

Inside the Armour of God

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[0 : 00] The thrust of this third chapter in the letter to the Colossians is that what Christ has done is sufficient for us. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ is in the right hand of God.

Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth, for ye are dead and your life is filled with Christ in God. And then it goes on to list the things that should be put away from us.

All the old ways and behaviours and habits of the world and the new things which should be embraced. And it is in the sense of feeling safe in Christ that we are able, as it were, to be more merciful, more compassionate, more vulnerable, if you like, in our relations with others and in our testimony and witness that we have.

And again, it's in that context that from verses 18 onwards, you know, the human relations, wives submit your husbands, husbands love your wives, children obey your parents, fathers provoke your children to anger, and servants be obedient to your masters.

Each individual category of people, instinctively, if they are told by the world, listen, this is what you've got to do. They would bristle at it and they would say, well, I'm not going to do that. Why should I obey this person?

[1 : 15] Why should I submit to that person? Why should I spend myself in love to that person if they're not going to help me or whatever? And instinctively, we defend our own corner. We defend our own category, our own personhood, our own identity.

And we bristle and we become defensive at the thought of having to give out, at the thought of having to obey, to submit, to serve in that sense.

And yet, this is the example Jesus gives us, that we are taught to serve one another in love preferring one another. And the sense, as it were, the essence of this chapter is that Christ has given to us sufficient security whereby we can know ourselves safe and secure in him so that we can afford to be generous one with another.

And the verses that I want us to focus on this evening especially are these verses 12 to 17. Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind and so on.

All the way down to verse 17. Whosoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. Now whilst of course this verse 12 put on as the elect of God is partly in contrast to the things which are to be put off.

[2 : 38] You know, verse 8, but now ye also put off all these anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication and so on. And put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies.

There is that sense in which it's the opposite of all the things that we did before we became Christ so we belong to Christ. All the things that the world is so much thinks are normal, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, blasphemy and so on.

Which is just standard fare for the world. And filthy communication out of your mouth and so on. That's normal for the world. You know, like spleetives and swearing and immoral behaviour.

That's not even considered immoral anymore. It's now regarded as socially liberal. It's okay, all these things. But if we are in Christ, we're putting away these things and we're embracing the true purity, the true love, the true sanctity that is in Christ.

But I'd also like us to recognise verse 12 onwards. Put on therefore as the elect of God. There's this sense which, if we know Paul's other epistles, you almost think that he's about to launch into an armour of God session here.

[3 : 47] You know, like when if you turn back a couple of pages, turn back two, three pages, you find in Ephesians 6 there, Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand an evil day, and having done all to stand.

All about what you're to put on. You know, your breastplate of righteousness, your loins getting about with truth, and your helmet of salvation, and so on. And if you turn a couple of pages in the other direction, we see in 1 Thessalonians 5, But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

And you almost feel as if Paul is about to say, put on therefore as the elect of God, as though he's going to list a whole bunch of armour again. But of course he's not doing that.

What we've got here is almost what you can afford to be, how you are meant to now conduct this spiritual warfare, inside the armour of God.

We might take that almost as our title or our thought for these verses. Inside the armour of God. Because we have the protection of what Christ has done.

[4 : 58] Because we have what Paul describes elsewhere, you know, helmet of salvation, breastplate of righteousness, shield of faith, and loins getting about with truth, feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

We can afford to forbear one another, forgive one another, have humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering. And so we can afford to allow ourselves to be vulnerable.

Because one of the reasons, in fact the main reason people don't like to allow themselves to be vulnerable, don't like to expose their heart, don't like to let themselves be in, as it were, the weaker position, or the one who has to be humble when the other person seems to be triumphant and riding over them roughshod, is because they fear that their identity, their personhood, will be diminished.

They fear that they will seem weak, that they will seem feeble, that they will be trampled on their foot. And the message of this chapter is, you are already protected and crushed.

You don't have to worry about them defeating you. You don't have to worry that the armour won't hold up. You are fighting this battle inside the armour of God.

