

# Ephesians Chapter Six

## PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LORD (6:1-4)

- In a Christian community that is full of the Spirit all relationships are positively impacted.
  - The following verses (6:1-9) flows straight out of Eph 5:18. The fullness of the Spirit impacts all relationships (5:21): marriages (5:22-23), parent-child relationships (6:1-4) and employer-employee relationships (6:5-9).

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honour your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 "so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." [Deut 5:6]

- **The first reason children are to obey their parents is that it is the by-product of their relationship with Christ.**
  - The word 'obey' implies 'respect, honour, submit to'. Obviously obeying one's parents should not come at the cost of disobeying God (Acts 5:29). A child may object if a parent leads them into sin.
  - The phrase 'in the Lord' (v1) means 'as something you do in union with Jesus'. He is speaking to Christian children who, also enjoying their union with Christ by his Spirit (5:18), obey their parents. In other words, their relationship with Christ both motivates and enables this heart-obedience to the parents.
- **The second reason children are to obey their parents is because it is God's design for their good and for the good of society.**
  - We see this in two ways. Firstly, Paul says that 'this is right'. In other words, 'it is in harmony with the way God has designed us'. The second way we see this is in verse 2 and 3 which quotes Deut 5:6, which is part of the law of Moses.
  - The law of Moses was God's temporary law-code for the nation of Israel. The goal of the law was the blessing and preservation of the Jewish society and the well-being of its individuals. And that is why God included in this law an instruction that children should honour their parents - so that it would go well for you (that is the whole nation and the person) and that you may enjoy a long life on the earth (that is the whole nation and the person).
  - Paul refers to this particular law and applies it to all people everywhere - the truth is self-evident. In a culture where children honour their parents, they are far more likely to be a strong, lasting culture. And, not only in a culture, but in a family and in a child's life. The family will be stronger if the children respect the

authority of the parents, and the child will be safer and more set up for maturity and success and happiness if they respect and honour their parents.

- **We need to learn to honour those who currently or historically have been a life-source to us.**
  - The principle of ‘honouring your parents’ can be applied to all those people who have put energy into developing us into the people we now are. We must find ways to bring honour to them. We should seek to honour them in our hearts, and in our speech about them, even when we may have disagreed with some ways they went about building into our lives.
- **A healthy church needs to consist of families, where people of all age groups are getting saved and growing spiritually.**
  - Paul is addressing families here. A healthy church consists of families, not just singles.
  - He is addressing the children. In other words he expects that the children are there as the letter is being read! The kids are in the meeting, and he has them in mind as he preaches.
  - Paul expects that the children have become Christians too, and that they are learning to apply their relationship with Jesus to different areas of their lives, particularly to how they relate to their parents.
- **Although we may at times draw some limited insight for morality from the law of Moses, we as Christians are no longer under the law.**
  - This is the *only* place where Paul connects the law of Moses with Christian obedience in any of his writings. This can be wrongly understood as Paul giving authority to the law in the life of the Christian.
  - But as we explore the teaching of Paul we remember firstly that as a Christian we fulfil the law accidentally as we follow the Spirit deliberately. We must remember that this section flows out of the teaching of life in the Spirit, after all (Eph 5:18). And secondly, sometimes there is an equivalent of the law in the life of a Christian, but it is never exactly the law taken at face value. In this case we are not exactly applying the law but drawing on the equivalent of it. If we were to exactly apply the law it would not apply to Gentiles, and the consequence of disobedience in a child was potentially death.
- **A note: Some of the Mosaic law was more important than other parts of the Mosaic law to the Jewish community.**
  - Eaton translates the phrase ‘the first commandment with a promise’ as ‘the supreme commandment with a promise’. This makes more sense because there were prior laws with the promise, and it was part of the Ten Commandments which were viewed as supreme over the rest of the law because it summarised the rest of the law.

