Chapter 6 – Relationships and God's Protection for Us

1. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*

This is a command (*obey* is in the imperative mood) that is addressed specifically to *children*. The questions that must be given some consideration are these: who are children, and when does one cease to be a child? We live in a day of extremes in this regard. We have those who advocate that children are subject to their parents until they leave home (particularly girls); on the other hand, we have parents who, in fact, live in submission to their children. This latter is sheer folly, for the Scriptures are clear that "Foolishness *is* bound in the heart of a child; *but* the rod of correction shall drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15). To permit a child to be the decision-maker is foolishness, something that the parents are responsible to remove from the heart of a child through discipline. Yet this has become the common rule for far too many of today's households. However, there are still families where the father will rule with a rod of iron and will not permit his children (particularly daughters) to function as adults until they marry or leave home. Within the Jewish tradition, a boy at age thirteen goes through a Bar Mitzvah, and the girls at age twelve through a Bat Mitzvah, at which time they are considered to be personally responsible to fulfill the law – they function as adults.[1] A Jewish boy, after the age of thirteen, actually qualifies as one of ten men required to establish a synagogue.[2] Clearly, that is a rather arbitrary application of responsibility, but the point that is evident is that there is a time when the parents' authority must be tempered – a time when the parents' instruction

[1] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coming_of_age
[2] Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, (Chicago: Moody Press, 2000), p. 51.

and input into their child's life must decrease in order to permit them to function as an adult.

The obedience advocated here is not unqualified; i.e., it is not a blind submission. The qualification is that the obedience must be *in the Lord*; in other words, it must not be in contradiction to the Scriptures. A child's obedience to his parents within the framework of godliness is called righteous (*right*). The Scriptures never advocate a blind obedience; i.e., because someone says to do something does not mean that we are to do it just because of the person's apparent position of authority. This has been the failure of most independent Baptist churches. They take Hebrews 13:17 (*obey them that have the rule over you*) as a command that the people within the "church" are to submit to the "pastor" in charge, which often leads to abuse of position. First of all, the gifting of "pastor" (Ephesians 4:11) does not carry any authority within the assembly of believers; it is not a position, but rather a gift given by the Spirit for the perfecting of the saints. Secondly, the word "obey" (which some of these "pastors" love to emphasize) does not advocate blind obedience, but rather a submission to **elders** (not "pastors") who have been tested to ensure that they are right according to Scripture.

Obedience is a very important theme within Scripture, but it must be within the framework of godliness and righteousness. Young children must learn obedience so that they will understand what it means to follow the Lord, and parents can demonstrate their submission to the Lord before their children and thereby support what they are endeavoring to teach them. Permitting children to determine their own lives only establishes their self-centeredness, and makes it very difficult for them to understand what it means to walk in obedience to the Lord. As a matter of fact, it is preparing them to be in rebellion against the Lord, for they will determine to go the way that they desire rather than the way of righteousness – in accordance with the pattern established by their parents. Catering to the whims of a child will only serve to establish the foolishness that is bound up in his heart, and places the parents in the position of being disobedient to the Lord.

Scripture is also very clear about our obedience to the governing authorities, yet this, too, is not without qualification. Romans 13:1-7 underscores the importance of being in submission to the authorities that God has placed over us, to which 1 Peter 2:13-17 concurs. However, 1 Peter 2:17 places the fear of God ahead of our requirement to honor the king. Once again, we are not to blindly do whatever a governing authority tells us, but we are to weigh the demands made against the words of Scripture to ensure that our compliance will not result in disobedience to God, Who placed the authority there. This is something that the Apostles learned early on (Acts 4:19, 5:29). The difficulty today is that those who profess Christianity do not know God's Word, which only deepens the error of pragmatism in the hearts of those who claim to know God. The Biblical ignorance of the average church attendee plays right into the hand of the devil, for they have neglected the only means to become spiritually discerning. As it is, they place all of their trust in a clergy who have become tainted by various and sundry modern philosophies, convenient theologies, and liberal thinking. Jesus' words to the scribes and Pharisees of His day are so appropriate here: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell [Gehenna, the Lake of Fire] than yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).[3] That may seem to be a harsh assessment of the religious Jews, but they are directed at those who preached assurance of heaven using a message that was not true – exactly like today's clergy who have been duped into believing a lie, and then spend their lives presenting it as truth to the unsuspecting laity. Yet even in this, the deceived laity cannot lay the full responsibility onto the shoulders of the deceived clergy, for they bear the responsibility of testing all things according to God's Word (1 John 4:1). Paul's words to Timothy are so fitting for today: "[2.] … Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. [3.] For the time will come [indeed, it is now here!] when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; [4.] And they shall turn away *their* ears from

[3] Strong's Online.

the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [*muthos*, myths, or lies]" (2 Timothy 4:2-4).[4]

- 2. *Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;)*
- 3. *That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.*

Presented here is the fifth commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12). *Honor* means to value, or revere, and from this comes our modern understanding of showing respect, or admiration.[5] This is the only command within the Ten Commandments that carries with it a positive promise. Subsequent to these foundational commands, Israel received many others from God that included promises that were contingent on their obedience to God's expressed will. The translations showing the words *may be* are not correct, it should be *in order that*.[6] The Greek structure in our verse identifies this as a purpose clause where subjunctive verbs (in this case, *be*) become like a statement of fact (indicative mood, identifying intent, or purpose, rather than the normal possibility);[7] the Hebrew, from which this is quoted (Exodus 20:12), also carries the same thought: God's intent is for us to *honor* our parents, and He will then provide long life.[8] The understood implication of this is that God desires us to show respect to our parents; indeed, there is a respect due to our parents regardless of who they are, how they conduct themselves, or what they have done. This is something that is largely missing from our society today. Paul warned Timothy of these days: "[1.] … in the last days perilous times shall come. [2.] For men shall be … disobedient to parents, unthankful … [3.] without natural affection … [4.]

[4] Friberg Lexicon.
[5] Strong's Online.
[6] BDB.
[7] https://www.ntgreek.org/learn_nt_greek/subj-purpose.htm.
[8] BDB.

highminded … [5.] [yet] having a form of godliness …" (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Indeed, Jesus spoke of a time when those who remain true to His name will suffer greatly at the hands of their own families (Matthew 10:21-22). There is a generation now gaining their independence who have ruled their parents from their earliest days; of a truth, these perilous times are upon us.

4. *And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

The words *provoke* and *wrath* come from one Greek word (*parorgizo*) which means to arouse to wrath, or exasperate: *and fathers, do not be provoking to anger* [*parorgizo*] *your children* (literal).[9] The word is in an intensive form, which is more than making your children upset, or even angry, with you. Some might even try to use this as a reason for catering to their children, because you're not supposed to upset the little cherubs. This does not support that notion; parents who adopt the appeasement approach to child rearing are in violation of many Scriptures that speak of the foolishness of a child and the need for discipline. The latter exhortation of this verse would suggest that the Scriptures must come to bear upon the child. *Nurture* (*paideia*) is most often translated as *chasten*, and includes everything for the training and education of a child.[10] Biblical discipline, correction, and guidance are to be used in nurturing a child to maturity.

It is noteworthy that this is addressed to the fathers. We have just come through a passage that has dealt very specifically with the marriage relationship and the importance of understanding the roles that God has ordained for the husband and wife. Despite the ease with which the roles within marriage are mixed, it does not change what God has ordained. The charge given here is to the fathers – they are not to arouse wrath in their children, but are to chasten and instruct them in the Lord's commands.

[9] Vine's "anger"; Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[10] Strong's Online.

One of the qualifying criteria for being an elder in an assembly is that he runs his own household well (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:6). The father bears the responsibility for the obedience of the children. Yet today we see the fathers taking a back seat in the rule of their households (very often because the marriage roles have been reversed), and the mothers taking on the dominant role. God is not pleased with this shift, and the shambles that these homes are in is evidence of His displeasure with such disregard for His Word.

There is a sense here that if the father does not provide a Biblical context for his administered discipline, it could then result in the *wrath*, or exasperation, of the children. The use of the word *but* draws a contrast between what has come before and what follows. There is a command to not provoke *your children to wrath*, and the contrast is to chasten and exhort them in the Lord. If the chastening is not for a purpose, then it could very easily be perceived by the child to be senseless discipline; the context for any chastening must be the Lord's instruction, not our frustrations. The wisdom of the Lord is needed by both parents in order to ensure a proper upbringing for their children.

5. *Servants, be obedient to them that are* your *masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;*

Servant, as used here, comes from the Greek word *doulos*, which is best understood as *slave*, and particularly one who is born a slave.[11] *Master* (*kurios*), the other side of the relationship, derives from the Greek word that is most often translated as Lord, or lord, and identifies one who holds legitimate authority over another.[12] Although this does not provide a basis for condoning slavery, it certainly includes the slave-master relationship, which was so common at the time that this epistle was written; however, the concept is also broad enough to include today's

[11] https://glosbe.com/grc/en/δούλος; Liddell-Scott Lexicon.
[12] Friberg Lexicon.

employee-employer relationship. *Doulos* (*slave*) particularly includes the idea of ownership, but it also extends to those who are forced to work for another. Paul's instructions to the Corinthians to live in a godly manner included this note: "…ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:20). There is one difference between the worldly slave-master and the faithful believer-Christ relationships: in the world, the slave becomes the property of his lord against his will, but, for the Christian, we have willingly become the slaves of Christ. The slave-market slave has no will but the will of his master, not by choice, but through a binding business transaction in which he typically had no part. We, on the other hand, are called on to count the cost of becoming a slave of Christ (Luke 14:25-33); we are very much a party to the transaction that brings us into Christ. Yet, too often today, the message is simply: "Jesus is our Savior," with no thought that the relationship must be so much more; unless it includes our submission to Him as our Lord (becoming His obedient slaves), then we are not *in Him*. That is why we are told to count the cost; we must be willing to pay the price of following Him – denying ourselves, and living in willing obedience to His commands (Matthew 16:24; John 14:15).

We, who are *in Christ*, receive many commands to glorify God (1 Corinthians 6:20), to live holy lives (1 Peter 1:15-16), to walk worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1) – all given for us to obey. We willingly receive the Word of God, yet the parable of the soils teaches us of the need for endurance – initial joy and growth is not enough (Luke 8:11-15); if we are not willing to pay the price of faithful service to the Lord, then we will either wither away, or be choked out. We must not forget the admonition to guard against a heart of unbelief that will turn us away from God (Hebrews 3:12). Paul refers to himself as being a servant (*doulos*) of Christ (Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:1), as are all who are *in Christ*, for we have willingly accepted this pathway to life (Matthew 7:21). However, it is important that we count the cost before committing our lives to the Lord, lest we fall away, and there be no hope left for us (Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-21).

