

Occupied Territory

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[0 : 00] Now the substance of this concluding part of Ephesians 6, indeed of the whole letter of the Ephesians, is, as we have seen in previous parts of the letter, it is about complete dependence upon Christ for all things.

Our helplessness without him, particularly in the realm of spiritual warfare, in which every believer is engaged, and the emphasis on which is very strong in this passage.

Now it's a great Christian phrase, spiritual warfare, isn't it? But what does it actually mean? Well apart from the fact it means that we, once we belong to Christ, acknowledge that we are Christ, we'll be under constant attack from the evil one.

It also indicates the fact that we live in occupied territory. Here in this fallen world, this is not our home. And the Bible looks that clear again and again.

This world, which the devil has taken over, in a sense, he's been allowed to. I mean, he doesn't do anything without permission, ultimately, from the Lord. But he claims it for himself. It's one reason why he's sometimes referred to as the prince of this world.

[1 : 09] But he, as it were, controls a great many things in this world. Indeed, except for that which the Lord himself intervenes and controls, the devil pretty much has a free reign in so many other things.

But in this occupied territory, the Lord has his own citizens, his own children. We might say his own soldiers, whom he is determined to get out of there and to set free.

Now this involves two main stages, of course. First of all, number one, making God's own children aware that they are his, that they belong to him, that they are set free, that they are redeemed, and that he has redeemed unto himself.

Until this happens, they won't even know enough to want to be free. They won't even know that they are in bondage. They'll just think this is normal. They won't realize how much they are enslaved.

To finally realize their identity. To recognize whose they are. Who their true father is. What he has done to redeem them. And how much he loves them.

[2 : 17] And when they recognize this, and when they own this, as it were, as their true identity, this we call conversion. And Satan will do everything he can to stop it.

That's number one. Secondly, number two, the believer then has to fight his or her way through this occupied land in which every possible temptation and attack will come against them to the very border of the free country to which they do belong.

And the border of this free country is not a geographical place in terms of this globe. It is a place rather in terms of time and stage in their lives.

One believer may, by means of their deathbed, be at the very border of that land of glory. Another may be going about their ordinary business not aware that they are only minutes away from eternity because of some providence that is going to be for them.

But all will be brought to that border. And all those who are truly Christ will be brought safely over it. Once at the border, they are sent for and brought home.

[3 : 29] Now this stage one, conversion, that may be a long, slow process, or it may take only a moment. Stage two, what we might call sanctification, the process of being made holy or being made sacred or fit for heaven, is a process that takes the rest of your life.

It takes all of your life to be prepared, to be ripened, to be made ready for heaven, and believe you me, it is a battle. It is a warfare.

Because if Satan cannot prevent conversions, he will do the next best thing. And that is to strive by every means to recapture or to trick or to snare, to damage, to destroy believers on their perilous journey through this world.

And because there are many believers striving to make this journey together, the devil knows that if he can bring down any one of them, the effect on morale and faith of the others will be very damaging indeed.

Now, we all think that we are not very important. We think, oh, well, if I think of so-and-so, what a Christian they are. You know, they are so much better than me, but I'm not important.

[4 : 44] And the devil wants you to think that. So that if or as or when you may fail or he may bring you down, you'll think, well, it's not a big deal if I give in to this temptation.

It's not a big deal if I am knocked down, if I am defeated or overcome. But it is. You think of any piece of machinery, if you take one little spoke or one little screw or one little detail out of it, it will affect the whole.

And likewise, any army, any body of people, any family, you take one individual out of it and the dynamic of all the rest is affected by it.

The devil knows if you can bring down one individual, the effect on all the others will be damaging. So believers need each other in this journey.

And we probably don't realize just how much we need each other in this warfare. As we see there at verse 18, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, all those who are the Lord.

[5 : 51] Saints are not those who are super holy. Saints in the New Testament, saints, are those who are redeemed by Christ. Ordinary men and women and boys and girls. Very, very ordinary people, saved by an extraordinary saviour.