4 Fathers [or PARENTS], do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

- **Parents should be a joy to obey.**
  - Similarly to how he dealt with husbands and wives (where he first instructed the wife to submit, and then instructed the husband to be a pleasure to submit to) so Paul first instructs the children to obey and then instructs the parents to be a pleasure to obey.
- **Parents need to raise and lead their children in three ways: fairness, training (in behaviour and in the Bible) and loving rebuke.**
  - Parents can easily abuse their authority and treat their children harshly or unfairly. In so doing the child is exasperated and feels resentment. This is unwise for parents to do. Rather they should seek to not be unnecessarily harsh, unfair or inconsistent.
  - Parents need to train their children's behaviour. Parents can expect their children to learn how to behave and respond to certain situations, but forget to enduringly and wisely train them. Children need hands-on training in order to begin to mature and to become godly in their character.
  - Parents need to bring their children up 'in the training ... of the Lord.' This means that it is primarily the parent's role to teach their kids the Bible and how to receive salvation, and how to grow in their faith.
  - Since the phrase 'instruction of the Lord' can also be translated 'admonition of the Lord', parents need to be ready to lovingly rebuke their children when they get it wrong. This requires courage and perseverance. It implies that a child does not inherently have what it needs to become all it can become. The parents play a major role in the shaping of the child's life. The modern belief that children just need to be taught to be themselves is absurd and damaging to the child.
- **Christian parents have the privilege and responsibility of partnering with Jesus in the rearing of their children.**
  - The phrase 'of the Lord' shows that Jesus himself is seeking to train and admonish the children, but that he partners with the parents in wisely and lovingly doing this.

#### **EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LORD (6:5-9)**

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart (or STRAIGHT-FORWARDLY), just as you would obey Christ.  
6 Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart (or WHOLE-HEARTEDLY).  
7 Serve wholeheartedly (or ENTHUSIASTICALLY), as if you were

serving the Lord, not people, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward each one of you for whatever good you do, whether you are slave or free.

- **Christians should make the best employers / workers in the world.**
  - This is because of their superior heart motivations they should cultivate while they work.
  - Almost half of the world in those times were slaves, which means that they were bound to do whatever their master wished. It was a terrible existence. However, despite many differences, we can still apply these truths to the employer-employee relationship.
  - But Paul was seeking to liberate them from the slavery - and in a surprising way: by encouraging them to see Jesus as their true master, for whom they worked. True freedom is found in submitting to the most worthy master - Jesus.
  - The basic way of dealing with masters that Paul was suggesting is that they would obey and serve their masters with respect and fear, with straightforwardness (especially when they weren't looking), with whole-heartedness and enthusiasm. Implied in all of this is integrity and diligence.
  - But what was the motivation to be? And this would make their behaviour distinct. The answer lies in what is happening in their hearts while they work:
    - 1) In their heart they would be submitting to Christ, and this would make submitting to a person so much easier. That is why it says, 'just as you would obey Christ' (v5).
    - 2) In their heart they would see having a job and doing it as part of God's will for them. They would give themselves to doing the will of their earthly master as the will of God (v6), provided, of course, what they were doing was for the good of others (v8 speaks of doing 'good' in their work). Again Acts 5:29 applies, where we refuse to obey an unethical instruction.
    - 3) In their heart they would live and work before the audience of One - they would see themselves as 'slaves of Christ'; they would serve not before the eye of their master but before the eye of Christ (v6). And Christ would be the one rewarding them - even if the master failed to see or commend the good they had done.
    - 4) In their heart they would see work as love in action. This comes out in the phrase 'for whatever good you do' (v8). Work is essentially about serving others in love.
    - 5) In their heart they would seek the favour of their employer (v6) which would be good in witnessing to them about Jesus. It is hard to influence someone spiritually if they do not respect and admire you. Of course, this last motivation is not the major motivation, since the employer could fail to see or commend our work.

9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.