[6 : 11] You already have your mind and head protected, as it were, with the helmet of salvation. You already have your heart, your body covered with the breastplate of righteousness.

You already have the shield of faith to cover all things. Your loins girt about with truth. Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. If you are going to fight, you fight with the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

Praying always with all prayer. That is how you wield it. It is in that context, almost. And if you compare the content of Ephesians, for example, with Colossians, you will see that there is an awful lot of parallels in them.

And you will see that an awful lot of the same material has, in fact, found its way from the one to the other. Almost certainly they were working at the same time and carried by the same messenger.

And even the section that we read at the end of chapter 3, a wife, submit to your husband, and so on. You find that, of course, in Ephesians 5. It is almost word for word, some of it. And this is the sense in which I think we should recognise that insofar as there are so many parallels between the content of what we have in Ephesians and what we have here in Colossians, that we should understand this as part of the spiritual warfare.

[7 : 29] What we are to put on now isn't so much the outward armour, about which Paul has already spoken in Ephesians 6 there, but rather that by which we are to act, the inward graces, the vulnerability, if you like, by which we are able to live out the Christian life, fighting inside the protection of the armour of God.

And there are a lot of similarities here, as we'll see. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved. Holy because we are set apart to God, elected by his grace from all eternity.

Beloved because he has loved us. Bounce of mercy. Now this is an old-fashioned word that tends to confuse us a wee bit because it makes us think of a particular part of our anatomy and its function and so on.

For the ancients, all the inners, you know, the bowels, heart, kidneys, liver, the whole lot, were seen as the seat of the emotions. And as the heart was perhaps associated with more sort of tender affection and so on, the bowels in the Hebrew, by the Hebrews, were regarded as the seat of intense emotion, love, hate, and so on.

For the Greeks, it was a bit more, you know, kindness, affection, tenderness, and so on. With the result that you have this term bowels coming out now in Genesis and Jeremiah and so on, and it's actually the Greek term that is used, and Luke will come to these examples in a minute.

[9 : 03] But the neatest translation that we would probably use nowadays would be heart. Now, the heart is a muscle. It's a part of the anatomy, just like the bowels, just like the kidneys, the intestines.

There is no physical or normative reason why this muscle-pumping blood around the body should have anything to do with emotion or anything to do with love or tenderness or anything.

And yet we associate it with these things. In the same way the ancients regarded the bowels as the seat of the emotions, as the intensity of emotions, they were down there, the sort of middle of the body there, possibly because it was almost at the midpoint of the body.

So we've got examples of this, then we'll have in Genesis 43, verse 30, Joseph, after he is met with Benjamin and the rest of his brothers, Joseph made haste for his bowels did yearn upon his brother.

It's heartless breaking, we would try to say it nowadays. His bowels did yearn upon his brother. He sought where to weep, and he entered into his chamber and wept there. Likewise, Jeremiah 31, verse 20, Is Ephraim my dear son, is he a pleasant child?

[10 : 12] For since I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore my bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

You see, the terms that are associated with the bowels here, it's the intensity of emotion, the yearning upon his brother, the mercy that the Lord feels towards his people.

And in Luke chapter 1, verse 78, where you've got the, Zacharias is making his speech and his prayer or his hymn of praise, however we describe it. In chapter 1 of Luke, verse 78, Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day spring from on high hath presented us.

Now, the translators have put the tender mercy of our God, but the actual Greek is, as we've got here, bowels of mercies, the tender mercy, the bowels of mercies of our God.

It's this sense of the intensity of the emotion, the great mercy the Lord has had, the tender mercy of God, whereby the day spring from on high hath visited us.

[11 : 17] He didn't need to do all that he did for us, but it was because he yearned over us with this intensity of love that he has done what he did in bringing his son, Jesus Christ, amongst us.

So if that is how the Lord has loved us, this is how we, protected by what Christ has done inside the armor of God, are to know ourselves free and safe to be able to make ourselves vulnerable.

Trust that the armor will protect you. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.