Believers need each other. But most of all, they need Christ, without whom they would never be converted in the first place, without whom they would never make it whole. He himself then supplies everything they need for this war, so they must depend upon him.

Now as we look through these aspects of the armour of God, there's going to be lots of different scripture references, right, left and centre. And don't get bamboozled by them, or think, oh I can't possibly keep track of all those.

Rather, recognise, even if you can't follow each individual one, recognise that they are all ballad and all there. Think of it like a piece of tweed. Where if you've got a piece of tweed, it's in prepared on the loom, you've got the warp and you've got the weft, you've got all the threads and all the strands, and some going this way and some going that way.

But every single one of them has a place. And every single one of them fits into the whole. And so it is with the word of God, which is not manifold, but one.

[7 : 03] All the different aspects of it, they all contribute, all the threads of it, all weave together into the one whole garment, which the Lord intends us to be clothed and guided and directed and protected by.

So lots of different references there's going to be, but don't be, you know, as we say, overcome or bamboozled by them. Just recognise that they each foot in. So first of all then, this is, as we said, a spiritual warfare.

We see verses 11 and 12, through all the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, that is, fallen angels, basically demons, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore, take out ye the whole armor of God. Now what verse 12 is referring to there, is if you think of the end of Romans 8, you know where it says, neither death nor life nor angels, only angels, nor principalities, reference to demons, fallen angels, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A spiritual warfare, this is in which the world's armies and weaponry is worse than useless. You cannot use physical swords.

[8 : 29] You know, when Peter drew his sword and cut off Marcus's right ear in the garden, he said, put up your sword. You know, this is not the kind of place. It's no use to you. And he healed Marcus's ear and said, suffer you thus far.

You know, it's no use, physical swords and weaponry, in this battle. In fact, it just plays into the devil's hands, because all the world's weaponry is designed to wound, and to maim, and to shed blood, and to kill.

And the devil just loves that. He thinks, that's great. Yep, kill each other as much as you like, damage each other, wound each other. That's fine. I don't care who wins, as long as you keep on hurting each other. Second Corinthians tells us, chapter 10, verse 4, as you know, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, not fleshy, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

And as we have here, at verse 13, in the middle, that he may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Withstand implies the onslaught of the enemy.

It implies the wave of an attack, like the wave of the sea, you know, crashing over the rocky lines of defenders, you know, damaging and bruising and wounding, perhaps, thinning the lines of it, but not overcoming, having done all to stand.

[9 : 48] Now, we're still there in Christ when the devil has done his worst. Still to be there, holding the position, unmoved and unmovable, however battered and torn we may be.

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Every single piece of it is needed.

God is not going to give you extra ceremonial or, you know, ornamental baggage to have to carry. It's enough of a journey, enough of a warfare, without superfluous stuff. You're going to need every single piece of this equipment.

Physical armor, iron and steel, explosives, weapons, guns, no use of it here. This is a spiritual warfare. So, what do we read then?

Stand, therefore, having your loins skirt about with truth. Now, when it says the loins skirt about with truth, in some modern verses, it's the belt of truth. It's not just a belt, like holding up your trousers, or holding in your chin, or whatever.

[10 : 52] The loins skirt about the sort of, the loincloth, or the girdle, as it were, in New Testament times, it covered all of that area. It protected that whole area. And this particular area, in the middle of the body, represents, in many ways, the most vulnerable part of our body.

If we are physically attacked, on any part of our body, we may be wounded, yes, injured, perhaps, but in one sense, our dignity, our manhood, our womanhood, is not lessened.

But if we are attacked there, in the loins, in that area, whether a man sexually assaults a woman, or a woman strikes out on a man, or other men seek to maim, and disfigure their fellow men, we are, in a real sense, violated.

Our manhood, or womanhood, has been violated. We have been cheapened, degraded, made an object of contempt. This is the part of our body, from which, life, emanates.

We all came into the world, the same way. We were all conceived, and born through the same, kind of intimacy, which brought our, respective parents together, and it all happened, the way that God, designed it.