- **Christian employers should be the best employers to work for.**
  - There are several reasons this should be so...
    - 1) Christian bosses should go about working with their employees 'in the same way' as Christ expects Christian employees to go about relating to the employers (see v5-8):
      - With sincerity of heart (i.e. straightforwardness) - which implies honesty and integrity.
      - Whole-heartedly and enthusiastically.
      - Before the eyes of God, in an attitude of doing God's will.
      - Seeking reward and honour from God because of the way they lead.
    - 2) Christian bosses should not threaten their employees. This does not mean that they cannot discipline or even fire consistently ill-performing employees - but rather it refers to the dangerous tendency to exploit their power or treating employees inhumanely.
    - 3) Christian bosses should be fair. This comes as they seek to see themselves and their employees through the eyes of their Master - and those are eyes that treat people equally, without discrimination (against lower socio-economic classes, or against those they do not like) or favouritism (toward those that they do like for whatever reason).
    - 4) Christian bosses should seek to reflect the character of their Master in heaven - which includes authority *and* fairness, strength *and* kindness. It also includes a willingness to reward the deserving for their efforts (v8).
    - 5) Christian bosses should not have elevated views of themselves because of their authority but rather should keep their heart on Jesus, the most deserving and wonderful of Masters to whom they gladly submit.
  
- **The spread of the Gospel, especially its idea that all people are equal in God's sight, leads to the positive reformation of society and culture.**
  - When it comes to the reformation of aspects of society, sowing the seeds of a new idea into multitudes usually precedes an overthrow of a structural evil.
  - We see this regarding slavery. After many centuries, the Christian Gospel would become the seed that would lead to the abolishing of slavery altogether through people like William Wilberforce. But, God in his wisdom knew that the Gospel and its implication of the equality of all people in the sight of God would first need to take root in multitudes before it could have that kind of policy impact on governments. It would have been unwise to tell all slaves to leave their masters since this would have crippled the forward-movement of the Gospel, and those slaves would have died anyway. Instead he introduces the simple revolutionary thought: see slaves as people of equal value to yourself in the eyes of God. This thought, taken the distance, would lead to the reformation of society.

## READY FOR BATTLE (6:10-13)

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

- **The battle needs to be fought in the strength of Christ.**
  - '10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.'
  - The word 'finally' shows that there is something else that needs to be added to all that has been taught already that is necessary to complete it. It also implies that the section to follow is emphatic.
  - Verses 10-18 deal with a simple reality: that if the Christian and the church are to deepen their revelation of the Gospel, and their experience of the fullness of God, and grow in godliness, and seek to minister grace to each other and seek to 'wake up' the lost then they can expect the devil to counter-attack. One of his main attacks is to try to weaken us.
  - But we have a starting-point in our response to Satan's counter-attack: we have a strong, mighty, powerful Jesus on whom we can lean and from whom we can draw strength. This implies fellowship with the resurrected, exalted Christ and drinking of his strength through being full of his Word and his Spirit. It also implies that we meditate on, and draw on Christ's victories in his life, in his miracles, in his wisdom, in his conquering Satan, in his resurrection, and in his willingness to impart that strength to us through the Spirit.
- **The battle requires that you get ready to fight with all the resources that God gives you to fight.**
  - '11 Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand'
  - It is true that God is a warrior (Exodus 15:3) and that 'the battle belongs to the Lord and he will fight for us' but it is also true that he invites us to fight too - using all the spiritual resources that he has made available to us. We need to fight. We need to take our stand. We cannot be passive in the face of onslaught or we will be destroyed.
- **The battle is different every time - since the devil schemes different ways to make you fail.**
  - 'so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.'
  - The devil hates God and Jesus, God's Word, God's people, God's will being done on the earth. And he has great power (power over nature, over animals, over the shaping of culture, over

unregenerate people, and he has access to the heart and mind of even Christians. And, using his craftiness and super-intelligence he attacks Christians and the church in many ways: sowing of doubts, spreading fear, sowing false teaching, tempting, discouraging, attacking with evil thoughts (that easily rouse pride, resentment and discouragement). He can rouse persecution against us, and he can launch special attacks into our lives (thorns in our flesh). So we best be alert!

- **The battle is against an organised, intelligent, powerful network of demonic beings in the spiritual realm.**
  - ‘12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’
  - Satan is the head of a host of evil spirits, a whole kingdom of spiritual beings, which are united in their hatred against God (see Matthew 12:22-28).
  - It is true that our sinful tendencies work against our faith, but we ourselves are not the real enemy since we have died to sin. It is true that the world (society’s group tendency to sin) works against our faith, but again they are not the ultimate enemy. Rather it is ‘the spirit who is at work in them, the ruler of the kingdom of the air (Eph 2:2)’.
  - We can expect these demonic beings to conspire against Christians and the church moving forward in our faith and obedience to Christ.
  - Paul refers to different kinds of demonic beings: rulers, authorities, powers of this dark world, and spiritual forces of evil. This implies that they are a highly organised network and that they have different functions within the realm of darkness (much like angels often have different functions in the realm of light.)
  