Now, kindness, if we think, for example, of the list that 2 Peter has at the beginning, you know, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge temperance, to temperance, patience, to patience, godliness, to godliness, brotherly kindness, and a brotherly kindness charity.

The sense, again, here is of kindness being that which would be extended towards our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Brotherly kindness, Peter called it. Kindness, it's listed as here.

[12 : 33] And when it says later on, and above all these things put on charity, charity is the more general description. That's why Peter lists it after kindness in his list, in 2 Peter chapter 1 there.

But here we have put on mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind. Now, humbleness of mind, we're meant to esteem others better than ourselves. That's what we're taught. You know, this is what Jesus does.

He becomes the servant of all. He washes his disciples' feet. Humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and this is part of the nature of love, of charity.

You know, you think of 1 Corinthians 13, charity suffereth long, and is kind. Charity envieth not. Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil.

Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Faireth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth. This is a costly love.

[13 : 36] It's not something, oh, this is how I feel my love for so-and-so. I just, I just can't control my heart. You know, it's not an easy, osy, superficial thing. It's not a mere emotion.

It engages the whole being, and it costs. We make ourselves vulnerable with this kindness and humbleness of mind, meekness, and long-suffering.

We agree to become the lesser party. We trust, if you like, in the protection of the armor that God has given us. The armor of God that enables us to fight, knowing there will be brickbats, knowing there will be wounds and attacks.

That's why a soldier is clad in his armor, because he expects the enemy to fight. He expects there to be an onslaught, an attack from the enemy.

He expects to receive wounds, and buffeting, and attacks, and injuries. That's why he has armor. But we have to trust in that armor, and know that the Lord, and what he has done, is sufficient to protect us.

[14 : 47] Not only to protect us, but to preserve our identity, our personhood, our worth, our value in God's sight, that if we make ourselves the lesser individual, if we humble ourselves, and let the other person appear to win, appear to be the stronger, appear to be the one who's right, appear to be the one who carries the day, we are giving way to them, not because we're saying, you've got a better argument, I was wrong, but rather we are humbling ourselves, putting on kindness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any.

Now these two, again, slightly old-fashioned sounding terms, or at least one of them, forbearing one another, implies the present tense, you forbear with somebody, almost like, perhaps they're having a go at you just now, this minute, and instead of fighting back, or giving argument for argument, you just forbear, you just let it all come, you just soak it all up.

Forbearing implies a present issue, a present argument, a present, you know, quarrel, or difficulty, or injury that is done. Forgiving one another, implies injuries of the past, it implies that which is of older duration.

So forbearing in the present, forgiving from the past, if any man have a quarrel against any. Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And again, this is standard, basic gospel teaching.

If you think about it, there is no amount of injury, or wrongdoing, that we can forgive to others, which will be more than what Christ, has already forgiven us.

[16 : 36] There is nothing that we ourselves, can acknowledge, and forgive, which will outdo, what Christ has done for us. We are the debtors, and no matter how much we give, but to others, by way of forgiveness, we will still owe, more than that, to Christ.

And it is by way of following his example, it is by way of acknowledging, what he has done for us, that we, are to forbear one another, forgive one another, if any man has a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Now notice what it's not doing, it's not saying, oh well, it doesn't really matter, you shouldn't get so upset, about these things, you know, so what if they said this, so what if they did that, no, it doesn't really matter, a hundred years from now, it will make any difference, it won't matter, yes it matters, it matters, if our hearts are wounded, it matters, if our trust is broken, it matters, if relationships, are damaged, it does matter, the injuries, that others do to us, but forgiveness, and forbearing, is not about just shrugging, and waving it off, that is not what God, is doing with us, he's not saying, well you're guilty, of all these sins, come on into heaven anyway, there is a price, to be paid, there is a cost, to be borne, and in the gospel, in what Christ has done, upon the cross, that price is paid, by himself, it is he himself, who takes the price, of our sin, and the wages of sin, is death, and he pays that price, upon the cross, so with the price, paid, we can receive, as it were, the stamped, and sealed receipts, saying okay, you're forgiven, you're clean, you can come, out of the heaven now, there's nothing, can keep you out, you've got a free pass, because, of what Christ has done, there is a price, forgiveness, as a price, where Christ is concerned, he has borne it, where the injury, is done to us, what he calls on us, to do, is to be like him, be holy, for I am holy, as Jesus told his disciples, you know, as I've washed your feet, you also ought to wash, one another's feet, do as I have done, not just do as I say, do as I have done,