[12 : 11] So life, emanates from that, part of our body, and which God, who is the Lord of life, would have us keep, chaste, pure, and protected, the activities, of that part of the body, intended to be sanctified, by marriage.

It is in this part, therefore, that the prince of death, attacks most readily, and perhaps, most easily. Filth-ridden humour, to encourage us, to snigger, and think all this dirty, that which God has created, to be pure, and good.

Pornography, to allure, and degrade, the tackiness, of using sex, either blatantly, or more subtly, as a tool of marketing, and advertising, for very ordinary products, for which they, they wouldn't be called for, at all.

Satan's aim, is to break down, the purity, and chastity, which we are called, to live out, and to have us, be degraded, into a culture, of death, wherein harlotry, is exalted, and the marriage bond, is despised.

And we see that, in our day, the marriage bond, is despised. It is presented, as something negative, as something, some kind of bondage, something that's bad, something from which, you should always, seek to be free, if you can.

[13 : 34] And the physical relations, which should be part of it, oh no, just whatever you want. Young, and often underage boys, are told, at the highest levels, of government, that it's okay, as long as you take precautions.

Young, and often underage girls, are encouraged, to swallow pills, before, and if need be after, to destroy, and abort, any unwanted, resultant life.

And the whole thing, is built on a tissue of lies. That it's okay. That it won't harm you. It's just fun. If it feels right, it is right. It's normal. It's healthy.

It's your right. As a young person, say nothing of diseases, of emotional wreckage, of long-term physical damage, of low self-esteem, of increased rates of suicide, a culture of death, and degradation, targeted at our most vulnerable weakness, from the prince of death, and the father of lies.

How do we count it? Well, this is what we read at verse 14. Stand, therefore, having your loins, girt about, with truth. Christ is the truth.

[14 : 46] This is what he said to his disciples. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me. He prayed for his disciples. He prayed for them. John 17, verse 7.

Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy word is truth. Surround yourselves, then, with the presence, of Christ. Girt up your loins, with Christ, and his truth, which will not lie, to you.

Christ's truth, will not lie, nor does it seek, to be a pill joy, or to deny, legitimate delight, that the Lord has intended, for the sanctity of marriage.

Romans 13, we read it, verse 14. But put ye on, the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision, for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts that are.

The truth is, chastity before marriage, and fidelity within it, is 100% safe sex. And what no government's so-called health report will admit, is that it is the only truly safe sex.

[15 : 54] Faithfulness to one another, requires a truthfulness, and trust, which is foreign to our society today. Truth is one of the essential ingredients, of fidelity.

Infidelity, unfaithfulness, inevitably involves, deception, of those, whom we hold most dear, or ought to hold most dear, and value, most highly.

That's what we would, put ye on, the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision, to fulfill, for the flesh, to fulfill, the lusts that are. Be clothed, and protected with Christ, who alone is truth personified.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about, with truth. Now of course, there's always a link, between desire, which we might associate with the loins, and love, which we might associate with the heart, because that's what else is vulnerable here.

That's the next thing. The heart, we may sustain, many an injury in battle, or a wound, to many parts of our body, but a wound, to the heart, will be, most often, fatal.

[17 : 04] So, a breastplate, we must have. Having on the breastplate, of righteousness. The breastplate, the protection, from fatal wounding, is to be, righteousness.

But what righteousness, can we have? If the word of God, is very truth, then, very truth, says to us, in Jeremiah 17, verses 9 and 10, the heart, is deceitful, above all things, and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. I try the reins, even to give every man, according to his ways, and according to the fruit, of his doings. Oh dear.

Isaiah 64, verse 6, we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses, are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

So much, then, for our hope, of righteousness, at least, in ourselves. We don't have, any, of our own. But rather, if righteousness, is not to be found in us, then where is it to be found?

[18 : 16] If we are to have on the breastplate of righteousness, where then is righteousness, to be found? Not in us, but in Christ, the Lord. For we read in Jeremiah, again, chapter 23, verses 5 and 6, behold, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice from the earth.