- **The battle is intensely personal.**
  - The word translated ‘struggle’ in verse 12 is often translated battle and fight. The best word, however, is ‘wrestle’ because it is the word used to describe close combat with an enemy. This shows that we will sometimes experience the battle very up close and personal. Satan hates us personally and he attacks us personally. He seeks to strike as close as he can to our heart. He seeks to tempt us, discourage us, distract us and damage us in our deepest heart - which is essentially our ability to trust Christ deeply. Satan is not as concerned with us knowing information about God as much as he is with our deep trust in Christ.
  
- **The battle is about taking ground despite the resistance.**
  - ‘13 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.’

- The picture here is of the church moving forward like an army, and individual Christians moving forward like soldiers. Every step they take forward is both an advance for God's kingdom and a loss for Satan's kingdom. It is a clash of kingdoms.
  - But Satan, who is not happy with this, will seek to resist us - and cause us to step backward rather than forward. The way he does this is by attacking us 'in the day of evil'. This refers to seasons of demonic attack on our lives and on our churches.
  - Yet, we must 'stand our ground' - and after the season of resistance and attack is over, we're still standing. We have lost no ground to the enemy.
- **The battle must be fought till the end of our lives.**
    - The phrase 'and after you have done everything, to stand' can be applied to our whole lives. That is why we need to hear God's Word to us - stand strong till the end. It does not matter how strong we start, what matters most is how strong we finish. The Christian does not ever retire from the call to move forward in Christ, nor the call to stay standing till the end, resisting the evil one till the last day.
- **The battle is absolutely winnable if we fight it in Christ's strength.**
    - V13 'Therefore put on the full armour of God so that ... you may be able to stand your ground.'
    - We need to be aware of the evil one - as these verses encourage us to be - but, more importantly we need to be in awe of Christ and his mighty power. The tone of these verses is not meant to intimidate us with Satan's power, but rather encourage us to be strong in the Lord, and in his even greater power.
    - We fight, but we do so drawing on the strength and victory of Christ. He is near. At fierce times in the battle he may even draw especially close as he did with Paul when he said, 'Do not be afraid. Keep on talking. Do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack you and harm you' (Acts 18:9,10).
    - Christ gives us his own ability - our efforts of 'doing everything' (v13) are fused with Christ's strength and power - and the result is that Satan eventually backs off and we remain standing, victorious in Christ.

### **THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR (6:14-17)**

14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

- **We can expect God to speak to us through the object lessons of our daily lives.**
  - Paul was in prison, guarded by Roman soldiers, when he wrote this. It seems like God spoke to him through the object lesson of these soldiers.
  - Similarly, God may speak to us through the object lessons around us - whether it is the people in our lives, or analogies that flow out of every aspect of life and society.
  
- **The battle is won as we have great revelation of and dependence on six different aspects of Christ's grace towards us as Christians.**
  - Each piece of armour represents an aspect of God's grace. It does not primarily apply to a character trait or some moral effort in us. It is true that God's grace applied to ourselves results in a transformed character, but the character in itself is not strong enough to resist Satan's attacks - what is needed is a radical dependence on that grace of Jesus toward us.
  - Paul was inspired by Isa 11:5 and Isa 59:17 where God is portrayed wearing armour. Paul understands that the armour really is Christ's armour - and much like we need to be strong in Jesus (6:10) so we apply to ourselves Christ's armour.

*There are six specific aspects of Christ's strength and grace for us that we need to depend on...*

**1) Be held together by a revelation that the Gospel really is true, that Jesus and salvation really are real.**

- 'with the belt of truth buckled around your waist'
- The word 'truth' refers to how easily humans are deceived about what is real. The Gospel message says that God, Jesus and salvation are gloriously real. And we need to be held together by this truth. Without the Gospel, we as humans and societies tend to disintegrate. There is no powerful integrating centre that holds us together.
- A belt metaphorically holds a person together. In the same way the Christian needs to be held together spiritually by a revelation of the truth of God's Word and the Gospel.
- Satan would love to see our lives falling apart because we fail to grow our revelation of the reality of Jesus and salvation.