I have borne the price, of your sin upon the cross, you bear the price, of other sins, they have wronged you, you bear that price, you pay, for that price, with your forgiveness, you soak it up, you absorb, that hurt, and you might think, well I can't, I can't do that, I just cannot take, so much hurt, I'm just going to, burn with anger, I'm just going to, explode, with how I feel, against what they have done, to me, we have to, seek Christ's grace, that we will be, able to forgive, and to forbear, and to absorb, that hurt, and that damage, because that is, what he has done for us, and that is what, we are called upon to do, and to trust, that the armor, will protect us, we are fighting, this spiritual battle, inside the armor, of God, the weapons of our warfare, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians, are not carnal, it's not a physical, battle we're talking about here, with swords, and spears, and shields, and so on, are not carnal, but mighty through God, to the pulling down, of strongholds, though we walk in the flesh, we do not war, after the flesh, this is a spiritual conflict, and if we are going, to make ourselves, vulnerable, if we are going, to have to absorb, the hurt, and the hate, and the injury, and the wounding, and I'm not saying, it comes easy,

I know myself, things that, I have had to forgive, over the years, sometimes it has taken me, years in the plural, although yes, I've said okay Lord, help me to forgive, and yes I forgive so and so, but I didn't really, and a few, a few prayer times later, I'd still be burning away, with anger, and resentment against, so it's like, oh how could he do this to me, you know, why don't you smile, why don't you judge, you know, between us sort of thing, and constantly, I was having, to be brought back again, to this need, to forgive, and forgiving, and forgiving, means letting go, it does not mean, bringing out the stamp, we say, look, look at what I did for you, look at the cost, of the forgiveness, that I forgave you, no, we have to let it go, once we have forgiven, once it is done, once the price is paid, and absorbed, by us, the slate, has to be cleaned, it doesn't mean, that we forget everything, and pretend, it never happened, we know it happened, but we have forgiven, forbearing one another, forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel, against any, and notice the apostle, is not saying, if you're Christians now, you shouldn't have a quarrel, with anyone, you should always be happy, always be loving, always be completely at ease, with everyone, you should never, feel ill against anyone, sometimes people, do us wrong, sometimes we do them wrong, and we have to recognize, that too, maybe we don't mean to, but we end up hurting them, without meaning to, we seek their forgiveness, in those occasions, but also we ourselves, must be ready, to forgive, if any man have a quarrel, against any, even as Christ, forgave you, so also do he, and above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond, of perfectness, it is that, which binds together, all things, as Peter says, you know, charity, it covers, a multitude, of sins, it covers over, so many injuries, so much hurt, it covers over, a multitude, of sins, and likewise, you know,

[22 : 38] James says, if anyone turns, on from the error, of their ways, their ways, they will, they will bring a soul, to righteousness, and they'll, they'll cover, a multitude of sins, that's what charity does, that's how it works, it is the bond, of perfectness, it binds, all these things together, we've already listed, the qualities of charity, you look them up, in 1 Corinthians 30, you can read through it, and recognize, these things, are not cheap things, they're not easy things, you know, charity suffers long, and is kind, oh it sounds great, but what does it actually mean, to suffer long, to endure, and keep enduring, to keep on being kind, when all you want to do, is bow back, these are the things, that we could not do, if we were standing, in our own strength, which the world says, you must not do, you must be your own self, you must assert, who you are, live out, trust your heart, and do what you want, live out your full potential, don't let anyone, tell you different, don't let anyone, ride over you roughshod, as though it were that easy, but even if it were doable, and really only the rich, and powerful, can actually live that out, and sort of fight back, and be their own people, most of us have our lives, dictated to, by other people, more than we would realize, but even if that were possible, it is not the self, that we are to make an idol of, it is Christ, who is to be our savior, it is the Lord, who is our God, we can afford, to allow ourselves, to be vulnerable, we can afford, to be humble, we can afford, to open our heart, and expose it to danger, because we must trust, that the armor will protect us, we are fighting, the spiritual warfare, from inside, the armor, of God, and let the peace of God, rule in your hearts, again, this is part of the armor of God,

