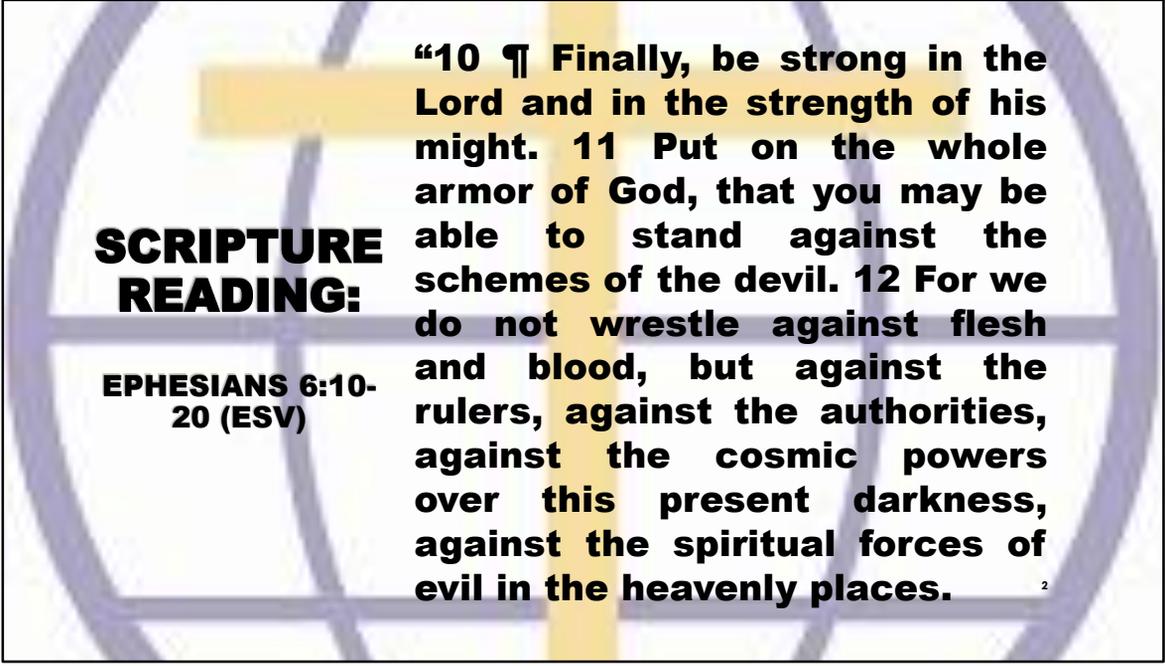


BE STRONG IN THE LORD

Grace Communion International
Minister: Eric Vautour
Date: August 26, 2018

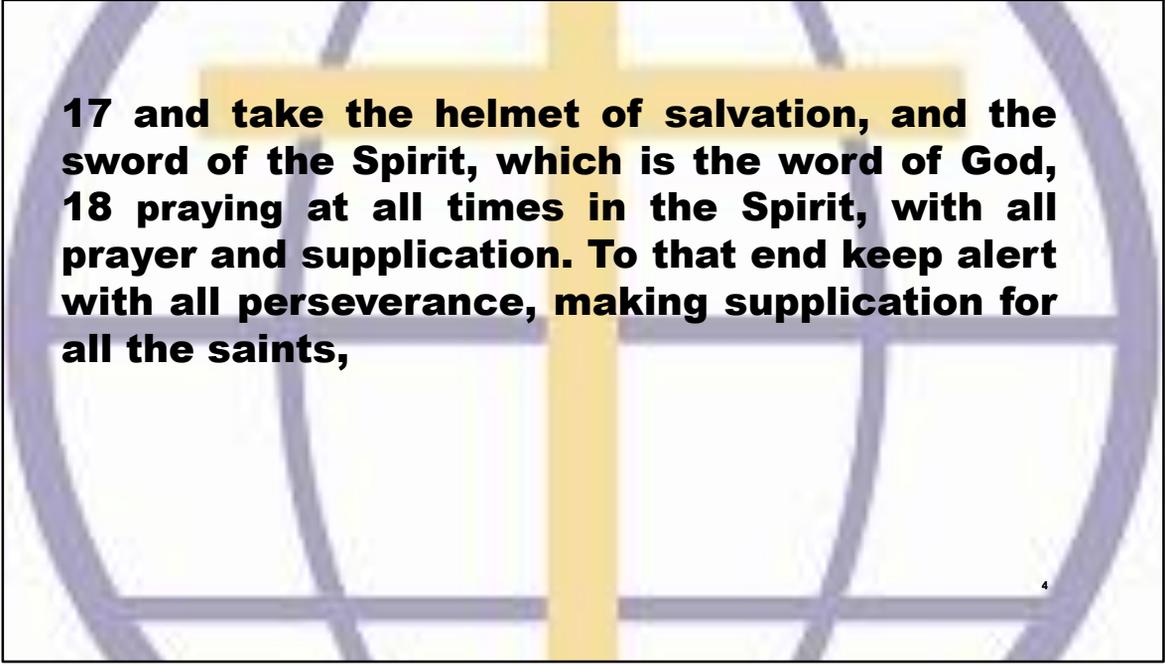


**SCRIPTURE
READING:**

**EPHESIANS 6:10-
20 (ESV)**

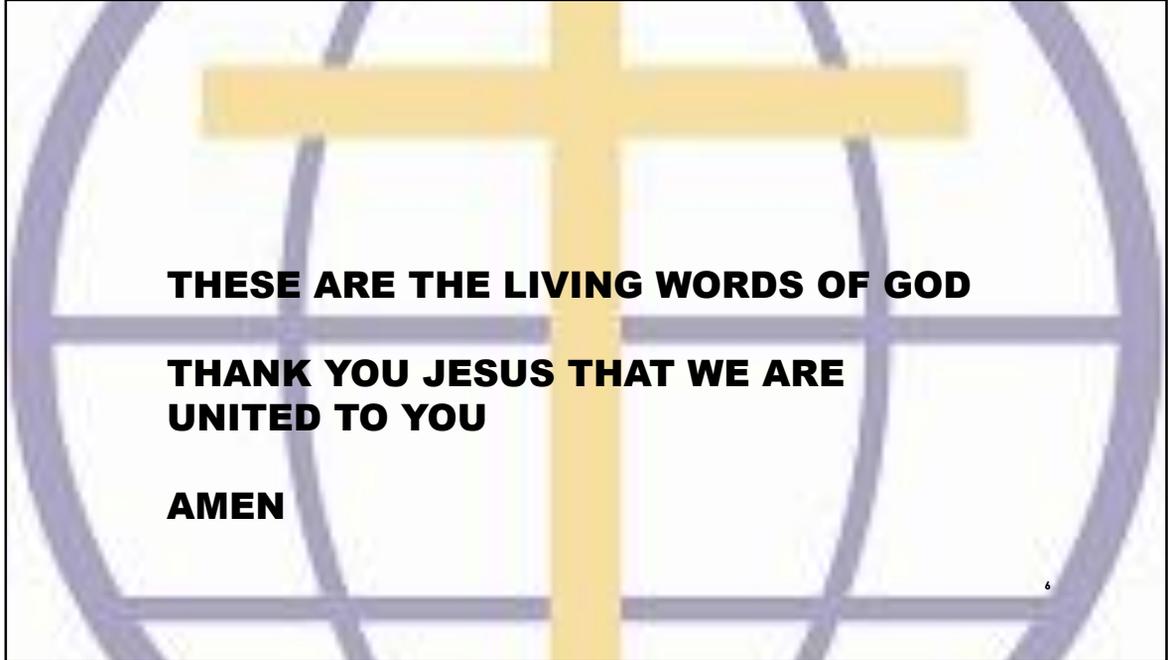
“10 ¶ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ²

- **13 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 FIRM. 14 STAND THEREFORE, HAVING FASTENED ON THE BELT OF TRUTH, AND HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 AND, AS SHOES FOR YOUR FEET, HAVING PUT ON THE READINESS GIVEN BY THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. 16 IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES TAKE UP THE SHIELD OF FAITH, WITH WHICH YOU CAN EXTINGUISH ALL THE FLAMING DARTS OF THE EVIL ONE;**



17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

**19 ¶ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.”
(Eph 6:10-20 ESV)**



As we read the Scriptures **“to be strong in the Lord”**, it is important to understand that we are not on our own and that we do not rest in our own strength. We need to understand that it is **“in the strength of his might”**.