**2) Protect your heart from Satan's condemnation by a revelation of Christ's gift of righteousness to us.**

- 'with the breastplate of righteousness in place'
- The word 'righteousness here refers to Christ's gift of righteousness to us. It refers to the way we may be 'found in Christ, not having a righteousness of our own that is by the law, but a righteousness that comes from God and is by faith / grace' (Phil 3:9). It refers to the pure gift of God, which means that our sins are no longer held against us by God. It is the only antidote to a conscience that condemns us. And it is the only protection

against the devil who would seek to 'accuse' us. After all, he is the 'accuser of the brothers' (Rev 12:10).

- The breastplate covered the 'heart' which is where we experience feelings and emotions. Satan would seek to accuse us for our real failures in such a way that we would be riddled with emotionally-crippling shame, guilt, condemnation and introspection.
- But we have a way of defending ourselves: we freshly affirm the gift of Christ's righteousness which means that God has credited to us the righteousness of Jesus, removing shame, guilt, condemnation and unhelpful introspection.

### **3) Stand firmly on the revelation that the Gospel is powerful to reconcile sinners to God any time it is preached.**

- 'with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace'
  - Shoes help you stand. They represent stability and grip.
  - 'the Gospel of peace' refers to one major aspect of Christ's work in Christians: that Christ has removed the enmity between God and people, and that, through faith in him, we can enjoy peace and reconciliation with God.
  - I have been entrusted with a message - the Gospel - that powerfully invites people to be at peace with God through faith in Jesus. And regardless of how I feel when I share it, that message is always able to change lives. It is ready to change lives. And I need this revelation.
  - Satan would love us to believe the Gospel message has no power to change lives, or that it only works sometimes.
  - We need to stand firmly on the revelation that we are at peace with God, and that the Gospel message is powerful to reconcile people to God any time it is preached.
- **We need to be both proactive and reactive in spiritual warfare.**
    - Before we look at the next three pieces of armour, realise that they are different in nature to the first three.
    - The phrase 'in addition to all of this' (v16) separates the first three pieces of armour from the last three. The wording makes it clear that the first three pieces of armour are proactively on us - we are *already* wearing our belt, our breastplate and our shoes. We never take these off. But the last three pieces of armour are to be reactively taken up in response to specific attacks of Satan.
    - The first three pieces of armour all revolve around constantly expectable attacks on the Gospel...
      - We wear the belt of truth because the enemy tells us *the Gospel is not true*.
      - We wear the breastplate of righteousness because the enemy tells us *the Gospel has not effectively made us right with God*.
      - We wear the shoes of readiness because the enemy tells us that *the Gospel cannot powerfully make others right with God*.

- So the proactive truths we need to keep on re-affirming and getting more revelation in are that
  - 1) *the Gospel is real,*
  - 2) *the Gospel has changed my standing before God, and*
  - 3) *the Gospel can change anyone's life.*
 This is the rock-solid foundation to standing against the devil's lies. Never doubt these truths! Always wear them like armour.

**4) Respond to specific attacks of Satan by holding onto and holding up specific promises of God by aggressive faith.**

- '16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.'
- Roman shields were protective. They were the size of a door.
- The enemies used to shoot burning arrows. Similarly, Satan attacks us with arrows. These arrows may come in circumstances, or in words spoken against us, or, most commonly, in the thoughts that come to us, that we so often don't realise come from Satan himself. These arrows are designed to do initial damage, but then also to start a fire to do progressive damage as time goes on.
- We have a way of refusing both the immediate and progressive damage of Satan's attacks: to hold up the promises of God in his Word by faith.
- We respond to specific attacks with specific promises in God's Word. We respond to specific attacks by clinging to specific aspects of God's character.
- The faith that holds up these shields requires vigour and effort. It is not a lazy or passive faith, but rather an aggressive faith which clings to the promises of God!
- Satan would love us to stop holding onto and holding up God's specific promises.

