, India, China, but also persecution can come from those who are near to us.

The only way to really counteract all of this is through the *shield of faith* and we know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. He who believes shall obey, and God gives faith to the obedient heart.

We never work to produce faith and faith will never point to itself. We do not have faith in faith, but faith will always point to God; to His character; to who He is. This is why we are told in Hebrews 12:2 to “look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

So in times of crises or even in everyday life the question is: What are we looking at or towards? What is it that draws our attention? Is it Jesus, or some ‘thing’ else, or some ‘one’ else that we look towards.

Remember, we take up the shield of faith.

**HELMET OF SALVATION**

Ephesians 6:17 ‘Take the helmet of salvation.’

It is important to remember that Paul is using the analogy of a Roman soldier when describing the pieces of armor that we need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and that it remains fixed in place at all times, but also what he is to pick up and put on when the danger or an enemy is coming.

“Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one,” now Paul reminds us to also “take the helmet of salvation.” By putting on the helmet we know that this is bringing attention to the head, the brain where we have understanding, imagination and the thinking process. In other pieces of the armor he has dealt with feelings, emotions and desires, but now he is dealing, I believe, with the intellectual part of our position as Christians.

In this spiritual warfare - the enemy will bring forth his strategy as well as his tactics to achieve the outcome he desires. It is possible that we can have an overall view of the strategy of Satan, but miss out on his tactics in achieving his goal of defeating us.

In this battle or conflict, we can begin to become weary and think that the fight is in vain. We have been in this battle for a long time, perhaps we have been wounded, you find yourself struggling and you begin to wonder if it is worth it all. It seems at times that nothing changes, or there is one delay after another, and what seemed to be a promise from God - does not come about when we thought is should or hoped it would.

It is like what David said when he was constantly being pursued by King Saul and his life was in jeopardy. 1 Samuel 27:1 “But David thought to himself, **‘One of these days I will be destroyed by the hand of Saul.** The best thing I can do is to escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will give up searching for me anywhere in Israel, and I will slip out of his hand.’” In this ‘giving up’ David went to a place called Ziglag which was on the border of Israel and the area of the Philistines. It was a place of compromise for David to survive; a pretense of survival. One would wonder what this affect had on his men.

We could look at the condition of the church today that has been around for 2000 years and think that it has little impact on the world to date. We see the church in the West full of confusion and uncertainty when it comes to some of the main issues that we face in our culture. The enemy can whisper in our ears that the church is useless today, and on the surface it would seem that the enemy is stronger than the Christian today who seems weak and powerless. We see that many have given up on the church, feeling it is worthless.

In the book of Hebrews talking to Christians it would seem that this book would be a good commentary on what we are faced with today as it was then. These Christians had left their Jewish traditions and turned to Christ and for a time they had great joy, but then their Jewish countrymen began to persecute them, rob them of their goods. They were told that Christ would return, but there was no sign of His return. The result was that they became discouraged.

It is in this context that we must understand what the helmet of salvation is. Some Bible scholars say that this is being always aware of being saved by Christ, no matter what happens. This is true, but it seems to be more than that. Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 “But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a **helmet the hope of salvation.”**

What is this “hope of salvation?”

When we look at Scripture and what Paul wrote in other letters to the churches - the hope of salvation is what can be called the ‘hope of glory.’ For example, he says in 1 Corinthians 15:32 that if he fought with wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons - he has gained nothing *if the dead are not raised*. He goes on to say that as we eat, drink, and expect to die – we KNOW Who is coming – and so we continue on with the good fight of faith, because of the “hope of His glory.”

We must keep in mind that there are ‘tenses of salvation,’ in other words, we have in our salvation the past, present and future. The past is justification, the present is sanctification and the future is glorification. So, with this in mind: put on the helmet of salvation so that we might be strong in the Lord and the power of His might.

**SWORD OF THE SPIRIT**

Ephesians 6:17 “…and take the Sword of the Spirit, which is Word of God.”

All the other parts of armor protect particular parts of the body. However, it seems that the Sword of the Spirit not only holds back the enemy in a defensive matter, but also offensively in protecting the entire body.

James 4:7 says “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” The question that comes is *how do we resist?*

Christ is an example for us when He was being tempted by the devil in the wilderness by using the Word of God. Satan has a strategy with tactics. One tactic is to try to terrorize us, produce a fear that will paralyze and stop us; hinder us from doing what God wants us to do. Because of this we must be confident in resisting him and this brings us back to the Word of God. We can resist the devil and cause him to flee. However, to do this we must stand and withstand using the Sword of the Spirit that causes him to flee.

What does it mean to take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God? Some translations bring out instead of the “Word of God” the “words that come from God.” However, I do not believe that this is what is meant. Yes, I believe, we are to take the Word of God, the Scriptures from the Holy Bible. We read in chapter 4 about Jesus defeating the devil as He was being tempted in the wilderness. He took hold of the Scripture and the devil left Him.

The Holy Scriptures found in our Bibles is the Sword of the Spirit. I take this to mean that ‘truth’ in the Scriptures is the Sword that the Holy Spirit gives us to use against our enemy. The Spirit of God trains us to properly use the Word of God.

We know from Scripture (1 Timothy 3:16) that all Scripture is God breathed. This means that what we have in our hand the Bible which has been given to us by God – to use. It was God’s Spirit who moved upon men chosen by God that wrote down the revelation from Him. Like one Bible scholar said: “It was breathed into these men and they wrote it.” We must also realize that it’s only by the Holy Spirit that we can understand the Word of God.

1 Corinthians 2:12 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”

We will not understand Scripture by intellect alone. It does not make any difference on whether we are a genius or like some say a great scholar; it will only be by the Holy Spirit who gives us understanding of God’s Word. Not only will He, Holy Spirit, give us understanding, but wisdom that helps us to use the Word properly.