The words **“in Christ”** and **“in the Lord”** are found 164 times in the epistles of the apostle Paul, 36 of which are found in Ephesians. (Paraphrase from *Snodgrass, Klyne. Ephesians [The NIV Application Commentary Book 10] [p. 57]. Zondervan. Kindle Edition.*).

That ability to stand in Christ is a gift of God. **“12 ¶ Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Php 2:12–13 ESV)**

We are called to participate in the work that God is doing in our life, in the life of the church and in the world. We are not to be self-reliant. This is always very important to remember. It is not our own strength that permits us to live the Christian life. It is the Lord’s abiding or living in us through the Holy Spirit as we abide or live in Him.

As we read in Ephesians 6:10–20, we are not to think that everything said there depends on our strength. It does not. It depends on the strength of God living in us. We trust in his faithfulness because on our own we fall far short of the glory of God or the righteousness of God. The quality of righteousness is a gift of faith, trusting in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ. He imputes or gives us his righteousness.

The letter of Paul to the Ephesians is addressed to the saints who are in Ephesus.

The modern idea of saint is a person who is extremely pious and who lives a perfect or a nearly perfect life. In biblical language, this is not what it means.

Saints, hagios in the Greek, (*hágios*) implies something (or somebody—words added) “set apart” and therefore “different”—i.e. “other”, because special to the Lord.

In other words, we have been set apart for the Lord. This is very humbling. We have not been set apart because of anything great in and of ourselves. **“26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.” (1 Co 1:26-29 ESV)**

Paul was writing this to the Corinthians. He knew very well that the Corinthians, although being called saints by God, were not exemplary in all their behaviors. In fact, Paul had to lovingly but sternly correct them because their behaviors were not reflective of their status in Christ.

As we read in Ephesians 6:10-20, it is important that we keep these very important truth in our minds and hearts.

The apostle Paul is teaching us where we should keep our focus as we live in Christ.

It is also very important to remember that Jesus has lived the perfect life for all of us. He is fully God and fully man in his one person through the incarnation.

Consequently, we do not rely on our perfect life which is impossible in the flesh. We rely on the vicarious life of Jesus, meaning that Jesus has lived perfectly in the flesh for all of us. In him we died; in him we live.

Also remember that this section of Scripture is written for believers and not for unbelievers. We know Christ that died for everyone. Everyone is included in Christ. However not everyone is united to Christ at this time. It is God's desire that everyone

would come to repentance and that none would perish, as we read in 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

Paul knew very well that not everyone is called at this particular time. Not everyone belongs to the church of Jesus at this time.



The enemy talked about in this passage of Scripture is also described in Revelation 12 and 13.

The apostle John was given a vision of a great red dragon with seven heads and 10 horns, and on his heads seven diadems or crowns. Revelation 12 also tells us that the dragon tried to usurp God's throne and was kicked out of heaven. This dragon is also called the devil and Satan (verse 9). He is the enemy of the whole world because it is said that he has deceived the whole world.

The way the dragon works, as we read in Revelation 13, is through human governments empowered by religion who is pictured as the beast rising out of the sea (human government) and another beast rising out of the earth who had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. This second beast or religious beasts make the inhabitants of the earth worship the first beast getting them to think that human problems can be resolved through human governments—humans functioning apart from God. (For further study, please see DISCIPLESHIP ON THE EDGE, An Expository Journey through the Book of Revelation by Darrell W Johnson, chapters 18 and 19)