In his days, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely, and this is the name whereby he shall be called, the Lord, our righteousness.

The Lord is our righteousness, the righteous branch, the reigning king. In his days, his people shall be saved. Israel shall dwell safely.

It is Christ the Lord, who is the Lord, our righteousness. He is the breastplate, the protector of our heart, and our life, Christ and none else.

If we are to have on the breastplate of his righteousness, it means that that for which we use the heart, must be focused first upon Christ. love Christ above all else.

[19 : 24] That's what he teaches his disciples. Any man who loves father, or mother, or husband, or wife, or children more than me, is not worthy of me. Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, the breastplate over your heart.

Love Christ above all else, and your heart will be protected. And all the other loves of this work, which are perfectly legitimate in their place.

They will all take their proper place beneath him, and your heart will be protected by the Lord, our righteousness.

Verse 15, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. That which we are shod, with which we are shod, is by definition that upon which we walk.

You say, well, what do you walk in? Well, I walk on the carpet, or I walk on the stones, or I walk on the tarmac outside on the road. No, you don't. Nonetheless, you're going barefoot. What you actually walk on is the upper sole of your shoe, or your boot.

[20 : 28] That's what's making contact with the road. Or you may have your sock between that, and your shoe, or whatever else you're wearing, on your feet, beneath your foot, and before your shoe.

When we talk about, oh, someone's got muddy feet. They don't actually mean they've got muddy feet, they mean they've got muddy shoes, muddy boots, or whatever the case may be. And we walk through puddles. It's not our feet going through the puddles, it's our wellies, and our shoes, and our boots.

But on the upper side of whatever we are walking on, that is what makes contact with the road, or the moor, or the path. It is that which imprints the soil.

When you walk through a soft patch of earth, it's not bare feet and toes that leave the pattern. It's the imprint of your shoes, or your boots. That's what you're walking on. That's what you are shod with.

And that which we walk upon, that is what actually carries us. We walk on it. It carries us. Because the gospel, the good news, is that upon which we journey.

[21 : 32] That upon which we walk. We walk in the light of the gospel. And the good news is beautiful. No, we are saved and redeemed by Christ. Our feet shod with it are said to be themselves beautiful.

Isaiah 57 verse 2, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, and publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth.

And when the lover beholds his beloved, he says, How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter. So if our feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, we are on a journey.

We are a life or death running battle. This is a spiritual warfare. For any army in battle, footwear is important to any marching army.

It is good news of peace that spurs our feet forward. This is what we read in Luke 2 verse 14. At the time of the birth of Christ, the angels proclaimed, Glory to God in the highest of the earth, peace, goodwill toward men.

[22 : 45] What was happening there that night when they said that? It was the birth of Christ. He has become our peace. Peace between heaven and earth. No longer enmity between God and man because Christ has come to make that peace.

Turn back a couple of pages in Ephesians and we see in chapter 2 verse 14, For he, Christ, is our peace, who hath made both one and hath broken down the little wall of partition between us, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to making himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby and came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh.

Now in the original context there in chapter 2, Paul is talking about the enmity between Jew and Gentile, but it is even more applicable to the enmity between God and fallen man, or more correctly speaking, between God and sin, in which man is just drenched and drowned in sin.

God's enmity is against sin. If we can get free of that, his enmity will continue to be against sin, but we're clear of it. So his enmity is not against us anymore. We are at peace with God if our sin can be taken away.

And the only one by whom our sin is taken away is Christ. This is a gospel of peace between God and man. It is that by which we journey, that by which we march.

[24 : 21] It is that with which our feet are shod, and it has been a long time in the preparing. Back to Luke's account of the gospel, chapter 1, verse 70. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

As the old paraphrase has it, this great salvation long prepared and now disclosed to view have proved thy love was constant still and promises were true.

Your feet shod with the preparation, long prepared of the gospel of peace. Above all then, what's the next thing?