Ephesians, now your feet shod, with the preparation, of the gospel of peace, wherever you walk, wherever you go, your feet are covered, shod, with the preparedness, of the gospel, of peace, let the peace of God, rule in your hearts, that doesn't just mean, have peace in your hearts, always be at peace, with everyone, the sense of this rule, is in the sense, of an umpire, a sense of, whether a sporting event, the umpire, that says that shot's out, or that score, has gone to that person, and the referee's word, is final, the umpire, has ruled, the judge, has ruled, let the peace of God, be that, which dictates, what you will, or will not do, let it be the umpire, in your life, seek peace, with all men, it's what we are taught, elsewhere, in scripture, scripture, let the peace of God, rule, in your hearts, to the which also, you are called, in one body, and be ye thankful, the body of Christ, that may have, many different parts, just as our own bodies, have many, we've got fingers, and hands, and elbows, and legs, and knees, and torsos, and all that, and the body of Christ, has many different aspects, and more charismatic Christians, and more formal Christians, and more traditional Christians, and more perhaps, contemporary Christians, and some believe, in gifts of the spirits, that will be in practice, and a lot of belief, others believe, that they've ceased, and we're a very diverse bunch, the Lord's people, and we'll be very different, in lots of different countries, and cultures of the world, but we are nevertheless, one body, and if we doubt that, that we are one body, you can be absolutely certain, the devil does not doubt that, and he attacks the Lord's people, wherever he can find them, and wherever he has the power, to do so, we are called in one body, to be that one body, let the peace of God, rule in your hearts, to the which also, you're calling one body, and be ye thankful, we have so much, to be thankful for, we have so much, to be thankful for, what Christ has done, if ye then, be risen with Christ, seek those things, which are up, it's because of what he has done, because of what he has given us, day by day, he has provided, everything for our needs, day by day, he protects us, not only under the cover, of his blood, but for the day to day battles, we are battling, from inside, the armor, of God, let the word, of Christ, dwell in you, richly, in all wisdom, now remember, that in the armor of God, the word of God, is the sword, of the spirit, it is the one, actual weapon, with which you are, able to fight, now when the devil, suggests different things, to you, that's when he tempted, the Lord Jesus, and the temptation, and the wilderness, how did Christ respond, he always came back, with scripture, it is written, it is written, it is written, and when we are in doubt, about any question, or any way, that we should turn, we go back, to the word of God, it is written, what sayeth the scripture, what does God say, in his word, if there's a doubt, about some, contemporary issue, which is originally, oh well they didn't have, these things in bible times, how are we to know, what to do, there will be, some place of scripture, that speaks, on that particular principle, clearly, men and women, may not necessarily, like, what the Lord, comes out with, it may not be, the way that they, want to go, it may not make them, look modern, or up to date, or culturally sensitive, but it will be, the authority of God, let the word of Christ, dwell in you, richly, in all wisdom, the feet of the Lord, is the beginning, of wisdom, if we would be wise, then we will, turn ourselves, to the Lord, and his truth, now when it says,