STRUCTURE OF EPHESIANS 6:10-20

- **HEADING: “BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER” (v. 10)**
- **MEANS OF ACHIEVING THE GOAL: “PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD” (v. 11A)**
- **PURPOSE: “SO ... YOU CAN ... STAND ... AGAINST THE DEVIL’S SCHEMES (v. 11B)**
- **EXPLANATION OF THE PROBLEM: “FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS ... AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL (v. 12)**
- **REPETITION AND EXPLANATION OF THE MEANS OF ACHIEVING THE GOAL: “PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD” (v. 13A)**
- **PURPOSE: “SO ... YOU MAY ... STAND” CALL FOR COMMITMENT: “STAND” (v. 14A)**

(FOUR PARTICIPLES EXPLAINING THE MEANS BY WHICH WE STAND)

“WITH THE BELT OF TRUTH BUCKLED AROUND YOUR WAIST (v. 14B)

“PUTTING ON [NIV, “WITH”] THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS” (v. 14B)

AGAINST THE DEVIL’S SCHEMES (v. 11B)

EXPLANATION OF THE PROBLEM: “FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS ... AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL (v. 12)

CONTINUED

- **“WITH YOUR FEET FITTED WITH THE READINESS THAT COMES FROM THE GOSPEL OF PEACE” (V. 15)**
- **“TAKING UP [NIV, “TAKE UP”] THE SHIELD OF FAITH” (V. 16)**
- **CALL TO BE EQUIPPED: “TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT” (V. 17)**

(TWO PARTICIPLES EXPLAINING HOW WE TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT):

• **“PRAYING [NIV, “PRAY”] IN THE SPIRIT” (V. 18A)**

“BEING ALERT WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE AND PETITIONS FOR ALL THE SAINTS” [NIV, “BE ALERT AND ALWAYS KEEP ON PRAYING FOR ALL THE SAINTS”] (V. 18B)

• **REQUEST FOR PRAYER FOR PAUL FOR TWO PURPOSES:**

“THAT ... WORDS MAY BE GIVEN ME” (V. 19)

“THAT I MAY DECLARE [THE GOSPEL] FEARLESSLY” (V. 20).

From: Snodgrass, Klyne. Ephesians (The NIV Application Commentary Book 10) (p. 337). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.

9

For those listening to the sermon on the Internet, please see slides 8 and 9 in the PDF document.

The word, **be strong in the Lord** could be translated **empowered**. In the Greek original language, **strong** comes from the word *endunamoó*: **to empower, strengthen, made strong** (see <https://biblehub.com/greek/1743.htm>).

In the Lord, we rely on his strength. We participate by putting on the whole armour of God to be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. He has the ability to make evil look good. We remember the temptation of Jesus. After fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The devil presented him with the temptation of changing stones into bread. There is nothing wrong in eating bread. However, the scheme was very devious because he attempted Jesus to stop trusting in God the Father to provide for his needs.

We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to be able to see the traps. When Adam and Eve, our first parents made the decision to live independently from God, the devil presented an alternative which appears to them to be good—to acquire the knowledge of good and evil and to be like God. They fell for the trap and we have been suffering

the consequences ever since.

The human heart became corrupt. Evil became rooted in our hearts. Some of the traps are very obvious. If one desires to become rich by robbing a bank during the busiest banking hours, the chances are that he will get caught and suffer punishment.

There are other choices which are much more subtle and devious. He can use what appears to be good to do evil. The devil can attach these subtle traps to anything to go against God's will for us.

For example, the world promotes good as being evil and evil as being good. As Christians, who know for example that abortion is wrong but because it is against God's will, it is not right to physically attack abortion clinics and the people who work in them. We are not to act in unchristian ways in rejecting the sins. Using violence will not change anything.

We live in a politically correct world. Some philosophies and behaviors that were considered sinful in the past are now being accepted as good. We just need to read the newspapers, listen to the news a little bit, and we see it everywhere around us.

As converted individual, as individual made saints, called out ones and being members of the universal church of Jesus, we are to stand firm against the temptation to do evil.

Standing firm does not mean destroying people.

We need to remember that our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the cosmic powers over the present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. We are not to do evil to other people in the name of Christianity.

"To do evil to people does not fit with the Christian faith. We may not suddenly forget tolerant love, patience, and peace when we encounter people doing wrong. We still are defined by and armed with truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, and the gospel, not ill-will, slander, anger, and violence. The way we carry on our battles is the most eloquent witness to our faith." (idem – page 355)

When we realize this, it affects how we deal with controversies that may arise in our daily interaction with people of the world.