Taking the shield of faith. Christ, we said, is the truth with which our loins are to be girt. Christ is the righteousness which is the breastplate over our heart. Christ is our peace with the good news of which our feet are shod.

How much more then is Christ the object of our faith? In Acts 16, verse 31, where the Philippian jailer says to Paul and Silas, what must I do to be saved?

[25 : 57] They say, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. And that faith, our faith which is in Christ is the ultimate protection against the attacks of the evil one.

Not for nothing, does Paul write, above all, taking the shield of faith. The Lord is the shield of his people.

And that has always been the case. It has ever been the case. And we see this especially in the Old Testament. In Genesis 15, for example, the Lord says to Abraham, after these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward.

Proverbs 30, verse 5, every word of God is pure. He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. And so on in Psalms. We see Psalm 3, at verse 3, but thou would hold out a shield for me, my glory, and the lifted up of my head.

Turn to page chapter 5, verse 12, for thou, Lord, will bless the righteous with favour, wilt thou compass him as with a shield. Psalm 28, verse 7, The Lord is my strength and my shield.

[27 : 15] My heart trusted in him and I am helped. And at verse, chapter 33, likewise, we see at verse 20, our soul awaiteth for the Lord.

He is our help and our shield. We could go on through this. We could go on through the Old Testament and constantly we find the Lord describing himself as the shield of his people.

He is the shield if our faith is in him. Faith is not a virtue in itself, in and of itself. There are lots of people in the world who will have faith in lots of false gods and lots of false prophets.

And I know I've used the illustration before to which I'm indebted for running Mr. McCaskill of Stornoway who uses the illustration of two bridges across a river. And as I say, I've said this before, but it's a helpful illustration.

And there's two bridges and you know that one of them is going to bear your weight and the other one is rotten. But you don't know exactly which. So you examine them, you look carefully and you try and hammer it to the wood and you test it and you take your measurements and you try and sort of put weights on it and so on.

[28 : 19] You don't want to risk going across until you're sure. So after all the examination and all the ways in which you think, you've identified which is the right one, bridge A or bridge B, you finally put your faith in bridge A.

And your faith is founded upon all the things you think and all the reasons why you think this is a good one. And you go across bridge A and it collapses on me and you fall into the river and all the harm that falls with that.

There was nothing wrong with your faith. It was perfectly reasonable. It was perfectly seen, logical to you. And all the efforts you've made to go to try and identify the right thing, your faith was of excellent quality.

The only problem is your faith was in the wrong bridge. Your faith was in the wrong thing. Faith is not a virtue in and of itself if it is in the wrong thing.

If it is in the wrong God, which of course there's only one anyway, if it is the wrong prophet, if it is the wrong religion, the wrong one who is supposedly a saviour, it will not save.

[29 : 23] Your faith has to be in Christ because he alone saves. There is no virtue in faith in and of itself. The virtue was in Christ.

The salvation is in Christ. Faith is simply the instrument, the tool, as it were, the condition, we might say, of salvation. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith he shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked only if your faith is in them.

Have faith in God, Jesus said. So if our faith is in Christ, that will surround all the rest of our bodies. Do you think of the shields of the Roman soldiers, with which Paul would have been so familiar?

They were great big rectangular shields, slightly curved, so that whatever else the other armour of the Roman soldiers may have been good or inadequate, he would be covered with this shield as he went into battle.

That covers everything. Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith he may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. Verse 17, and take the helmet of salvation.

[30 : 34] The helmet of salvation, protection to the head. And by extension, what goes on in the head? The mind and the thought. If we look at what we read in 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 7, For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

The Lord intends you to have a sound mind which is protected. Turning back to chapter 4, verse 23 in Ephesians. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Likewise, Romans 12, verse 2, Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

For the believer in this spiritual warfare, the mind must be kept well informed with clarity of understanding and sharp, clear thinking.

This is one reason for the regular emphasis in the New Testament on the need for sobriety and clear-headedness. Far from being the wishful, mystic escapism which some would paint it as, Christianity is actually the path of truth, of knowledge, of fact, of clarity, of understanding.