The admonition to obedience given here is a command; both the employee and the slave are to be obedient to those who are over them. The same Greek word is used in Ephesians 6:1 (*hupakouo*), which means to hearken to, or submit to, the one who is the parent (or master).[13] It is noteworthy that the phrase "according to the flesh" is included here; in essence, the message is to get this relationship right in the physical world where it is easily understood. The slave-master relationship does not exist within the local assembly of the *ekklesia*; on the contrary, we are to submit to one another (Ephesians 4:21). Jesus' instruction to His disciples was that there was to be no hierarchical authority (master-slave) among them (Matthew 20:25-28), and the Lord strongly condemned the Nicolaitane doctrine (clergy-laity) in two of the seven churches of Revelation (Revelation 2:6, 15). The clergy-laity relationship may not be exactly like that of the master-slave, but, within most churches, there is definitely an authority attributed to those holding that *clergy-position* of "pastor,"[14] and this, from my experience, is particularly pronounced within the independent Baptist movement.

In his instruction to the Corinthians, Paul puts all of this into perspective: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called *being* a servant [*doulos*]? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather. For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant [*doulos*], is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ's servant [*doulos*]. Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants [*doulos*] of men" (1 Corinthians 7:20-23; cp. Proverbs 22:7).[15] If you are a slave and have opportunity to be freed, then take it; if not, then don't worry about it, for you are free in the Lord. If you come to the Lord being freeborn, then don't forget that you are the Lord's willing slave. There is a leveling of the playing field before the Lord; the slave is free in Christ, and the one born free is the slave of Christ. Jesus made it clear that even He did not come to earth to be ministered unto, but to

[13] Strong's Online.
[14] Within churches today, the pastor fills a position with specific responsibilities and authority; contrary to Ephesians 4:11 where the gifting of a pastor, or shepherd, is placed within the Body for our edification – there is no inherent authority with this gifting.
[15] Strong's Online.

minister, to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for mankind (Matthew 20:28).

We are to serve with *fear and trembling*; this phrase is "used to describe the anxiety of one who distrusts his ability completely to meet all requirements, but religiously does his utmost to fulfil his duty."[16] The service is to be done with respect (*fear*), as to someone who can bring retribution if you do not do what is required (*trembling*) – for a slave, failure could mean physical punishment; for an employee, it could mean being fired. *In singleness of your heart* literally means that responsibilities will be carried out with integrity and sincerity of heart, endeavoring to do one's best.[17] Our relationship to those who are our masters in life is to be characterized by honesty and integrity, not slacking off when no one is around, but rather diligently fulfilling the assigned responsibilities.

Lest what we have heard to this point is not sufficient, we are to serve as "unto Christ." This is not a popular topic for preaching within Evangelical circles; too often it is voiced that the worst employees to have are professing Christians. What a blight on the name of Christ, what a shame on that person, yet this is not as uncommon as it should be. Even within "Christian" organizations, a "they owe me" attitude can develop that results in much time being spent in visiting, coffee times, and the like. Employees, who show little commitment to the work that they have been hired to do, are often most punctual when it comes to having their two coffee breaks a day. This is in direct violation of this passage; we are to work *as unto Christ*: "and whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Colossians 3:23).

6. *Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;*

[16] Strong's Online.
[17] Friberg Lexicon.

Eyeservice (*ophthalmodoulia*) refers to the work that is being done when the boss is watching, so as to make a good impression, but it also hints at the work that is not being done when he is not watching.[18] It exemplifies a heart of deceit and hypocrisy, as those who seek to please and gain the favor of men with as little effort as possible. There is a superficiality to this mindset that is not becoming to the heart of a Christian who is to do all things "as to the Lord" (Colossians 3:23). The Greek word translated as *menspleasers* means, "studying to please men," and carries the understanding that the focus is to gain favor with men, and not God.[19] This is someone who perfects the art of *eyeservice*, the ability to leave a good impression, and who has the skill to look good while still doing as little as possible. This is to have no place within the Christian's life.

By contrast, we are to be *servants of Christ*; the same Greek word, *doulos*, is used here to present a relationship of submission and obedience. We should not hesitate to be called the servants of Christ, for we have willingly become His slaves (*doulos*) after counting the cost of being His disciples. The one who does all things as unto the Lord is fulfilling the mandate of being a *servant of Christ*. There is no doubt about the activity of such a person, for he is "doing the will of God from the heart." What is the will of God? It is nothing less than obedience to His Word. Perhaps this is why Evangelicals are in such a mess today; they do not read the Word of God with hearts that desire to obey the Lord. As they neglect the Word in favor of the instruction of their "professional" theologians, Evangelicals align themselves with the theologies of men to the neglect of God's clear instruction. As Evangelical theologians have delved ever deeper into compromise with the Liberals, their theologies have become increasingly dark and apostate. Yet, to the delight of Satan, too few recognize the apostasy that is there; since they will not accept the truth, they are being deluded into believing a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11; 2 Timothy 4:4).

[18] Vine's "eye-service."
[19] Vine's "Men-pleasers."

7. *With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:*

This is a parallel to Colossians 3:23, as we have already noted. The word *service* is from a verb form of *doulos*, and is the performance of duties by a slave – i.e., obedience.[20] It is interesting to notice that, although the matter at hand has to do with the physical work of a slave or employee, Paul emphasizes that such service is to be carried out as if it was for the Lord; our work ethic must reflect our relationship with the Lord. It is not enough to be busy doing things, they must be the right things and done in the right way – such as would please our Master, Jesus Christ. We see much activity within modern Christianity, but activity alone is not necessarily pleasing to the Lord, even when it is done in His Name. Jesus stated very clearly: "[21.] Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [*is doing* (present tense)] the will of my Father which is in heaven. [22.] Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? [23.] And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).[21] These workers of *iniquity* prophesied in the name of the Lord Jesus, although they were not servants of Christ; they cast demons out of people in the name of the Lord, yet they did not do the will of God; they did many wonderful works, but were not known by the Lord Whom they professed to serve. A classic modern-day example of someone who would fit this description is Benny Hinn. He claims to be a man of God, says that God has spoken to him, and claims to have a healing ministry, yet he has been found to be a fraud who lives a lavish lifestyle on the gifts of those who give in order to receive a blessing. If Hinn was a man of God, he would then live in obedience to the Word of God. Instead, he arrogantly presents himself as a dispenser of the Holy Spirit, yet he only dispenses false hopes, empty promises, and

[20] Friberg Lexicon.
[21] Strong's Online.

spiritual confusion. His "healings" have been proven to be lies, and his teachings are most often in contravention of Scripture; yet, within the Charismatic arm of the Evangelical community, he has a significant following. Hinn's work of service is to himself: he lives lavishly. He publicly and piously claims that none of the money given to his ministry goes to him personally – perhaps, but he is the primary beneficiary of everything that this money buys.

Benny Hinn's Malibu Mansion

By contrast, our service is to be done to the Lord, and not unto men. Jesus called the Pharisees to task because "all their works they do for to be seen of men" (Matthew 23:5). Jesus told the Jews of His day to do the things that the Pharisees taught, but they were not to follow their example; right teaching is not enough. Rather, "he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). The Pharisees of Jesus' day and the Benny Hinns of today love to be recognized by men; they love to enjoy the best of the best, and to be served and honored by men. Unlike the Pharisees, Jesus taught by word and example, and His example to us is clear: "… the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister …" (Matthew 20:28).

8. *Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether* he be *bond or free.*

Here is where the ears of those who promote a prosperity gospel will perk up. They would say, "See!! Whatever good you do, you will receive the same from the Lord in return." The Word of Faith movement, as they are known today, promotes a name-it-claim-it gospel that promises financial prosperity and health. The purveyors of this false gospel message are many.

Joel Osteen has been called the "Prosperity Gospel's Coverboy," and some of his sermon titles expose his thinking: "Enlarge Your Vision," "Holding onto Your Dreams," "How Valuable you are in God's Eyes," and "The Greatest Hindrance to Healing."[22] Joel says, "See the Bible says that we can grow in favor …. I believe one of the main ways that **we grow in favor is by declaring it**. It's not enough to just read it it's not enough to just believe it. **You've got to speak it out**. **Your words have creative power**. And one of the primary ways we release our faith is through our words. And there is a divine connection between you declaring God's favor and you seeing God's favor manifest in your life…You've got to give life to your faith by speaking it out" (errors in original; emphasis added).[23] In the Bible, we find the concept of growing in favor in just two cases: the first is with the boy Samuel ("And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men" [1 Samuel 2:26]); the second is in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ as a child ("And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man" [Luke 2:52]). In neither of these cases is there any mention of "declaring" the favor to make it happen; nor do we read anywhere of faith being given life by "speaking it out." Just before the *favor* with the Lord and men was declared, we are told that Samuel "grew before (or, with) the Lord" (1 Samuel 2:21), and that Jesus was subject (or, obedient) to Mary and Joseph (Luke 2:51). What Osteen has done is to move the focus from the Lord, and obedience to Him, onto something that **we** can do to make our lives grand. The promoters of the prosperity gospel shift the focus away from God and onto man; within their thinking, **we** hold the key to making our lives what we would really like them to be. They refuse to accept the truth that obedience to the Lord is the only expression of our faith that He finds acceptable – without works of obedience, our faith is dead (James 2:26; 1 John 2:3-5).

Bill Gothard has done something quite similar in his book, *The Power of Crying Out: When Prayer Becomes Mighty*. In this book, he declares: "For most of my life, I assumed that crying out was simply synonymous

[22] http://www.cultlink.com/ar/osteen.htm
[23] Ibid.

with prayer. I've come to be amazed, however, to see the specific purposes and potential for crying out—and how this is emphasized time and again in Scripture. God hears our prayers, and the Bible's testimony reveals that, in a special way, He particularly hears us when our requests are voiced *aloud*" (emphasis in original).[24] Gothard is ascribing power to our spoken words; that is not Biblical, and he is not far removed from Osteen's "your words have creative power." The Lord, on the night of His arrest, cried out to God the Father in great agony of soul, yet His prayer was that the will of the Father would be done. Jesus recognized that it was for this purpose that He came to earth, yet His humanity shuddered at the thought of the pain and degradation that He was about to endure. Gothard has made a hypothetical differentiation between prayers that are verbalized and prayers from the heart. Malachi, in his day, understood that God is not moved by our words: "Ye have wearied the LORD with your words" (Malachi 2:17).[25] Jesus said, "[6.] …when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. [7.] But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen *do*: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matthew 6:6-7). We are told "…the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26). It is clear from Scripture that voicing our prayers aloud will not enhance their power with God; within our finite frame, we do not know how we should pray, but the Spirit of God intercedes for us in ways that cannot be expressed in words.