We have the example of the apostle Paul when he was confronting the men of Athens, who were very religious and who worshipped idols. He did not send them to hell. He did not condemn them. What did he do?

He saw an inscription **“to the unknown God”** on one of their altars and he used this to present and proclaim the real God. He told them that the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives all to mankind life and breath and everything. He went on to tell them that all nations came from one man having set boundaries of their dwelling place that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him.

He went on to tell them that God is not far from any of us. He went on to tell them that we are all God’s offsprings. He told them that they were not to think that the divine being - God, was like gold or silver or stone or like an image form by the art and imagination of man. He went on to tell them that God is very patient with their ignorance of God. God overlooked it. Now he commands all people everywhere to repent.

He began to talk to them about Jesus, “a man whom he [God the Father] had appointed” and that this man had been raised from the dead.

The apostle Paul acted towards them with graciousness and love because he knew God loved them. He did not try to scare them into hell. Instead he pointed them towards having a relationship with the real God.

We have much to learn from him.

Paul did not see these idolatrous men through the eyes of the flesh but he saw them as God sees them—people who were blind and ignorant of who the real God is and blind to his plan for humanity.

The ultimate example of graciousness and love is Jesus hanging on the cross, dying a brutal death and asking God the Father to forgive those who were brutalizing him and standing at the foot of the cross.



What is the whole armour of God?

The armour of God has to do with our relationship with God in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

1 – having **fastened the belt of truth** means that we are strengthened by God’s truth – his written word, the Bible and that we live in the truth—Jesus being the truth.

2 – put **on the breastplate of righteousness**—means that we are to be reflections of the character of Jesus in our actions. We are to live in our new identity having been made righteous in Jesus.

3 – our shoes—**having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.**

This goes beyond a willingness to share the gospel. It certainly includes it.

Our whole life is to be a reflection of Jesus living in us. Jesus is our teacher. If you will, we learn in his school. Consequently, we are called to live wisely in this world ready to do the whole will of God. We are to reflect the love of God poured out in our hearts, as

the apostle says in Romans 5.

The life of Christ is to be reflected in all our relationships, in our work, in our hobbies, in our spare time, in our willingness to love one another in Christ, and having a humble attitude, being self-controlled and being prayerful. Our first allegiance is always to God. If man in any capacity tells us to go against the will of God, we are always to obey God first.

As far as it depends on us, we are to live in peace with everyone. However, we are not to shy away from obeying Christ if obeying Christ leads to conflict. We need to remember important passages found in the gospel of Matthew. Living in Jesus does not mean that life will always be easy and without conflict. **“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.” (Mt 10:34 ESV)**

4 – **The shield of faith**—is the trust in God’s faithfulness towards us. The Roman army was very capable in using their shield.

At one time in the Roman army, their shields were 4 feet high and 2 ½ feet wide. They were used to protect the soldiers from arrows. The Roman army had also mastered the ability to use their shield in an offensive way being able to walk through enemy lines using their shields as their barriers. Their shields protected them.

We are to take up the shield of faith, with which we can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

As God’s people, we are protected from the attacks of the enemy by nourishing our relationship with God. We will be able to recognize temptations, the devil’s traps and to be able to avoid them and not only avoid them but defeat them in Christ.

5 – **The helmet of salvation**—we know we are safe in Christ now and that we will be safe in Christ in the future. The helmet of truth is both present and future.

The **helmet of salvation** is to be accompanied by **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.**

Our actions and our attitudes are rooted in our thinking. Thoughts are words we tell ourselves. Thoughts are different from feelings. Many times people have difficulty differentiating between thoughts and feelings. Feelings are experienced in our body. Thoughts are experienced in our minds.

The words we tell ourselves will influence how we perceived or react in any situation.

The words of God as found in the Bible are how God thinks in his mind. When the words in our minds, our thoughts do not match the words or the mind of God, we have the freedom and to the strength/the capacity in Christ to bring these thoughts/words in captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

We need God's help in this area. Sometimes, we may have negative thoughts that we are not even aware of. We need to trust the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds to God's truth.