[31 : 58] Science backs up the evidence of Christianity. The proof is with the Lord and those who follow him, which once we have accepted Christ, it just piles up in incontrovertible evidence.

The only way that anyone can deny it is by simply saying, well, whatever it may appear, no, it can't be this because, of course, there is no God. Whatever might be the evidence of creation, of course, we don't believe in creation, we believe in evolution.

See all the layers of mud and all the layers of earth which represent millions and millions of years and look at the different fossils and the fact that you've got some fossils that actually straddle these different millions of years apart and some that actually shouldn't be in the place where they are, that's a bit awkward.

But, you know, we have to just rule that out because there can't be a God, it can't be creation. We must rule out these possibilities. That's what they do. Ideology gets in the way of fact, gets in the way of science, gets in the way of truth, but not for us.

If we are trusting in Christ, we see the evidence all piling up and when new discoveries are made with failure, the Bible actually said that years ago, centuries ago, God is way ahead of us.

[33 : 12] The evidence is that which demands a verdict from a sound and fearless mind. God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

That is what the Lord requires of us. Who do you fear? Is it the world? Is it the jeers of men? You're not thinking straight if that's the case.

Your mind needs to be fed. It needs to be informed. It needs to be opened and expanded to the eternal possibilities to which you are invited.

It needs to be, yes, protected. The helmet that protects it is the helmet of salvation. It is the knowledge of salvation which protects and equips the mind.

What is salvation? Salvation is the fact of being saved from our sin and death. Who is our salvation? Well, Matthew 1, verse 21, we read, She shall bring forth a son and thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.

[34 : 24] Why call him Jesus? Because he will save his people. Jesus means saviour. More precisely, Jesus is simply the Greek version of the Hebrew name Joshua which means Jehovah is salvation.

It is the Lord, Jesus, the Christ, who is our salvation, our helmet defector, big defender, and the protector of our heads and minds and thoughts.

It is the Lord who protects our head, protects our mind, protects our thoughts. The helmet of salvation. In the latter part of verse 17, we read, The sword of the spirit which is the word of God.

Now this is the weapon, the one and only spiritual weapon in the hand of the believer. Hebrews tells us, chapter 4, verse 12, The word of God is quick and powerful.

That word quick doesn't mean fast moving in the Old Bible. It means living. It is alive, quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and it's a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

[35 : 40] This is the weapon. This is the one and only weapon in the hand of the believer. And in this, we have the witness and example of our Lord.

Remember when he was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. He didn't try and use logic. He didn't say, ah, cut you out because you were inconsistent there, Satan. No, he just went back to the word.

He said, it is written, it is written, it is written. That was his evidence against which the devil had no answer. God cannot lie and even those who are disposed to lie are by written evidence or contracts confronted and pinned down.

Somebody might lie through their teeth in a court of law but if the lawyer then produces written evidence that contradicts what they have said, well, there's no question about who's telling the truth. God's word does not lie.

God does not need to be pinned down but he does desire that we have confidence in him, that we hold him to his word and use it as a weapon when Satan comes to attack.

[36 : 50] It is written. Now for that to be the case, of course, we have to know God's word and there's no quick, easy way of knowing God's word.

Nowadays, I realise, of course, that present generations are so accustomed to just plugging something in and downloading an app and there you've got all the information suddenly. We can't do that. If we could just stick a memory pen into our ear and then that's the whole Bible now in our heads, that's brilliant.

That would be so good. It would be so easy but we can't do that. We can have it, yes, at our fingertips to consult but we won't know where to go unless we have it in our head, in our heart.

There's no way of doing that except reading it. You have to read it and keep reading it every single day in life. You wouldn't say just eat your food once a week and say, oh, it's okay, I had breakfast seven days ago so I don't need any more food just now.

You can't just take the Bible up and then put it down for a week or a four night. You've got to go to it every day. Read it. Feed your mind. Feed your thoughts. Feed your heart. Find a version with which you personally are comfortable and make that your version.