Bill Gothard

[24] Bill Gothard, Power of Crying Out: When Prayer Becomes Mighty, p. 19.

[25] The context from verses 10-17 shows that the people were covering the altar of the Lord with their tears and were crying out – yet because they had disregard for the holiness of the Lord, He hearkened not to their cries. Gothard seeks to build a doctrine on this concept, yet the phrase "cried out" is used twice as many times in Scripture to refer to those who were crying out against the Lord rather than crying out to the Lord. Clearly, a shaky basis.

Joyce Meyer

Joyce Meyer says: "Why would He (God) want all of His people poverty stricken while all of the people that aren't living for God have everything? ... I think it's old religious thinking, and I believe the devil uses it to keep people from wanting to serve God" (errors in the original).[26] "Joyce Meyer is one of the most popular Christian personalities in the world, and her influence is growing rapidly. With sermons on receiving emotional healing, overcoming the past, freedom from condemnation, and more, Joyce Meyer has grown from an associate pastor at a local St. Louis church to a world wide speaker, author, and conference host."[27] Her charisma has been magnetic for many, as she has come from an abusive past and a failed first marriage. Clearly, her amazing "ministry" has grown beyond the Word of God, for she fails to adhere to the restrictions that God has placed upon a godly woman. She has embraced much of the teaching of the Word-Faith movement, and has openly declared herself to be sinless: "… I didn't stop sinning until I finally got it through my thick head I wasn't a sinner anymore. And the religious world thinks that's heresy and they want to hang you for it. But the Bible says that I'm righteous and I can't be righteous and be a sinner at the same time ... All I was ever taught to say was, 'I'm a poor, miserable sinner.' I am not poor, I am not miserable and I am not a sinner. That is a lie from the pit of hell. That is what I was and if I still am then Jesus died in vain" (errors in the original).[28] Yet God declares in 1 John 1:8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Who is telling the truth? Despite such contradictions, Joyce remains very popular among Evangelicals today.

Robert Tilton has openly declared: "Being poor is a sin, when God promises prosperity."[29] Gloria Copeland, wife of the famed Kenneth Copeland, has learned her husband's heresy well; she is quoted as saying:

[26] http://www.rickross.com/reference/tv_preachers/tv_preachers4.html
[27] http://www.christnotes.org/_joyce-meyer.asp
[28] http://www.pfo.org/wan-star.htm
[29] John MacArthur, Charismatic Chaos, p. 285.

"Give $10 and receive $1000; Give $1000 and receive $100,000 … Give one airplane and receive one hundred times the value of the airplane. … In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal."[30] Actually this passage (Mark 10:29-30) comes on the heels of Jesus' teaching on the spiritually crippling power of riches, and Gloria conveniently overlooks the requirement that all of these things (house, brethren, sisters, mothers, children and lands – but no mention of money) must be left for His sake, and she omits the promise of persecution that will come with following Jesus. Leaving behind what Jesus calls us to forsake is very different from giving $10 to the Copeland's "ministry" and expecting to receive $1000 in return. What Gloria doesn't clarify is that this will only work if you're in their type of "ministry" where you can keep the masses confused by spiritually sounding rhetoric, and gullible enough to continue sending money in hopes of receiving the multiplied return.

Our verse is not a loose promise that the Word of Faith people can claim as another evidence for their selfish lifestyles. This verse is the latter part of a longer sentence that includes an admonition to work faithfully for those over us, in the same way that we work for Christ. We are to do the will of God from the heart, and to carry our service out as to the Lord. The focus of this passage is service done for mankind, but done as unto God; whatever we do, we are to do it for the Lord. This calls for a heart that is right with God, attuned to His Word, and whose focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of the faith (Hebrews 12:2). The Word of Faith people have done violence to the Word of God through promoting heresy and focusing on the prosperity and health of our present lives. Paul's charge was to "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2). Paul calls us to direct our attention heavenward, to the Lord; the Word of Faith heretics have their focus on what is earthly, and create all kinds of systems to ensure that they are the beneficiary of all that they want. God's words to Abraham were "I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1). The Word of Faith people endeavor with all of their might to make God their genie; it is as if God is there to serve them and provide for their every wish. They

[30] http://zedekiahlist.com/cgi-bin/quotes.pl?&id=30393647.

have made merchandise of God; they have bottled, formulated, and tabulated a god of their own imaginings in order to dupe the gullible into supporting their lavish lifestyles.

Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians was "be not weary in well doing" (2 Thessalonians 3:13) – don't become exhausted in living Biblically. Our verse provides us with the assurance that our labors for the Lord are not in vain; we may not reap physical rewards in this life (as some claim), but we can be assured that the Lord will reward us for all that we do for Him (Matthew 7:21). We can become *weary* in living in obedience to God's Word (*weary* is in the subjunctive mood, making it a real possibility), and may even wonder why we strive to remain strong in the faith when no one seems to care, or have any regard, for what we are doing. Yet we are assured that the Lord is aware of the sacrifices that we make in order to serve Him faithfully, and such labor will not go without His reward – this promise is extended to everyone who serves the Lord from the heart.

9. *And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.*

After taking the time to explain that the service of the *servant* is to be as if to the Lord, the Spirit of God now addresses those who find themselves in the role of lords and masters. The summation is that they are to do the same as the servants; they are to serve those who work for them, and do it with diligence as unto the Lord. "Servant leadership" became a popular phrase in the 1970s in the leadership world through the writings of Robert K. Greenleaf, who wrote a book with that title. Although many saw this as a radically new approach to leadership, they would have only had to look at our passage, or recall the words of Jesus, to realize that this is not new. Jesus, the Creator of the universe, came to this earth "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a

ransom for many [*all*]" (Matthew 20:28).[31] His specific instruction to His disciples was: "[25.] Ye know that the princes [*rulers*] of the Gentiles exercise dominion over [*rule over*] them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. [26.] But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister [*diakonos*, a servant]; [27.] And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant [*doulos*, a slave] …" (Matthew 20:25-27).[32] Jesus provided us with instruction **and** His example!

When Jesus sent His messages to the elders of the seven specified assemblies in Asia through the Apostle John, there were two who drew special instruction in this regard. The elder at Ephesus received the Lord's commendation for his hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitanes (which Christ also hates), and the elder at Pergamos was criticized for his tolerance of the teachings of the Nicolaitanes (Revelation 2:6, 15). Who are these mysterious people about whom we hear nothing else? Many hold that they propagated the doctrine of Balaam, advocating a mixing of pagan practices with Christianity. However, a close reading of Revelation 2:15 makes it abundantly clear that the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was tolerated in addition to the error of the doctrine of Balaam, and so it is not the same thing. The two primary Greek words that form *Nicolaitanes* are *nikos* (which means victory, or to utterly vanquish[33]) and *laos* (which means people): so the word means "victors over the people."[34] Jesus exposed the authority that the scribes and Pharisees held over the common people. He told the multitudes and His disciples to do what the Pharisees said, but not to follow their example (Matthew 23:3); rather, "all ye are brethren" (Matthew 23:8), and "he that is greatest among you shall be your servant" (Matthew 23:11; see also 1 Peter 5:1-5). We saw earlier (Ephesians 5:21) that one of the signs of the filling of the Spirit of God is submitting to one another. Pause to consider today's Evangelical churches: most have a man who provides the leadership – sometimes

[31] The Greek word *pollon* (as used here) can be either exclusive (*many*) or inclusive (*all*), with context being the determining factor. In this case, passages such as 1 John 2:2 make it clear that this is an inclusive use, and must be understood as *all*. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, in One Volume, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, "*polloi.*"
[32] Friberg Lexicon.
[33] Strong's Online.
[34] See Ephesians 5:21 for a more in-depth explanation.

almost independently, other times through several leaders (if the congregation is large enough). The responsibilities have been defined, and it is generally understood that those who fill the leadership roles are the clergy, and the rest of the people are the laity. The clergy are those who are ordained to carry out the religious service of the group (whatever that might mean); the laity are all of the followers of the religion who are NOT clergy.[35] There is a division here, a distinct separation between the clergy and the laity. This is clearly evident within most Evangelical churches today where spiritual interpretation is left up to the experts: the pastors and theologians; consequently, the common people are becoming increasingly ignorant of the Scriptures, and the gap between the clergy and the laity is ever widening.

We are rapidly returning to a situation where the general populace leaves the interpretation of the Bible to those who are deemed to be more capable, or worthy. The average Evangelical is ripe for being deceived by charlatans who bear the title "pastor." The independent Baptist churches take great pride in their exaltation of the pastor, and he is often given full control, even though there is no basis for this within Scripture. To quote from their writings: "One can't obey God without obeying his pastor, according to Hebrews 13. One can't obey God without properly submitting himself to the authority of a born-again, independent, fundamental, premillennial preacher."[36] This is heresy in that it finds no basis within Scripture – if God didn't say it, then how can we? Actually, what we do see from Jesus' words is that this is how things are **not** to be within the assembly of believers. What amazes me is that all of these self-proclaimed Bible-believing, fundamental men, with all of their learning and doctorates, still cannot understand that 1) they are twisting Hebrews 13 for their own purposes, and 2) there is no Biblical **position** within the assembly called "pastor." The clergy-laity concept, including the title "pastor," came into being from the earliest roots of the Roman Catholic Church – the catalyst for a massive apostasy. As much as these very same men lament the heretical error of the Catholic Church, they have grasped

[35] Encarta Dictionary, "clergy," and "laity."
[36] Larry Brown, Blowing the Whistle on the Wolves, p. 9.

onto this particular error and cling to it with all of their might. As early at AD 190, we are told that Victor, the bishop of Rome, endeavored to force his views onto those who disagreed with him, upon threat of having them excommunicated from the fellowship.[37] It is very evident that there were powerful clergy already in place by this time, fewer than a hundred years after the Apostle John penned the warnings against this very practice in the book of Revelation! Yet, what do we find today? For the most part, all churches have succumbed to the temptation of following the Nicolaitane pattern that was firmly established by Rome.

It is clear, from our passage alone, that lording it over others is not to be; those who are masters and lords in this life are also to leave off *threatening*. Threats, whether spoken, or unspoken, are the way that some retain their control, and this is often part of a "pastor's" bag of tricks to keep "his" people in line, as well. Even Victor, Bishop of Rome, used the promise of excommunication as his stick to silence all dissenters – a tool that is still used by modern-day charlatans posing as "God's pastor" for His people. This is to have no place within our thinking, for the Master of both lord and servant is in heaven, and we are accountable to Him Who shows no partiality.