**5) Respond to specific attacks by filling your mind with thoughts of Christ's certain victory in this situation.**

- '17 Take the helmet of salvation'
- Helmets represent confidence and victory. Soldiers were to 'hold their heads / helmets up high'. In the Roman army, soldiers who had won previous victories wore feathers on their helmets to signify victory.
- Helmets were also worn on heads, which is the place of our thoughts. Our thoughts needed to be dominated by the certainty of victory.
- Salvation here seems to speak of Christ's promise that he will ultimately save us, and that we will ultimately prevail in his strength, and that he will work all things - even the intensity and wounds of this battle - for his glory and our good.
- Satan would love to fill our minds with thoughts of defeat and fear and doubt in Christ's strength and sovereignty. But we need to fill our minds with thoughts of Christ's victory in each and every situation.

## 6) Respond to specific attacks by quoting aloud certain verses of Scripture.

- '17 Take the ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'
- The sword in the Bible is often connected to God's Word being spoken. In Hebrews 4:12 we see that God's sword is like a surgical knife. In Revelations 1:16 we see a sharp double-edged sword coming out Jesus mouth.
- This verse is best illustrated by Jesus' own temptation in Matthew 4. There we see Satan attacking with specific lies and specific temptations, and Jesus responds by quoting aloud specific truths from the Bible (vs 4,7 and 10). He does not fight Satan with reason, but rather with Scripture. He uses it like a sword in one-on-one combat with the devil. And he prevails. Similarly, we as Christians need to have memorised certain Scriptures, ready to speak them aloud in response to the specific lies and thoughts from the enemy. Portions of the Bible being read aloud as a form of spiritual warfare will also help. And like Jesus experienced when he spoke the Scriptures, we will also see Satan fleeing.
- **Summarily, when specific attacks come, we need to respond with faith, with our thoughts and with our speech.**
  - The last three pieces of armour were ways of responding to specific attacks. They are
    - 1) the promises we hold onto with faith,
    - 2) the thoughts of God's saving power we cultivate, and
    - 3) the words of the Bible we speak with authority.
  - To summarise the whole armour:
    - Proactively, always affirm that the Gospel is real, it is effective in my life, and it can be effective in anyone's life!
    - Reactively, be ready to respond to the specific attack by holding up specific promises, by thinking thoughts of God's saving power, and by speaking certain Scriptures aloud.

## PRAYER (6:18-20)

18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

- **Pray 'in the Spirit'**
  - Prayer and being filled with / led by the Spirit are in many ways synonymous. The Spirit is the one who allows us to experience God's presence and God's leading, which are vital in prayer. The Spirit prays and intercedes 'for God's people in accordance with

the will of God.’ It is good for us to intentionally ask the Spirit to both energise and guide our prayers.

- **Pray ‘on all occasions’.**
  - We need to learn to pray unceasingly, to do everything with a sense that God is with us, and that we need his grace for the moment. Every single situation and hour of the day warrants prayerfulness. And this prayerfulness will surface in different ways, but it is there all the time, like a river running through our inner being, regardless of what we’re doing.
  - This is perhaps one reason why Paul did not make prayer one of the armour pieces. He could have easily said, ‘take up the spear of prayer’. The problem would be that we would then see prayer as just one seventh of what we need in spiritual warfare and in life. But the truth is that prayer happens simultaneously with everything else. Prayer is the way we put on the armour.
  
- **Pray ‘with all kinds of prayer and requests’.**
  - There are so many different kinds of prayer.
  - The word ‘prayer’ is a general term referring to worship and talking with God. The word ‘requests’ (also translated ‘supplication’) means casting ourselves on the mercy of God. The second word translated ‘praying’ in verse 18 is different to the word translated ‘prayer’ at the beginning of verse 18. Another translation is ‘petition’ and means to ask for certain things for ourselves and others.
  - There are so many other kinds of prayer: prayer directed towards God (worship, adoration and intimacy), prayer directed inwards (confession, asking God, listening to the Spirit, prayers for the infilling of the Spirit) and prayers directed outwards (spiritual warfare praying, intercession, authoritative prayer etc). There is prayer on our own and prayer together with others. There is prayer with our minds, and there is the praying in tongues, where our mind is ‘unfruitful’.
  - Different prayers capture and express different nuances of our relationship with the Father, Christ and the Spirit, and different dimensions of the wide range of human experience.
  