God defines who we are. When we tell ourselves words like I am 'stupid', 'not much', or words that lead to self-depreciation we need to remember that God sees us as his beloved in Christ.

When we are down on other people for whatever reason, we need to remember that Jesus has died for everyone.

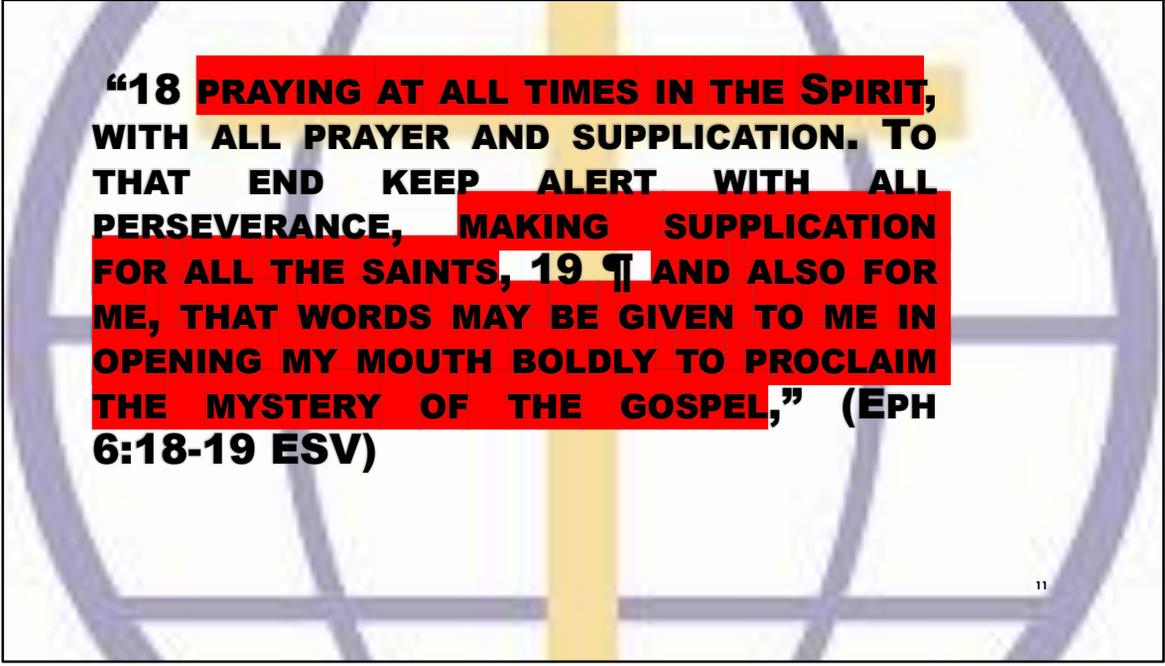
When we self-condemn for things we did or did not do in the past, we need to remember that at the cross we are forgiven. God has already taken care of all our sins in Jesus.

When we feel shame towards self or others, we need to remember that Jesus took all the shame of sin on himself. Jesus was killed, crucified as a common criminal outside the gate of the city of Jerusalem. The Jewish leaders regarded Jesus as profane and they had contempt for him. He took all this shame, the shame of sin, upon himself. He took upon himself all the shame of our sins! He became sin and a curse for us, in our place!

We need to remember who was behind the brutal death of Jesus. It was the devil trying to rid the world of him. He worked through the 2 beasts of Revelation – the beast from the sea = human government and through the beast of the earth = man made religion.

Before God the Father, in Christ, we are beloved, forgiven of all our sins and the shame that is attached to sin and been dealt with by Jesus at the cross. Because of Jesus, we have no shame in Christ. We are given the gift of sanctification or holiness. How can this be?

Because Jesus is the Gift of God the Father to us.