10. *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*

The word *finally* does not mean "at last," nor is it used as a preacher's signal that the end is in sight. Rather, the Greek phrase *to loipon* (shown as *finally*) means *from now on* or *henceforth*,[38] which means that what follows, being addressed broadly to *my brethren*, signals a change in subject. Paul has just dealt with the marriage relationship, and has specifically spoken to children, fathers, servants and masters; now he will

[37] Eusebius Pamphilius, Church History (pdf edition), Philip Schaff, editor, p. 375.
[38] Friberg Lexicon.

deal with something that everyone can take to heart: how to be *strong in the Lord*.

Strong is in the imperative mood (it is a command), but it is also in the passive voice, which means that we cannot do the strengthening – it must come from God.[39] Typically, when we think of a command, it is a call to action, and **we** must do something; however, the passive voice tells us that the action is **not** for us to do. Therefore, how are we to understand this? Although *becoming strong* or *becoming enabled* is an action that comes from the Lord (passive), it is also evident that we must be willing for the Lord to carry this out in us (imperative). Again, we find evidence that no one will enter the glories of heaven against their will; we are created in the image of God, which means that we can reason and make choices based upon our assessment of a matter. Jesus openly declared: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth [*is doing* (present tense)] the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21);[40] *heaven* is **only** open to those who are living in obedience to the Father! Paul explained it this way to the Romans: *"Consequently,* [there is] *now no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus, who are living, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit"* (Romans 8:1, literal).[41] No one under God's condemnation will enter heaven; it is those who are *in Christ* **and** who are living in submission to the Spirit of God who are **no longer** subject to God's condemnation. Our willing compliance (it is a command in our verse) with the Spirit opens the door for the Lord to strengthen us in Himself (the passive voice).

This is the secret to our ability to face life; it is the Lord Who will see us through, and not our abilities. "But they that wait upon [*who are waiting for*] the LORD shall renew *their* strength [it is conferred by God] …" (Isaiah 40:31a).[42] God's words to Paul were: "…my strength is made perfect [*is being made complete*] in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9a);[43] the Lord uses our weakness as an opportunity to show forth His strength

[39] Strong's Online.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[42] BDB.
[43] Friberg Lexicon.

through us. One of Paul's prayers for the Ephesian believers was that they would be "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). This is part of the sanctifying work of the Spirit of God in us that will mold us into the image of our Savior, and it fits well with the admonition to *endure hardness*, or to bear afflictions (2 Timothy 2:3).[44] "Watch ye, stand fast [*be steadfast*, persevere] in the faith, quit you like men [*be brave*], be strong [*be strengthened* (also passive)]" (1 Corinthians 16:13).[45] It is clear that the Ecumenical crowd does not read the Scriptures carefully, or, perhaps, they read this from the perspective of their skewed view of the Christian faith, which is really no faith at all. Paul calls on Timothy to "hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me …" (2 Timothy 1:13). To be a Biblical Christian is a call to defensive warfare (as we will see); we are in a battle that knows no "time-outs": *and even all who are desiring to live in a godly manner in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (2 Timothy 3:12, literal).[46]

After Joshua was given the leadership of the children of Israel, the Lord instructed him to be strong (Joshua 1:6-9). However, from the word of the Lord to Joshua, you will notice in the midst of these numerous commands to "be strong," that God's purpose is for Joshua to "observe to do according to all the law." The admonition in our verse is to be strengthened in the Lord; this is the same instruction that God gave to Joshua – we are to be strong according to the teachings of the Scriptures, the Word of the Lord to us. Yet, among Evangelicals today, we hear much encouragement (in the form of empty pep talks), but little instruction – this is unbalanced. Unless the two (encouragement and instruction) are given equal weight, we are simply being duped.

Men like Rick Warren and Joel Osteen provide motivating speeches of positive platitudes, but they are based on the psychological reasoning of man, and not the Word of God. *"17. Now I am imploring you, brethren, be watching for those who are causing divisions and offenses without regard for the teaching that you did learn, and turn away from them; 18. for such*

[44] Friberg Lexicon.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

as these, our Lord Jesus Christ are not serving, but their own desire and through deceptively favorable words and flattery, they are completely deceiving the hearts of the unsuspecting" (Romans 16:17-18, literal).[47] Note: *the teaching that you did learn* is the Word of God; Paul is warning that there will be those who will endeavor to draw us away from God's Word into their way of thinking (*divisions*); they will present persuasive instruction that is **not** completely in agreement with the Scriptures – it's not that their teachings are in direct contradiction to the Bible, but they are more intent on defending their philosophy than presenting God's truth.

As with all teaching, we are to take it to the Standard (God's Word) and evaluate it carefully; it is during this essential process that it will be discovered that the truth has been carelessly handled. Paul has warned us concerning men like Warren and Osteen (and there are many others). It is not a popular thing to stand in opposition to such men; yet we are not called to seek popularity, but to "hold fast the form of sound words" that we have in the Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:13) – if we are holding fast to God's truth, then we will not be separated from it by smooth words. Paul recognized that not everyone who spoke of Christ was His, and he also warned us about such people. "[18] For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: [19] Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame [they glory in what should cause them shame], who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:18-19). These men and their "ministries" are earthly focused, and they seek to do only those things that will permit their work to flourish (pragmatism) – which, in turn, serves to increase their willingness to accommodate error. This is becoming increasingly evident in the works of Warren and Osteen, but there is probably no greater example of this than in the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) denomination that is focused on serving a form of Christianity that accommodates the particular lifestyles of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community. Those involved with the Toronto MCC were "key players in the legal action that ultimately

[47] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

brought same-sex marriage to Canada."[48] First Timothy 6:3-5 warns us about what our attitude is to be toward such: we are to *withdraw* from them, to have no part with them.

11. *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*

This begins a section on the armor of God that we are to wear. *Put on* comes from the same Greek word as used in Ephesians 4:24 regarding the *new man*, except that, in this case, it is in the imperative mood – it is a command! Herein is the means for being made strong in the Lord; this is the key to enduring. *Whole armor* comes from a Greek word (*panoplia*) that gave rise to our modern word *panoply*, and means "a full suit of armor," or, more generally, a covering that protects.[49] However, this is not just any suit of armor, it is made by God. From time-to-time, we hear of protective gear that soldiers take into battle that fails the test, resulting in injury, or death. This is armor that has been prepared by God that will enable us to stand against the *wiles of the devil*; although this armor will not fail, we are warned to guard our hearts against falling away from the Lord (Hebrews 3:12).

This armor, if it is worn as it was intended, will enable us to stand against the trickery and craftiness of the devil. Today, it seems that most wars are being fought against an enemy who no longer follows the rules of engagement – they resort to guerilla tactics. The many suicide bombings are just such a matter; these people appear to be engaged in the normal activities of life, going about their business, yet, when the opportunity is there, they detonate the bomb that they are carrying, often with devastating results. They are using deceit in order to accomplish their mission of destruction; they do not present themselves as being soldiers, or the enemy, lest their mission should be discovered and ended. Likewise, Satan does not come to us as the devil, but as an angel of light

[48] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_Community_Church
[49] Strong's Online; Encarta Dictionary, "panoply."

(2 Corinthians 11:14); if he appeared to be as evil as he is, he would be avoided and would fail to accomplish his mission of destruction. He came to Eve as a delightful serpent with a feigned desire for Eve's good. When Satan came to Constantine and the bishops who were loyal to him, he appeared as a harbinger of unity for the Roman Empire, which meant greater peace for everyone (Christians had just come through a time of terrible persecution), but the price was apostasy from the Lord. As Constantine mixed pagan and Christian traditions, he gained a united people if they followed his lead; however, for the bishops to submit to him, they needed to disobey God's commands – a time of great apostasy followed. Christians who followed Constantine and the bishops found great peace in the formation of the Roman Catholic Church (a political and religious entity); those who remained true to the Lord faced a persecution that continued for centuries. When Satan came to the leaders of the New Evangelical movement, it was with the good that could be done through this new approach to Christianity. What could be better than to dialogue with the Liberals, for thereby they could hear the good news of salvation. What harm could there be in revisiting some of those controversial doctrines? If it was possible to add to the fold by making some minor, virtually irrelevant, adjustments, wasn't that a good thing? Yet the result was a deepening apostasy for those who once may have had an opportunity to hear the truth, and repent. Satan may present himself as an angel of light, but it is a thin disguise over the blackness of hell. If he presented himself as being evil and explained the destruction that would come to the faith of many, the bishops under Constantine's spell, as well as the leaders of the New Evangelical movement, would have avoided him. By all accounts, Constantine never converted to Christianity, he simply found a means of uniting and strengthening his Empire. By failing to uphold the Word of God as the Standard against which everything must be measured, the 4th-century bishops, and the 20th-century New Evangelical leaders, succumbed to the *wiles of the devil*; the "good" that they perceived came at tremendous spiritual cost to those who followed their lead.

The command here is to *put on the whole armor of God*. It is not enough to put some of it on; unless all of the pieces of armor are worn, there will be exposure to harm. The promise of protection from the enemy of our souls comes only through all of the armor. God, Who knows our foe better than we, has prepared effective protection for us. However, for the most part, we often fail to recognize that we are in a spiritual battle; we hear such an emphasis placed upon unity among professing Christians that anyone who advocates Biblical separation is looked upon as being unnecessarily narrow and divisive. Prairie Bible Institute (now Prairie College) is an example of these New Evangelical shifts: their motto used to be "Disciplined Soldiers for Christ," then it became "To Know Christ and Make Him Known," and, more recently, for a time, it was "Building a Passionate Body of Christ." However, the last was only for a short time, they have now gone back to the previous motto in a feigned attempt to appear to be more Biblical – having removed *Bible* from their name, they had to do something. It is clear that, in their minds, the battle is over, and they are busy building relationships – they may have changed their motto to sound more Biblical, but they have done nothing to undo the significant compromises that they have made through the years. Their actions declare their capitulation to the New Evangelical philosophy! However, the Word of God, which is the same forever (Psalm 119:89, 160), openly declares that we are in a battle, and it will not be over until God has pronounced the final judgment on Satan and all who follow him. We are to be engaged in the spiritual conflict that is being waged, but most professing Christians today are AWOL – they have checked out of the battle, cast their armor aside, and are engaged in a friendly dialogue with the enemy. They have so modified the terms of warfare that most of those who were once the enemies, are now their allies. The late Robert Schuller openly declared that if he came back in 100 years and found his descendants to be Muslims, that it wouldn't bother him.[50] This is the man after whom Rick

Bill Hybels

[50] http://inplainsite.org/html/robert_schuller.html.