[38 : 01] You read day by day, night by night, whatever it is that is most easily memorizable, whatever it is that speaks most easily to your mind, to your thoughts, go to God's word.

Become familiar with this holy weapon. Job said, oh, that my words were now written. Oh, that they were printed in a book, that they were graven with an iron pen and lead in a rock forever.

For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.

God's words are written for you. They are there to be received, to be read. Keep that sword sharp and gleaming and it will protect you as you fight back against the evil one.

But if, verse 18, if the word of God is the sword of the spirit, prayer is the power by which that sword is wielded. A fencing master who is using a blunt sword will be far more successful against me with the sharpest rapier in my hand if I do not have the skill to fight back against them.

[39 : 17] If I have not learned the moves, the ability, if I do not know how to use this weapon, prayer is the means by which this weapon is learned, is used, and we become familiar with it and we become, as it were, adept at the use of it, the memorising of it, the applying of it to different situations in our lives.

Praying always with all prayer and supplication and the spirit watching there unto all perseverance. Supplication is that for which we ask. Prayer is the word infused with our mutual communication to God.

We ask for the things that we need and to keep us mindful of our total dependence upon God and we pray for others too because we need them and they need us. Fellow believers who depend on us as we depend on each other, as we members of any military unit or team or any other united body.

And Paul says, pray for me too. We might think, well, why does Paul need to pray? He's the apostle. He's way up there. Why does he need to pray for? Those who we may think are strong in the Lord.

Those who we may think are, oh, they're far more experienced than I need to pray for them. They need to pray for me, but I don't need to pray for them. Yes, you do. Because however our situation may be, whatever may be our experience, the devil does not discriminate.

[40 : 45] He will attack and bring down anyone that he can. And the higher profile or more experienced a Christian may be, the more the devil will delight to bring them down.

Pray for one another. And Paul says, and for me, that utterance may be given unto me that I may open my mouth boldly. Therefore, this is that which we must do.

Paul reckons and knows that he is insignificant. Last of all, he says in 1 Corinthians 15, Christ will save me as one born out of due time, an ambassador in bonds.

But as he says to Timothy, 2 Timothy 2.9, wherein I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound.

You see, they can take away your Bibles, but if you've read your Bible and memorized portions of it, it's still there in your heart, in your head. They can take away the Bibles, but they can't take the word out of your heart.

[41 : 45] And therefore, as he says, so I'm sending Tychicus to you, so you'll know my affairs and I'll know yours. This contact and communication informs our prayers and fills in the gaps in our intelligence network.

If you were thinking of giving to a missionary organization or body, who would you be more likely to give to? The ones from whom you receive regular missionary news updates and letters and come and do meetings with you every so often, every year or every few months are the ones that you sent off money to years ago, but you never heard a thing since then, and as far as you know, you don't even know if they're still in existence because you never hear anything back.

No, it's going to be the regular communication that's going to feed that mutual prayer, that's going to help and strengthen that relationship. Regular communication. I'm sending Tychicus, he says, so that who he'll tell you about what I'm doing and I'll learn from him when he comes back all that you're doing.

In Malachi 3.16 we read, Then they that fear the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that fear the Lord and that thought of his name.

Because we need each other to survive in this spiritual warfare, we need to know that we've got each other's backs. In this warfare, the church in Ephesus knew all about it.

[43 : 09] They were the center of occult worship and Diana worship and all the rest of it. Sometimes, a couple of decades ago, of course, there was a different kind of Diana worship than it was in our country, but it's still not the true God, if it's anything other than Christ.

At the human level, we depend on one another, and at every level we depend wholly on Christ. And these two are not mutually exclusive, but rather, as Jesus said, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

This is what Ephesus needed to know. It is what we need to know as well, and this is how he concludes. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. sincerity. There's the key thing that holds all the armour together. Love of our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

This is Paul's message to the Ephesians. This is God's word to us. Let us pray.