teaching and admonishing, one another, in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace, in your hearts, to the Lord, I know that these, particular verses, in both Ephesians, and Colossians, will have been, absolutely dissected, and done to death, in our own branch, of the church, particularly, prior to the plenary, assembly in 2010, so I'm not going to, attempt, to unpack, the rights and wrongs, of these here, now what we can say though, in terms of, treating this psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, whether we take this, as referring simply, to different kinds of psalms, and therefore, being exclusive psalmity, or whether we mean, or say, oh yes, but that includes, other spiritual songs, and so on, and hymns as well, of human composition, and not everyone, would agree with that, some do, some don't, I'm not seeking, to get into that tonight, because that would take, a whole sermon, or series of sermons on it, but what we do understand, and anyone can understand, is that there is, a clear distinction, between singing something, to the Lord, and of the Lord, and which is honouring, to the Lord, you know, if a little child, is going along, singing all things, bright and beautiful, then it is a different thing, from if they're singing, the latest piece of, of you know, hard rock, or something, with skulls, all over the artwork, and death glorifying, and so on, which so much contemporary music, often is, there's all the difference, in the world, between that which is, of the world, and that which is, honouring to the Lord, it may or may not be, sacred scripture itself, but we can all recognise, a distinction, between something, which is, to the Lord, and honouring to the Lord, and if we sing that, then we know, we're praising the Lord, under whatever circumstances, whether in church, or out and about, whatever the case may be, there is, a clear distinction, and we will always, be the better, for honouring the Lord, with what we sing, than honouring the world, and there is always, something to learn, and something to teach, in a song, or a, a praise, which is honouring, to the Lord, there'll be some truth, that it conveys, or something, it speaks to our heart, and this is partly, what it means, it means focus on the Lord,

I'm not going to get, into the argument, as I say, about scripture, or non-spirit, it means focus on the Lord, this is where, the Christian's heart, should be, focused on the Lord, and that should be, the guide, to why we need to ask, let the word of Christ, dwell in you richly, in all wisdom, teaching, admonishing, one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, because, where we sing, there is usually, joy with it, not always, we sing also, in times of mournfulness, or times of solemnity, as well, but there is always, if there is a song, in our hearts, then it is usually, that which will uplift us, that which will bring, a certain joy, even in the midst of sorrow, singing with grace, in your hearts, to the Lord, and whatsoever ye do, in word, or deed, do all, in the name, of the Lord Jesus, that doesn't mean, we have to go around, proclaiming loudly, well I'm cutting this grass today, and I'm cutting it, in the name of the Lord, or I'm polishing this surface, I'm doing it, in the name of the Lord, or whatever, we don't have to be, proclaiming it loudly, with words, but it doesn't alter the fact, that if you're cutting the grass, you should be cutting it, as though Jesus is going to, walk on that grass, ten minutes after you're finished, it means that you should be, doing it to the utmost, of your ability, every little corner of perfection, as far as you are able to do it, you're polishing a surface, polishing as though,

Jesus is going to put down, his drinking vessel on it, you're scrubbing a step, do it as though, Jesus feet are going to walk on it, everything you do, should be done, as though it were done unto the Lord, how you go about your business, how you deal with, your bills, and your affairs of the world, and ordinary daily business, how you interact with others, how you travel, how you drive, all these things, the Lord should be in the midst, of all these things, whatsoever you do, in word or deed, everything, if you belong to Christ, everything you do, you are doing as a Christian, I'll say that again, if you're in Christ, everything you are doing, you are doing as a Christian, you do not go off duty, as a Christian, you can't say, oh well it doesn't matter, because I'm not in church now, so I can do what I like, it doesn't matter, what I look at on the internet, or how I behave, when I'm out in the shops, or how much I might gossip, or whatever the case may be, I can do what I like, because I'm not in church, and it's not the Lord's Day, so it doesn't really matter, yes it does, it's a 24-7 relationship, with the Lord, all the time, full on, everything we do, we do as unto the Lord, you may be content, maybe to get one over, on your colleague, or your neighbour, or whatever, would you do that to Jesus, would you do it as unto the Lord, can you truthfully say that, everything we do, do all in the name, of the Lord Jesus, because whether we acknowledge, that or not, that is what we are doing, and remember, that the world, and the flesh, and the devil, will take it that way, if they do something, they think is hypocritical, or inconsistent, they will say, look at that, look at, they call themselves a Christian, look what they are doing, and they will come, to that conclusion, they will judge, even if we haven't the sense, to recognise, that everything we do, will be seen, as being done, by a Christian, now, the flip side of that, is, that everything we do, is itself, a witness, now,