Warren and Bill Hybels have patterned their ministries; it has been evidenced that much of what Rick Warren writes comes almost directly from the musings of Schuller.[51] There is little wonder that Bill Hybels had no qualms about turning his pulpit over to a Muslim to explain his faith to those before him, or that Rick Warren would welcome Barack Obama, who promotes so much that is unbiblical. In Saddleback's 2007 AIDS Summit conference, Warren gave the podium to Hillary Clinton, who received a standing ovation from those present; five other presidential candidates spoke via video.[52] Clearly, both Hybels and Warren are AWOL (or, more likely, they have never been truly born again), and yet their following among Evangelicals is huge and growing, but then, most Evangelicals are not born again either – despite their claims. *The Church Report*, in their 2007 rating of the most influential Christians in America, ranked Hybels and Warren number 3 and 16 respectively. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many **false prophets** are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1); "beware of **false prophets**, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). A *prophet* is literally someone who *fore tells events* (the *pro* prefix is of time) and/or one who *tells forth* God's message publicly (*pro* prefix is of place, before or in front of).[53] With the book of Revelation, there is good reason to believe that the *foretelling* is ended, and that the *forth-telling* of God's message is the role of the prophet today. A *false prophet*, therefore, is someone who *forth-tells* a message that might appear to be the truth, but in reality, he does not speak for God and proclaims the lies of the devil – a wolf disguised as a sheep!

In Ephesians 4:24 we read that we are to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." This "new man," created by God, is to be *put on* so that our behavior, or manner of living,

[51] Warren Smith, Deceived on Purpose p. 52.
[52] http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=58959
[53] Friberg Lexicon.

will agree with the new nature that God has given to us (2 Corinthians 5:17). We have not followed the light within, as the New Age movement advocates, but through repentance from our sin, God makes us new and we *put on the new man* that He has created in *righteousness* and *holiness*. This *new man*, this new life of holiness, comes through the planting of the Seed, the Word of God (Romans 10:17); yet we must be alert to the condition of the soil into which the Seed falls. Jesus made it clear that not all soils will permit the Seed to flourish to maturity (Luke 8:5-15). He said that when the Seed is sown, some of it falls by the wayside – where the Word is heard, but the devil snatches it away before they can believe and be saved (v.12) – the Word is taken away before it can take root in their hearts. Some Seed fell among the rocks, and the Word is received with joy; they are believing for a while, but when a trial or temptation comes along, they fall away or depart from the faith (v.13). Notice that the Word brought life forth; this was not a false profession but a genuine indication of new life, yet because the soil of the heart was shallow (rocky), there was no endurance. Jesus declared that it is the one who faithfully endures unto the end who will be saved (Matthew 24:13); there is an endurance to which we are called that we must not miss lest we fail in the time of trial (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:3). Some Seed fell among the thorns or weeds, and, again, there is life – the Seed brings forth evidence of life and growth. However, when these go about their daily activities, the new life from the Word of God is choked out by the care and pleasures of daily living (v.7, 14). The word that Jesus used for *choke* (v.7) is the same Greek word as He used in verse 33 of the same chapter to describe what happened to the pigs that ran into the lake; the pigs died, and so this new life dies through strangulation by the cares and pleasures of the world. Modern Evangelicals would seem to advocate that the new life and worldly pleasures can grow together and coexist in the same heart, yet it is clear from Jesus' words that this is a lie, a deception of the devil. The pleasures and cares of life will choke the new life out, if they are given the opportunity; the soil of the heart is not too shallow in this case, but it is filled with weeds. The final soil is good and well prepared to permit the Seed to grow to bring forth fruit in keeping with the Word of God

(Galatians 5:22-23). Notice Luke 8:15 – the fruit will be brought forth *with patience* (*hupomone* – endurance or perseverance!).[54] This *soil* does not produce fruit without effort; if we love the Lord, then we **must** be living in obedience to His commands (John 14:15). James tells us: "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith worketh patience [*hupomone*]" (James 1:2-3).[55] Trials, temptations, and testings are not popular themes among Evangelicals today; they are more content with the positive-only messages of the charlatans who profess to be purveyors of the truth. However, we must consider the reception that the Lord received from the religious rulers of His day, and His reminder that "if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). Paul understood this fully, for he affirmed this to Timothy: *and even all who are desiring to live in a godly manner in Christ Jesus will be persecuted* (2 Timothy 3:12, literal).[56]

However, the theme among Evangelicals today is unity and brotherhood – we are all one family; they have set the Word of God aside and joined themselves to those who profess a Christianity of their own making – the words may be the same but the meanings have been changed. The wolves have learned to speak "sheep" well enough to dupe the unsuspecting into believing a lie (Romans 16:18), and only a very few have a desire for the truth, and find it (Matthew 7:14). The devil cares not if he snatches the Word away before it can take root, or if he brings a trial that causes the shallow roots to fail, or if the new life is simply choked out through the distractions of this life – the end is the same. When we have heard the Word, we must be diligent and guard against "an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12) lest we become one with those who are apostate.

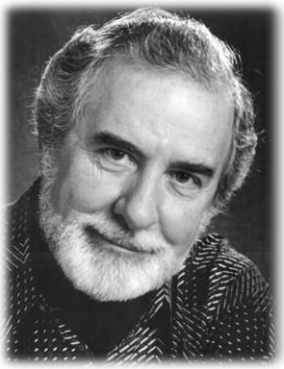
There is an interesting word picture given to us here. We are to put on the full armor of God so that we are able to *stand* against the subtleties of the devil. This is not what comes to mind when we think of soldiers

[54] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.
[55] Strong's Online.
[56] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

dressed in their gear; they typically do not *stand* to fend off the attack of the enemy, but, rather, are active in launching an offensive against the adversary. The word *stand* (*histemi*) carries with it the concept of steadfastness.[57] We see that endurance plays a part in our armed posture – we are to be immovable; the Lord has called us to persevere, but He has also provided us with the protection in order to do so. Paul listed many things that cannot separate us from the Lord: "[38.] For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39.] 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" (Romans 8:38-39). This is often quoted as being evidence that our salvation is eternally secure. However, this is actually proof of our ability to *stand* and to persevere if we are committed to wearing the whole armor of God. All of these things that Paul cites are **outside** of us, and the Apostle Paul names all of these things that are **not able** to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. There is **nothing** that can come against us that is able to cause us to fall; God has provided us with all of the protection that we will ever need against anything that might come at us, the provision for enduring has been secured in Christ (John 10:27-28). However, that is not the end of the story; we have been warned: "Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [*apistia*, no faith], in departing [*to become apostate*] from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).[58] This warning is given to *brethren*, which makes it abundantly clear that the armor of God will not protect us from an *evil heart of unbelief*; God did not design His armor to protect from a deceitful heart. A soldier who goes to war and, through fear, becomes a deserter, cannot complain that his armor failed him; it may well have protected him from enemy fire, shrapnel, and all sorts of external forces, but it was not designed to provide protection from a coward's heart.

Charles Templeton is an example of one who professed faith in Christ, and then fell away. He cofounded Youth for Christ with Billy Graham, held evangelistic crusades, had a weekly Christian television broadcast on

[57] Vine's "stand."
[58] Strong's Online; Gingrich Lexicon.



Charles Templeton

CBS for years, and founded a church in Toronto that is still there today. However, after attending Princeton Theological Seminary, he said that he was now an agnostic, and in 1995 he published a book, *A Farewell to God: My Reasons for Rejecting the Christian Faith*.[59] The protection of the armor of God was more than adequate for all external enemies, but Templeton succumbed to an evil heart of unbelief and turned away from God. How well we need to ponder the caution: "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

12. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high* places.

We now find the reason for wearing the whole armor of God; our warfare is not with man. There is an anomaly here. The Spirit of God, Who elsewhere used the phrase *flesh and blood*, actually says *blood and flesh* here – it is the translators who chose to switch them. Why, in four other instances of where this phrase appears in the Bible, would the Spirit have the order as *flesh and blood*, but in this case choose to reverse them? That is an interesting question to which I have found no adequate answer.

The understanding is that we are not in conflict with men; this is not a physical battle in which we are engaged, even though we may often face a physical foe. Rather, we are in conflict with *principalities*, which speaks of primacy (being first), or rule (dominion, sovereignty).[60] Keeping in mind that these are not the authorities in the physical realm (**not** *blood and flesh*), they are understood to be spirit beings (angels). Revelation 12:9 tells us of the devil and his angels who were cast out of the presence of God, and Peter says that they are now bound with "chains of darkness"

[59] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Templeton
[60] Friberg Lexicon

(2 Peter 2:4). Their bonds are not of restraint from movement, but rather are of blackness; they spurned the light and glory of God and are now bound with the absence of light. Yet we are warned in 2 Corinthians 11:14-15 that, to us, their blackness may appear as righteousness, as these servants of Satan are able to transform themselves into ministers of righteousness. How important it is to practice the Lord's call to separation and wise judgment, lest we should be deceived by those who appear to be righteous, but do the bidding of the devil. It is against these angels, who are bound by blackness, that we wrestle; we are dependent upon the Spirit of God to discern their *blackness* under a veneer of feigned righteousness. If we could completely understand this hidden darkness and the wolf that comes to us as a sheep, we would embrace the narrowness of God's calling and the Biblical separation that leads to our sanctification. There would be no hesitancy in exercising Biblical discernment to condemn that which is not in accordance with Scripture. In the call of God to holiness (2 Timothy 1:9), we recognize that not all who profess to be Christians are actually born-again; His calling is very specific, and we are to walk worthy of that calling (Ephesians 4:1). Within Biblical separation, we find sanctuary from the alluring philosophies of wolves; by exercising discernment through the Spirit, we will be able to identify those who proclaim Truth mixed with error, and avoid them (1 John 4:1; Romans 16:17).

The Greek word translated as *powers* (*exousia*, authority) speaks of the freedom to choose, and the right and ability to act.[61] In the truest sense, this is applicable only to God, but, within our context, it is applied to the spiritual forces that are in opposition to God and who are bound by blackness. This ascribes to them the ability to use any scheme, and any deception, to accomplish their wicked goals. Our enemy, much of the time, will not be identifiable, for they wear the cloak of religion and education in an effort to intimidate and deceive.