- **Pray alertly and perseveringly.**
  - ‘be alert and always keep on praying’.
  - Since the spiritual battle is constant, and can flair up at any moment, we need to stay in touch with Christ, the Commanding Officer. This requires that we keep a war-time mentality and that, no matter how long the battles last and how intense it becomes, we keep on praying. In the words of John Piper, ‘We will never know what prayer is for until we understand that we’re in a war. Prayer is not the intercom device that orders new poolside snacks - it’s the radio phone that connects a soldier to his Commanding Officer, seeking update of strategy and ordering in new back-up.’

- We need to ‘pray until assurance comes’. Jesus taught us to keep on asking, seeking and knocking until we get the result we long for. Sadly, we so easily give up in prayer, but Jesus taught his disciples to ‘always pray, never giving up’ (Luke 18:1).
- That is one reason why we need to pray in the Spirit and not in our own strength. The Spirit will energise our ability to be alert and to persevere.
- **Pray ‘for all God’s people’.**
  - Praying for each other is the spiritual back-up others need in the battle. Prayer is covering each other’s backs spiritually. We are really vulnerable in a battle if the other soldiers are not watching out for us. We need to pray for other Christians constantly, both those close and those far. Prayer for other people should be a big part of our prayer life. We should pray for them in their presence and in their absence.
- **Pray for the advance of the Gospel.**
  - ‘19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.’
  - Paul has been describing a fierce Roman soldier to us. The truth is that he is surrounded by them in prison. And it requires fearlessness to try witness even to fierce Roman soldiers about the Gospel. But he sees himself as a soldier for God advancing the Gospel - and he requests fearlessness to keep on preaching.
  - Paul knew what to say (the Gospel). He knew there were opportunities. But what he really needed was 1) how to go about saying it (he needed ‘words to be given him’) and 2) courage to rise to those opportunities. He requested these prayer reinforcements.
  - Although we can pray about everything, we need to never neglect praying for those on the front-line of Gospel advancement. And we need to seek the prayers of others as we seek to advance the Gospel in our own lives.

#### **LAST WORDS (6:21-24)**

21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

- **In the midst of the battle to advance the Gospel we need to care for and be committed to fellow-soldiers.**
  - Tychicus cared for Paul and was committed to him while he was in distress in prison. He was described as ‘a brother’ not just a

fellow-soldier showing the highest loyalty. His loyalty was not just to Paul but primarily to Jesus. His 'faithfulness' to Jesus spurred on his faithfulness to Paul.

- It was the fact that he was 'in the Lord' that energised his care and commitment.
- **In the midst of the battle to advance the Gospel we need to team with other soldiers, helping each other where we can.**
  - Paul really wanted the Ephesians to know how he was doing. Tychicus helped him with that. Paul really wanted to encourage the Ephesians. Again Tychicus helped him to do that. He faithfully represented Paul.

23 Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love, with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. (V24 can also be translated, 'Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ - grace and immortality.')

- **The Father and the Son shower all of us with peace, love, grace and immortality.**
  - Usually v23 is translated 'peace to the brothers', but Paul certainly implies 'brothers and sisters'. After all, he has addressed wives too (5:22). The Greek Word that is translated 'brother' is better translated 'sibling' - which is not gender specific. However, in English, we do not call each other 'siblings' since it lacks the affection intended. However, we do call each other 'brothers and sisters.' That's why Eaton and the TNIV translate it 'brothers and sisters'.
  - Eaton suggests that the second translation option of verse 24 is better.
  - v23 speaks of peace and love from the Father and Jesus. v24 speaks of grace and immortality from God. These come from God. They are God's grace-initiative toward us.
  - But we position ourselves for this shower by faith (v23) and by loving the Lord Jesus (v24). His grace initiative toward us awakens our faith in and love toward him in response.