[34 : 13] I mean, most of you are aware, that our eldest son, was married a few weeks ago, and his, his mother-in-law, are opposite numbers, if you like, when the bride's parents, were saying afterwards, that the hotel staff, had been saying to them, at the end of the reception, how nice it was, how good was the spirit, and the atmosphere, on that occasion, because, people weren't fighting, or getting drunk, and there wasn't, a loud mouth, high drinks, and bad behaviour, and so on, clearly the staff, exposed to that, on many an occasion, but there wasn't any of that, because it was, by and large, Christian wedding, and it didn't mean, that everybody, was absolutely, rigidly, teetotal, but it meant, that the behaviour, was good, it was positive, it was nice, it was enjoyed, by all, and those who are not, Christians, noticed it, everything that is done, nobody was sitting out, and saying, let's make this wedding, as really Christian, as we can, let's make sure, we behave ourselves, let's make sure, that we, we make sure, everybody realises, these are Christians, they're very well behaved, nobody set out, to do that, it's just, that that was the message, that was subliminally, conveyed, that's the message, that came through, and people passed it on, they mentioned it, to our in-laws, in that sense, because, it was different, it was different, in a positive sense, we have the opportunity, as followers of Christ, to be different, in a positive sense, and we can afford, to be so, because we have, the protection, of what Christ, has done, you can afford, to allow yourself, to be vulnerable, because you are safe, and secure, in what Christ, has done, so if wives, submit to your husband, you're not losing, your identity, as a woman, or as a person, you're doing it, for Christ's sake, husbands, to love your wives, and be not bitter, against them, even if you're ready, for an argument, or whatever, then you remember Christ, and you act, accordingly, children, obey your parents, in all things, well, most of us, we've all been children, at some point, and most of us, have wanted to rebel, against our parents, at some point, but we're taught, obey your parents, in all things, this is well pleasing, to the Lord, you may not agree, with what they've said, but they're the ones, the Lord has set over, you for now, they're the ones, the Lord has given to you, as your mom and dad, and so, this is what you should obey, for the Lord's sake, you are honouring, the Lord, with that obedience, fathers provoke, not your children, to anger, lest they be discouraged, you can't just rule, like a tyrant, remember, you also are under authority, you see the point here, servants obey your masters, and all that you do, knowing, verse 24, that of the Lord, you'll receive the reward, of the inheritance, verse 23, whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men, it's in this context, that all these, human relationships, are governed, and we can afford, to be generous, we can afford, to be vulnerable, we can afford, to be humble, to be, more long suffering, to forgive, to forbear, because we have, the protection, the safety, the security, of what Christ, has already done, your salvation, is not going to be in doubt, if you let somebody else, win an argument, that you know, you have the rights of, you're not going to become, less of a person, if you forgive somebody, when you know, that they are actually wrong, you're not going to become, less of a man, if you give way, to your wife on occasion, you're not going to be, less of a woman, if you submit, to your husband, you're not going to be, less of a, an individual, in your own right, if you obey your parents, as a child, you're not going to be, more crushed, or less of a, an employee, if you do what the boss says, because he's your boss, because that's what the Lord says, we are to do, and all these human relationships, we can afford, to be generous, because we have,

the protection of Christ, this spiritual warfare, in which we are engaged, we fight it, inside the armor of God, to the Hebrews, the apostle wrote, let your conversation, be without covetousness, and be content, with such things, as we have, for he had said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, Christ will never let go of us, he has not forsaken us, in the battle, he has not deserted the field, so that we may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear, what man shall do unto thee, put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel, against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye, and above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness, and let the peace of God, rule in your hearts, to the which also, you are called in one body, and be thankful, let the word of Christ, dwell in you, richly in all wisdom, teaching, and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace, in your hearts, to the Lord, and whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name, of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father, by him, do it all, under the protection, that Christ has given, in the safety, that Christ has purchased, for we fight, this spiritual battle, inside, the armor of God, let us pray, gracious son, beloved Lord, with that fact,