However, there is more. We are also facing the *rulers of the darkness of this world*. Paul earlier reminded the Ephesians (and us) that "in time

[61] Strong's Online; Gingrich Lexicon.

past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience …" (Ephesians 2:2). Satan is the prince of this world, and it is his domain. "And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it" (Job 2:2). The Lord did not rebuke Satan for being out of his territory, for, since the sin of Adam, this has been his domain. Peter reminds us that we are to be clear-minded and alert, "because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour…" (1 Peter 5:8). Even though Satan's defeat was fixed at the cross, he is still on the rampage today. Yet our verse uses the word *rulers*, plural. We have already seen that *powers* speaks of those who do as they please, and, being cloaked with blackness, you can rest assured that the fallen angels are mavericks and not even necessarily under complete compliance to Satan, the prince of all demons. Anarchy would be the norm within the realm of utter darkness; they are fighting a losing battle (and know it), and so their tactics will demonstrate desperation. Each demon will be a *ruler* within its own right.

We are also wrestling against *spiritual wickedness in high* places, or in the heavenlies. Satan is called the accuser of the brethren: "[9.] And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. [10.] And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12:9-10). Satan will find fault wherever we give him opportunity, yet we read that the brethren "overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony …" (Revelation 12:11). If we better understood the unseen battle that is being waged, we would give greater heed to the commands to "be sober," and to "be vigilant." Our only hope is *in Christ*, the often repeated phrase throughout the earlier parts of this epistle.

This is a brief consideration of the foe whom we are facing. We are finite creatures who, too often, live as though the visible world is all that

there is. Here we are reminded that we are not fighting a physical enemy, but a spiritual one; our foe is none other than Satan and his myriad of demons – all bound up with blackness. It is only the full armor of God that protects us against the attacks of this enemy; we have no protection within ourselves. How contrary this is to modern philosophy that teaches everyone to look within for light to guide. Jesus spoke of this light: "[22.] The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single [healthy, clear], thy whole body shall be full of light. [23.] But if thine eye be evil [unhealthy, cloudy], thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-23).

When Jesus knew that His time was come, He "stedfastly set his face" to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51); there was a determination to accomplish what He had come to earth to do. He had a singleness of purpose, and resolute determination to complete the task at hand. Within Satan, we see restlessness, a perpetual roaming about throughout the earth. There is only one way to have a *single* eye, and that is to have God as our focus (Hebrews 12:2), anything else will only be countless distractions, demonstrating the restlessness that comes from Satan. Jesus said "the light of the body is the eye," so if our eyes are focused on Him, then our body is full of light, but if our eyes are distracted by all of the blackened ploys of Satan to keep us looking elsewhere, what a great darkness will fill us. Remember, Satan and his minions are bound up with blackness; we are either for the Lord Jesus or for Satan (Matthew 12:30). There is no middle ground where we can go as it suits us, and there is no fence to straddle – it is either black or white; there is no gray. Evangelicals have mixed the white of God's Truth with the black of Satan so as to promote a spiritually deadly, gray potion called Ecumenical unity. Charles Colson summarized this Ecumenical error the best: "Unity is the essence of the church. To be one with one another as Jesus is one with the Father is a matter of biblical obedience."[62] This error first appeared in Colson's book, *The Body*, in 1992, and, eleven years later, he reiterated the same error in his updated book, *Being the Body*. Our *unity* is accomplished ***in Christ***, not by

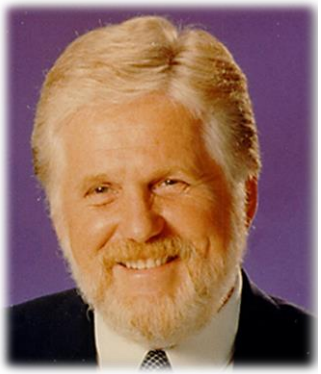
[62] Charles Colson, Being the Body, p. 75.

embracing those who calls themselves "Christian" and making room for their error. Truly, it is a matter of *Biblical obedience* (Colson had those words right), but it is obedience to the Word of God that calls us to separate from those who have deviated from His Truth even if they still call themselves Christians (Romans 16:17).

13. *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Wherefore – for this reason, because of what was just outlined for us in the previous verse – we are to *take* the whole armor of God; *take* is in the imperative mood, i.e., it is a command![63] After explaining to us that the foe whom we face is not physical, but spiritual (of the most devious sort), we are again admonished to take the protection that God has prepared. This is a reiteration of verse 11 – and carries the same emphasis to take the ***whole*** armor of God and then to ***stand***.

I am reminded of Jude 9 – "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." A mighty angel from the presence of God did not accuse Satan, but deferred to the Lord – this is a demonstration of *standing*, rather than taking the offensive. Yet we find some Evangelicals today embracing what they call *spiritual warfare*, where there is a direct, sought-after confrontation with Satan. John Wimber and his Vineyard movement are those who advocate confronting the Satanic powers directly; Neil Anderson, on the other hand, and those like him, have created a more systematic process for challenging the devil's influence. Yet, both speak of spiritual warfare and advocate a confrontational approach with Satan.



John Wimber

[63] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon.

Wimber founded what has been called the "hyper-charismatic" Vineyard movement.[64] He and his group were influential in the "laughing revival," as well as the very popular, more mainline, Promise Keepers movement; despite his *hyper-charismatic* connections, Wimber participated in teaching church-growth classes at Fuller Seminary.[65] He sat on the board of the Renovaré, a group founded by Richard Foster, who is heavily involved in new age and Eastern mysticism under the guise of spiritual formation thinking.[66] To add to this, Wimber never lost touch with the Roman Catholics, thereby truly demonstrating his "hyper-Ecumenical" stance. Out of this conglomeration of hyper-charismatic experience, church-growth philosophy, Eastern mysticism and Ecumenism, comes a man who openly confronts Satan? Because of his clear violation of Scripture (on so many fronts), it seems that he and his movement would be a means of bringing people under Satan's control rather than freeing them from it. Satan may not be omniscient, but he does learn from his mistakes. I would suspect that he learned something from his experience with the sons of Sceva, who thought to cast demons out through the name of "Jesus whom Paul preacheth" (Acts 19:13-17). In this case, the evil spirit declared that he knew Jesus and Paul but not them, and he turned on them, resulting in the fear of God falling on the people of the area and the name of Jesus being magnified. Such an attack proved to be counter-productive to Satan's schemes, so you can rest assured that he would not do that again. So even though Wimber and the Vineyard movement are not grounded in the Word of God, the results of their actions "against" Satan will not result in the same response as that drawn by the sons of Sceva – they may even experience feigned success that Satan will use to delude the unsuspecting and draw them away from God's Word. We are called to be discerning of error, and the Vineyard group is fraught with it, therefore we are to identify them as such and avoid them (Romans 16:17).

[64] https://faithinconsistent.wordpress.com/2011/09/08/john-wimber-is-satan/.
[65] https://vineyardusa.org/about/john-wimber/.
[66] http://www.mediaspotlight.org/pdfs/RENOVARE.pdf

Neil Anderson

Neil Anderson, on the other hand, has taken a more conservative and clinical approach to the matter of spiritual warfare. He has laid out a seven-step process that, if followed carefully, will result in freedom from demonic forces (so he says). This includes such things as renouncing any involvement in occultic or false religious practices (whether actually or only possibly, by you or anyone in your family), extending forgiveness to others who have hurt you, to God, and to yourself (this is a decidedly psychotherapeutic concept that finds no basis in Scripture), and praying a prayer to break the generational demonic hold that Satan may have on you through the errors made by previous generations.[67] In coming to his conclusions, Anderson has openly sought to integrate psychology and theology,[68] by which he identifies demonic influence as the primary cause of sin. He has no regard for the fallen nature that we inherit from Adam, which is still a part of every Christian; in Anderson's view, Christians no longer have a sin nature. He takes exception to Christians being called sinners saved by grace; we are to think of ourselves as saints who occasionally sin (because of demonic influence). By attributing any committed sins to the devil, Anderson ensures for himself a steady stream of seekers; however, his saying that we no longer have a sin nature does not make it so.

One of his books is titled *The Bondage Breaker*, yet we have personally witnessed that those who become involved in this type of practice are perpetually bound. They are trapped in the cycle of repeating his method of release over and over – a process of constantly praying prescribed prayers in an effort to bring freedom. Every time you sin, you must repeat the prescribed procedure for banishing the devil from your life, which seems to be more of a bondage maker than a bondage breaker. His seven-step process, prescribed to remove the demonic influence as evidenced by

[67] http://www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?id=888&rc=1&list=multi
[68] Ibid.

sin, serves to replace 1 John 1:9 (at least in his mind). The ability of the Spirit of God to work is bound by a ritual, and freedom can never be realized because it is based upon a false premise. Rather than seeking deliverance from the power of sin through sanctification by the Spirit of God, Anderson strives to break the power of demons through ritualistic prayers and psychotherapeutic thinking. However, he does have influence among Evangelicals, and whole ministries have been formed around his way of thinking. The very fact that he seeks to draw psychotherapy and Christianity together should immediately alert us to his error. **Anytime you try to meld the philosophies of unregenerate men (psychotherapy) with the holy Scriptures, you can rest assured that the philosophical concepts will come out on top (Satan will do his utmost to ensure that this is the case) – drawing truth and error together only leaves you with error, because truth has been destroyed in the process! Thinking that such a mixture will work, is based on an elevation of man's thinking and a downgrading of God's Word – the foundation is man-oriented, hence man's philosophy (the error) will always dominate.** "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). The word translated as *spoil* (*sulagogeo*) literally means to *carry off as captive*, and hence to lead away from the truth, or to victimize.[69] Satan has become much more civilized and sophisticated in his approach of gaining the upper hand in the heart of man; we must beware (1 Peter 5:8)!

We are to take the full armor of God, *in order that we will be able to stand* [against the enemy] *in the evil day, and overcoming all, to stand* (literal).[70] The command of our verse is to *take to ourselves* the whole armor of God.[71] We are reminded that this is not a protection that we are able to generate within ourselves or for ourselves; this is a defense that

[69] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.
[70] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[71] Strong's Online.

has been prepared by God for us. However, this protective gear is not designed for an offensive attack against the spiritual enemies that we face; all of the pieces of armor are defensive. Herein is the error of men like Wimber and Anderson who seek to take offensive action against Satan in an effort to banish him from their lives. They view themselves as being sinless, and the sin that they do commit is the fault of the devil; therefore, if they could just banish the devil from their lives, then they could live their lives perfectly (in their minds, the sin nature that we all have disappeared when we were saved – contrary to Romans 7).[72] By holding a skewed view of who we are, and by actively engaging demons, they are opening themselves to the onslaught of the enemy in a way for which God's armor provides no protection. We are to resist [*anthistemi* or stand against (a different form of the same Greek word that is translated as *withstand* in our verse)] the devil (James 4:7),[73] and we are to flee from sin (1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11) – nowhere are we told to actively engage the enemy in battle. It is clear from our passage that the enemy will attack us with great cunning, and for that attack God has provided full protection. If Michael the archangel would not bring an accusation against Satan, why would we presume to attack Satan when God has told us to **STAND**?