It is very important for us to understand the relationship between the Spirit and the Word. Some today say that since we have the illumination of the Spirit we do not need the written Word. What a tragedy! But, we have the other side that tends to say that since we have the written Word we need nothing further. Again, what a tragedy. The Spirit and the Word always go together.

When we read through the Gospels we see how Jesus (our example) perfectly used the Word of God. When the Pharisees, or lawyers who were trained men and supposedly experts in the Jewish Law, tempted Him – He always defeated them by using the Word of God.

We live in a world today that believes that there is no such thing as *ultimate truth,* and the only way that we can defeat “fake news,” or untruths that are being promulgated today, is to use the Word of God.

It was 500 years ago that a man by the name of Martin Luther discovered the truth that “just shall live by faith.” Luther brought about what we now call a “Reformation” that basically transformed Western civilization. One of the things that took place was that the Bible was getting into the hands of the common man.

Tyndale, wanting us to have a good translation in the English language, said that “his resolve was that every plow man, every boy at the plow should be able to read and understand God’s Word in order that they might be safeguarded against the false teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.” It was at that time the Catholic Church was keeping the Holy Scriptures out of the hands of laypeople.

This brings us to the point that we all are to know the Word of God. It is available to us and with it we can give an answer to anything that might come to us and against us. Keeping to the Word of God for truth with Christ’s teachings – we too can cause the enemy to flee. We need to be students of the Word of God and depend on the Holy Spirit in how to use it properly.

Just as God told Joshua – so God is telling us: Joshua 1:8 “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

Just as Joshua was strong in the Lord and the power of His might, we can be as well.

**IN THE SPIRIT**

Ephesians 6:18 “Praying always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit**, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”

We must remember that when Jesus was here in the flesh He was engaged in the same conflict that we are in. The devil assailed Him and the weapons that Christ used are the same weapons that we Christians have as well to defeat the enemy.

Ephesians 6:18 starts out with the words, “praying always.” Prayer is not necessarily another piece of armor that we put on, but when we are *putting on* the armor it means that we are covered with each piece as we pray with all prayer and supplication. I believe it is like some Bible scholars bring out that the armor which is provided for us by God is not effective unless we are in fellowship and communion with God.

We can be orthodox in our theology, but that is not enough. There is such a thing as a dead orthodoxy. There can be people who understand the truth with their mind, point out the errors in other people’s teaching and yet their life is no value to anyone, because they are still being defeated by the devil.

The same can be applied to the church as a whole. Often this might be the case of why so many churches, traditional in their theology, are making very little impact in their society or in their surrounding area. Why is this the case? Perhaps it is because they have forgotten the further admonition of the apostle Paul when he said, “praying always.” It is possible that the people or churches who are the most orthodox are those who realize least - the value of prayer.

In one sense, to *be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might,* is not to forget this last admonition of the apostle Paul of *praying always*. We cannot rely upon our own intellect, philosophy, traditions, rituals, etc., but on the power of God and our continual close communion with Him

When we look at the New Testament, and especially the four gospels, we see the example of the Lord Jesus Christ – through prayer walking the earth in human form depending solely on His Father. We see Jesus constantly arising early in the morning to seek out a place to pray; we see Him praying all night; we see Him constantly going off seeking a place where He might meet with His Heavenly Father. This is why in the gospel of Luke the disciples came and said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray.” Luke 11:1

Our ultimate position as Christians is tested by the character of our prayer life. Prayer to the Father is more important than knowledge and understanding. If all my knowledge and understanding does not lead me to prayer then there is something wrong with me.

What does Paul mean when he talks about *praying with all prayer?* I would tend to think that he is referring to private prayer, communal prayer, oral prayer, silent prayer and possibly even different positions of prayer. It does not mean that we have to be in a church building for prayer, we can pray as we walk, as we drive, take a shower, as we go about our daily business; we can be talking with our Heavenly Father just as we talk with our spouse or close friend.

Some of our prayers can be orderly as we see with the Lord’s Prayer. Our prayers need to be intelligent knowing what God says in His Word. Also, prayers can be a groan or a cry from the heart that words cannot express. Paul said in Romans that the Spirit makes intercession for us.

Look at the prayers of the prophets, like Isaiah, who prayed with adoration, worship, thanksgiving and praise to our Heavenly Father. We are to pray bringing our petitions before God because we are told to “let your requests be made known unto God.”

However, Paul says “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” “In the Spirit,” I believe, is the real essence of true prayer. Just as Jesus had access to the Father so we too find in Ephesians 2:18 that “through Him, we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” Paul refers to the same thing in other epistles – like in Romans 8:6.

When Paul uses the phrase “in the Spirit” in relation to prayer – prayer is to have its proper place before the Father. It will not be because of our repetitions like the Pharisees who loved to hear themselves pray, or by the length of our prayers, etc., but it is to be “in the Spirit” that we pray.

Prayer “in the Spirit” is the opposite of prayer that relies upon forms of rituals, as we again see with the Pharisees. Praying *in the Spirit* is the opposite of cold, heartless, proud and formal prayers. We do not come before the Father and just ‘say a prayer.’ Praying *in the Spirit* becomes the most important part of a person, and as natural as having a conversation with a friend or your spouse. Praying *in the Spirit* is not necessarily an emotional prayer although it can be, but what it means is that it is the Holy Spirit that is directing us in prayer. He creates the prayer within us and empowers us to offer it with confidence. This also results in worship, praise and adoration to our Heavenly Father.

Prayer is not a duty, but rather it should be a delight to talk to our heavenly Father – just as it is a delight to have a two-way conversation with your spouse or close friend.