“18 PRAYING AT ALL TIMES IN THE SPIRIT, WITH ALL PRAYER AND SUPPLICATION. TO THAT END KEEP ALERT WITH ALL PERSEVERANCE, MAKING SUPPLICATION FOR ALL THE SAINTS, 19 ¶ AND ALSO FOR ME, THAT WORDS MAY BE GIVEN TO ME IN OPENING MY MOUTH BOLDLY TO PROCLAIM THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL,” (EPH 6:18-19 ESV)

11

Paul was inspired to write to the Ephesians to pray at all times in the Spirit.

This means that we are in relationship with Jesus Christ, in relationship to God in the Holy Spirit who is also God. It does not mean that we are on our knees all the time. But it means that in our hearts and minds we are always aware of our identity in Christ. Because we are in relationship, we are intimately joined with God.

For those of us who are married, we are in relationship even when we are not talking with one another or away from one another. When we are occupied doing other things, it does not mean that we are not in relationship. We still are. When we are about our daily tasks, whether it be taking a bath, eating, working, serving, reading, etc., we are always in relationship with God.

Our prayers are not to be selfish. They are to be altruistic. We are to pray with perseverance making supplications for all the saints. Paul asked for prayers that the gospel might be proclaimed powerfully. This should be our prayer today also.

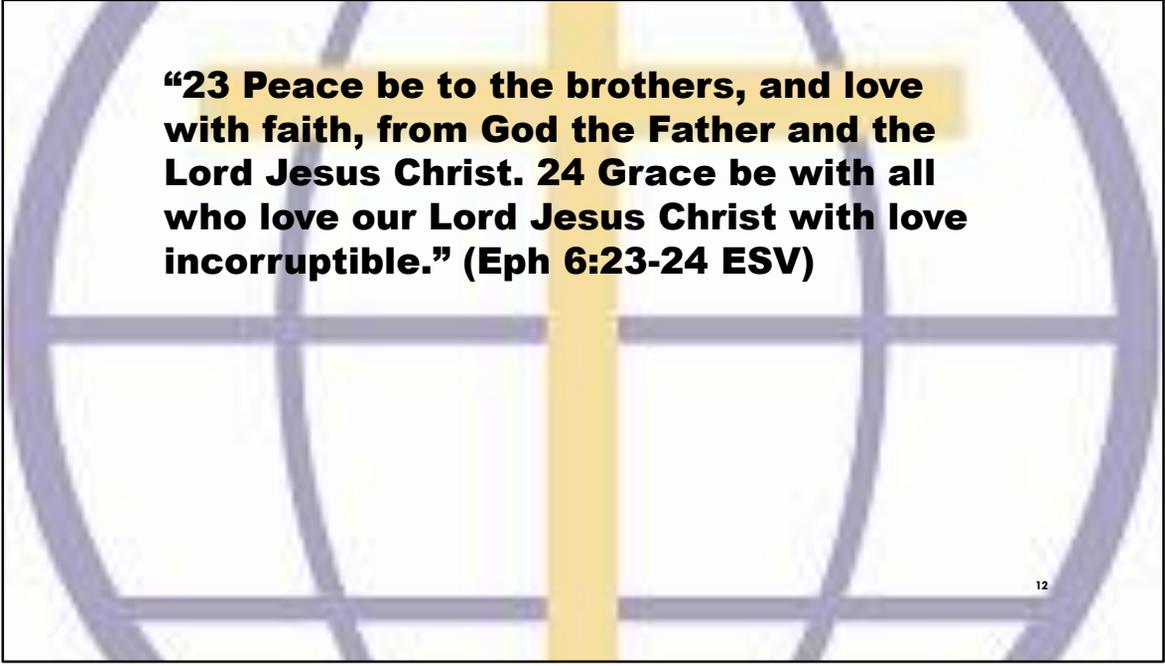
We must also remember that although we remember who our enemy is, our enemy is not the focus. The focus is on God. He is the one who has won the battle over the devil

and its minions. We are not told to fear the devil.

What does the Bible tell us?

It never tells us to fear the devil. It tells us to fear God, to be in awe of him, to draw close to him and the devil will flee from us.

That is why Paul could end his letter by saying:



“23 Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.” (Eph 6:23-24 ESV)

12

Let us pray.