14. *Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;*

We now have a listing of the various pieces that, together, form the full armor that God has provided for our protection. It is noteworthy, that even this begins with the command to *stand*! Because we are dealing with a spiritual enemy (not a physical one), and because God has provided us

[72] Yes, like most Evangelicals, they look upon salvation as a past action rather than a life-long journey of sanctification that will lead to a future salvation, if we remain faithful to the Lord (Matthew 24:13).
[73] Strong's Online.

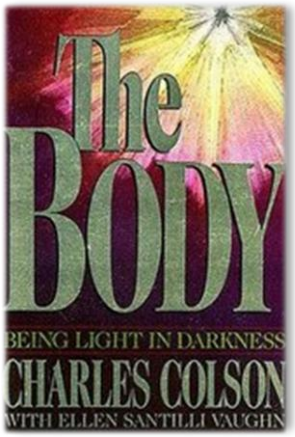
with armor for our complete protection, we are to *stand*! We are told that repetition is used for emphasis; by now it should be very clear – we are to **stand**! Wimber and Anderson, God's command is STAND, not attack!

The first piece of armor delineated is *truth*, which is to be worn about our loins, or from the waist to the hips. In keeping with the charges in verses 11 and 13, **we** are to put this piece of armor on; it will not be put on for us, **we have work to do**. The action, "having … girt," is something that we are to do; we are to wrap ourselves tightly in God's truth. *Gird* (*perizonnumi*) refers to tightening a belt at the waist in order to shorten a robe as preparation for activity – in this case, it literally means to *tighten the belt around the waist*.[74] God has made this available to us, but we must expend the effort to put this piece of the armor into place. We then come to the question that Pilate asked: "What is truth?" (John 18:38). If we are to wear truth for our protection, then we must know what it is. Jesus has given us the answer: in John 14:6, He identifies Himself as being the Truth – the only way to the Father. He also stated: "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17), which fits entirely with Jesus' identity as the *Logos of God* (Revelation 19:13); God has preserved His Word for us in the Scriptures – we, in turn, must be students of His Word. Yet as we have observed from time-to-time, today's average Evangelical is Biblically illiterate; they might speak of the armor of God, but most of them do not even understand the Truth, let alone put it on. To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote of the deception of unrighteousness that is in those who are perishing (2 Thessalonians 2:9-10); this is the same deception to which Eve surrendered in the Garden; she became convinced that taking the fruit was going to be beneficial (Genesis 3:6). In like manner, there are many today who hold to a form of godliness that is a deception, and so they remain in their sins. Even though they are within the professing Christian community, on that final day they will hear, "depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:23). Why are they perishing? *"Because the love of the truth they did not accept in order to be saved themselves"* (2

[74] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.

Thessalonians 2:10, literal).[75] Our very salvation, which the Lord will make available after this life, is dependent upon our attitude toward God's truth!

This is not a very popular concept today. We live in a day of pragmatism and tremendous accommodation. It is no longer sufficient to be tolerant of another person's beliefs, no matter how farfetched; we are to be accepting of everyone's philosophy of life, and we must permit the existence of conflicting forms of "truth." Today, the rights of the individual are of paramount importance, and the accepted question is not, "Is it right?", but rather, "Does it work?" What is true for one may, or may not, be true for another, but we are to permit each one to come to his own understanding of truth through whatever means works for him. The only thing that is offensive, within this "tolerant" context, is to say that the truth of the Word of God is objective and exclusive; mutual accommodation is all that is acceptable. Even within the community of Christianity, this pragmatic thinking has taken root; this is very evident within the Ecumenical movement – they are prepared to reduce their "truth" to a few broad statements in order to justify embracing those who believe error, yet they still want to be identified as Christians.



Within the modern unity movement, various approaches are taken to justify their actions. Chuck Colson declared: "True unity is not sought by pretending that there are no differences, as modern ecumenists have done, but by recognizing and respecting those differences, while focusing on the great orthodox truths all Christians share."[76] To put it another way, he is saying that there are differences and it is foolish not to acknowledge them, but there are also some orthodox truths held in common, and that must be our focus. Billy Graham stated: "I've found that my beliefs are essentially the same as those of orthodox

[75] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.
[76] Charles Colson, The Body. (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), p. 104.

Roman Catholics, for instance. … We only differ on some matters of later church tradition."[77] This is more of a "see-no-differences, hear-no-differences" approach – a desire to turn a blind eye to everything other than points of agreement. Then we have Focus on the Family, whose VP has declared that those who work with them "cast their theological distinctives aside in order to achieve a common objective."[78] Their approach to unity is to focus on a common goal and ignore everything else. Whatever tactic is taken, truth suffers at the hands of those who seek unity; yet how subtle their message can be, for despite their violation of the Scriptures on many hands, all three of these (Colson, Graham, and Focus on the Family) are held in high regard among Evangelicals. This is an indication of the failure of Evangelicals to embrace the truth of the Scriptures in purity (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

As we have already noted, the concept of girding the loins is used metaphorically to speak of being in readiness, of being prepared for what will come.[79] We are told that we are to have truth firmly bound around us; we are to **stand**, with truth securely in place. We must spend time in the Word of God so that His truth will become our protection; it is not enough to be familiar with theological thinking, we must know what God has said. Ecumenism holds much religious reasoning, but the truth of God lies tattered and torn in their hands. We must view the teachings of man through the grid of the Word of God – not the other way around. We must be watchmen, alert to the strategies of the enemy.

Then we are to put the *breastplate of righteousness* on; again, this is something that **we are to do**, it will not be done for us. The Greek word for "having on" is in the middle voice, which affirms clothing one's self.[80] This piece of armor covers from the neck to the navel, and protects both the front and back (in similar fashion to the truth). Therefore, we have righteousness fitly joined to truth in order to provide protection from the

[77] David W. Cloud, Evangelicals and Rome. (Oak Harbor, WA: Way of Life Literature, 1999), p. 84.
[78] https://www.incpu.org/UNChangeAgents-AlMohler-MarkDever.html.
[79] Vine's "loins."
[80] Strong's Online.

neck to the hips, in both the front and back. In Ephesians 4:24, we are commanded to "put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Job declared, "I put on righteousness, and it clothed me" (Job 29:14).

The righteousness of God will provide protection for our hearts from all things external. "[38.] For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, [39.] 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" (Romans 8:38-39). There is security from all external attacks if we are wearing the breastplate of God's righteousness – if we have put the *new man* on, whom God has created in righteousness. However, as we have said before, this armor does NOT provide protection from an evil heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:12). God is able to keep us if we are clothed in His armor; **we** must guard against unbelief turning our hearts away from Him.

15. *And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;*

With the armor in place for the protection of the torso, our attention is now drawn to our feet. The word *shod* (*hupodeo*) means to bind underneath, and most often referred to sandals being bound onto the feet.[81] Here we have the good news of salvation as the protection for our feet. The Psalmist declared: "When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up" (Psalm 94:18), recognizing that it was the Lord Who held him up and provided his stability. We have noted the repeated command to *stand*, and herein is the security for our stance: the readiness of the Gospel of peace is on our feet! We also noted the anomaly of donning armor only to stand, and here, as a part of it, is footwear that is the good news of peace. Even while wearing the armor of God

[81] Vine's "shod."

(symbolizing being prepared for battle) our stance is secured in the Gospel of *peace*.

Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34), and He goes on to declare the divisions that will come to families because of Him (the word *variance* in v. 35 means to split into two, or to sever[82]); even to the point that "a man's foes [hated, hostile – most often translated as *enemy*] *shall be* they of his own household" (v. 36). This is reiterated in Luke 12:51 – "suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division [a parting or dissension]." Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). If we consider 2 Timothy 3:12, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution," then it would seem that we will have opportunity to practice Jesus' words **if** we don the *new man* created in righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24). The security of our stance against the enemy of our souls is the Gospel of peace, the good news of Jesus; this is the Gospel as we find it in the pages of Scripture. Whether we face the foes within our families, or the enemy of our souls, we are called to wear the Gospel of peace on our feet. "[18.] If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. [19.] Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves …" (Romans 12:18-19). There are many gospels out there today: the gospel of unity, the gospel of prosperity, the gospel of growth – but Paul's words to the Galatians hold firm: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). We must hold to the message of the Scriptures and not waiver; "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).

[82] Strong's Online.

16. *Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

The phrase *above all* carries with it two thoughts: 1) importance, and 2) position in relation to what has just been outlined. It is clear that the shield is an important piece of armor. The Greek word for *shield* (*thureos*) is one that was originally used for the stone that would cover the mouth of a cave, but came to refer to a large, oblong shield.[83] The root of this Greek word (*thura*) is translated as *door*, and provides a picture of the usefulness of the shield. Perhaps you have seen riot police with the large shields; they can place the shield on the ground and it forms a complete protection from a frontal attack.

The Lord's shield for us is *faith*. Keep in mind that this is the armor of God, therefore, this is the faith that God instills within us, and it is our shield. This is the faith that comes through hearing, and hearing through the Word of God (Romans 10:17); it is the faith of Jesus Christ through which we are justified before God (Galatians 2:16-20). It was the faith of Jesus in the plan of the Father that procured our salvation; it is in this faith that we are to continue with steadfastness (Colossians 1:21-23; 2:6-8). Romans 3:21-23 confirms that this faith is available to everyone; *"21. and now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, being approved by the law and the prophets, 22. the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ unto all, even upon all those who are believing, for there is no difference, 23. for all do sin and are falling short of the glory of God"* (literal).[84] This is not a faith that man can muster up within himself, else Christ died in vain; without Christ, we are dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1-1, 8-9). This shield of faith is another provision from God for our protection; **our role** is to persevere in this faith (1 Corinthians 16:13). We are to unwaveringly fix our eyes upon

[83] Strong's Online.
[84] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; Gingrich Lexicon.

Jesus, Who is the *founder and finisher of **the faith*** (Hebrews 12:2a, literal in italics).[85]

The shield of faith will enable us, or make us powerful, to block the arrows of the enemy. The Greek word translated as *shall be able to* (*dunamai*) is the same word from which we get *dynamite*; this shield will provide a defense against the enemy. It is through the use of this shield of faith that we will be able to block all of the flaming arrows of the *evil one* (Satan) – God has made it so. Notice what the enemy will be throwing our way: not only arrows (or *darts*), which alone could cause significant pain and suffering, but these darts are also burning – they are on fire! In days gone by, this was a favored way of inflicting maximum damage on the enemy; if an arrow missed a target, then it was a wasted arrow, but if it carried fire as well, then that could ignite a blaze that would inflict further harm. The devil is not without his cunning tactics, and he is out to destroy. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). There are two things that are noteworthy here within the context of our discussion: 1) the word *devour* (*katapino*) literally means *to drink down*, and metaphorically, to completely overcome, or destroy, and 2) there is that little word *may* of which we need to be aware (*devour* is in the subjunctive mood – it is a possibility but not a certainty).[86] The promise of our passage is that the armor of the Lord will protect us from the cunning craftiness of the devil, and the shield of faith, that the Lord has prepared for us, will protect us from his *fiery darts*; however, that protection is only there if we put the armor on and raise the shield. We are called on to *be sober* and *vigilant*, and part of that vigilance will be to ensure that the protection that God has prepared for us, is in place. **We** must wear His truth and righteousness, **we** are to "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24), and **we** are to accept the faith of the Lord.

[85] Friberg Lexicon.
[86] Vine's "devour"; Strong's Online.

17. *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:*

The Greek word for *take* (*dechomai*) is one that is most often translated as *receive*; in this case, it is a command to take hold of the *helmet* that God has prepared as a part of His full armor.[87] It is evident that: 1) this is not just another piece of the armor that God has prepared for us, and 2) for it to serve its purpose, it must be accepted and put into place (along with all of the other pieces). *Helmet* is from a compound Greek word (*perikephalaia*) that literally means *around the head*,[88] so there is no question as to where this part of the armor belongs.

Salvation, here, speaks not of the salvation of our soul, but of the hope of salvation – of our future deliverance. There is both a present reality to our salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and a future element, which is our hope of final deliverance from the power of sin. Our hope in Christ goes beyond this life to a life with Him in glory (1 Corinthians 15:19; Colossians 1:5; Hebrews 6:17-20). This *hope of glory* is *Christ in you* (Colossians 1:27), and as this becomes our focus, our minds will not be alarmed by the warfare that we face, and so we STAND. The hope of glory permits us to look beyond this life to a day when we will stand with Christ in eternal glory, eternally free from the penalty, presence, and power of sin. Hebrews 12:2-3 encourages us to look to Jesus, "[2.] who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. [3.] For consider him that endured such contradiction [hostility or rebellion] of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."[89] The example of Christ is to look beyond the present to the future – the hope of glory to come, and to endure.

[87] Strong's Online.
[88] Vine's "helmet."
[89] Friberg Lexicon.

We are also to take the *sword of the Spirit*. The *sword* (*machaira*), in this case, is a dagger, or short sword, that is used for close combat.[90] Revelation 19:15 speaks of a sword proceeding out of the mouth of Jesus, and, by contrast, this is a long sword (*rhomphaia*).[91] The long sword is more useful in offensive battle, while the short one is for close fighting – more of a defensive weapon. Notice that this *short sword* is that which belongs to the Spirit of God, and more specifically, it is the word (*rhema*) of God. Once again, we are faced with the necessity of knowing God's Word to us; we will not be able to defend using the sayings of God if we are not familiar with His Word, the Bible. Herein lies the greatest failure of Evangelicals today – they have relinquished their understanding of the Scriptures to the "professionals." When they do read the Word of God, it is without the conviction that what they are reading is life and protection for their souls; too often, they are also reading a Bible that has been corrupted by the hand of man. Through the thorough compromise and accommodation among Evangelicals, there has come a complacency concerning the devil; the vigilance is gone, and the roaring lion has been made to appear as simply another sheep to be embraced – they have been swallowed up, and don't even realize it.

This completes the armor of the Lord; it is important to notice that all of the pieces are defensive in nature. This fits with the admonition that preceded the description of the armor of God – we are to stand! God's provision is designed to ward off the attacks of the enemy: we STAND having His truth and His righteousness wrapped about us, we STAND on the good news of His peace, we STAND holding the shield of the faith of Christ, we STAND with the hope of His salvation guarding our minds, and we STAND with the weapon of His words firmly in hand. Having donned this armor, we are protected from the wiles of the devil; we need not fear whatever we face, for His protective covering is able to provide us with the defense that will see us through. It is our responsibility to heed

[90] Strong's Online; Friberg Lexicon.
[91] Strong's Online.

the warning of Hebrews 3:12 – "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." The best armor in the world will never protect the soldier from a cowardly heart; what God has provided will not protect us from a heart of unbelief; for that, WE MUST *take heed*!

18. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

The action that we are to take is now defined: after donning the armor just outlined, we are to stand (vss. 11, 13, 14), and pray in the Spirit! The order of the words in the Greek gives a different emphasis than what we get in English on this first phrase: *with every prayer and petition, you are praying in the Spirit at every opportunity*.[92] This *prayer and petition* is linked to our taking the helmet of salvation (our hope of glory) and the sword of the Spirit (the words of God). However, even in our praying, we are not alone. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities [or, weaknesses]: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts [Psalm 139:1] knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of* God" (Romans 8:26). "Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). When we are confused and cannot discern in our minds as to how we are to pray, we can be assured that both the Spirit of God and the Lord Jesus are making intercession for us in accordance with the will of the Father.

[92] Stephanus 1550 NT; Friberg Lexicon; https://translateking.com/translate/greek-to-english-translation.

We noted earlier that the devil is called the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10). What should be reassuring is that the Spirit and the Son are interceding for us. The Apostle John wrote: "…if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous …" (1 John 2:1). This word *advocate* (*parakletos*) is what Jesus used for the Spirit of God Whom He would send after He had ascended to the Father (shown as *Comforter* in John 15:26), and it refers to someone who pleads, or intercedes, for another.[93] What comfort is ours through this realization; we are not abandoned – two members of the Godhead have come to our aid and are interceding for us. We need to focus our eyes on the future reality: the hope of glory in Christ (Colossians 1:27).

The words *prayer* and *supplication* are very similar in the Greek; the former is a word used only for a petition addressed to God, and the latter carries the additional thought of a plea, or entreaty.[94]

The word *watching* is from the Greek *agrupneo*, literally meaning *to be sleepless*, and used metaphorically as being watchful.[95] This speaks of a continual vigilance by praying in the Spirit, and is emphasized through the use of *all perseverance*. *Perseverance* (*proskartereo*) is an intensive form of *karteros* meaning to be strong; it identifies the need for a continual commitment to something, and a determination to keep it.[96] This is similar to God's instruction to Joshua to *be strong* (Joshua 1:6-9). We are to be strong in our prayers for all of God's holy ones, His saints; we are to pray for one another (James 5:16).

19. *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,*

[93] Strong's Online.
[94] Friberg Lexicon.
[95] Vine's "watch."
[96] Vine's "attend."

Here Paul requests prayer for himself that he will be given a word (*logos*, not *rhema*) that he might speak boldly the message of the hidden things of the Gospel. This is the Apostle who had received heavenly revelations directly from the Lord (2 Corinthians 12:2-4) asking for prayer so that he will be given a word from God, and that he will proclaim it boldly. Jesus said that when we are brought before rulers because of the Gospel, we are not to be concerned about what we will say (Matthew 10:19), for, in that moment, we will be given the words. However, we also need the words when not being hauled before authorities – and that is Paul's prayer request of the Ephesian believers here, that he will proclaim the full Gospel with boldness and clarity.

We have here the phrase *make known the mystery*, which tells us that what has been unknown in the past is now being revealed. *Make known* (*gnorizo*) means to come to know, and *mystery* (*musterion*) speaks of something that cannot be known without the Lord's intervention;[97] therefore, the *mystery* that is being revealed is what God has known from all ages, but He is now unveiling it for those who are *in Christ*. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul refers to this *mystery* as being: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). In the purposes of God, this truth was hidden from humanity since the beginning of the world (Ephesians 3:9); through His prophets, the Lord provided small glimpses of what was coming, but with the fulfilling work of Christ, the New Covenant has been fully revealed! The culmination of God's salvation that was offered for all of mankind since Adam, is made known in the sacrifice of the perfect Lamb of God (Jesus) for the sins of the world (John 1:29; 1 John 2:2). If we are prepared to walk the narrow road that leads to life (Matthew 7:13-14), which is Jesus Christ (John 14:6), then we have the protection that God makes available to us (His armor). However, we must commit everything into His hands and step onto that narrow Way. In the midst of explaining the cost of discipleship, Jesus said, "If any *man* come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren,

[97] Vine's "know," "mystery."

and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). This may sound harsh, but the Lord knows our deceitful hearts and how easily we can be distracted from the Way that leads to life. The basis for this is found in God's instructions to Israel in Deuteronomy 13:6-11, where He gave explicit warnings against being enticed to worship other gods, as well as clear instruction on the course of action that was to be taken to deal with it – this is not a small matter in the eyes of God. The lure of the world is no different today; the objects of worship may have changed, but the reality of our easily distracted hearts is the same. "Take heed, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).

20. *For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

The word *ambassador* is used today for someone from one country who is sent as its representative to another country – someone who is knowledgeable of his home country. The Greek word (*presbeuo*/*ambassador*) is actually a verb, which means that Paul is fulfilling the responsibilities of an ambassador – he is serving as God's man to open the *mystery* of the New Covenant to all. The first meaning of *presbeuo* involves the concepts of being the eldest, the first, or of highest rank;[98] hence, the Greek word for elders within the assembly is *presbuteros* (Titus 1:5) – they are to be those who are older and more established in the faith.[99] So we understand more fully that Paul's instructions to Timothy regarding the qualifications for a bishop or elder (the two are used synonymously in Titus 1:5 and 7) require that this individual not be a novice (*neophutos*, a neophyte, one recently converted

[98] Liddell-Scott Lexicon.
[99] Vine's "ambassador."

and immature), but one who is stable and seasoned in the faith (1 Timothy 3:6).[100]

Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians while he was being held prisoner; he was *in bonds*, or being physically restrained. His request is that he will speak forth the Gospel with freedom, as he should, even while being in bonds for that very action. We see, through Paul's example, that we are to be in obedience to God first, and when there is a conflict between what God requires and the laws of the land, obedience to God must always take priority (Acts 5:29). As our society continues its downward slide, it may very well soon be against the law to declare the truth of God's Word, for it will clash with the prevailing philosophies of the day and be determined by the laws of the land to be a hate crime. More and more we see governments adopting hate-crime legislation that provides the framework for persecution in the days ahead. A philosophy that advocates the acceptance of all belief systems will not permit the existence of a conviction that all other beliefs are wrong; in the midst of modern tolerance, there is an intolerance for the exclusive message of the Gospel.

21. *But that ye also may know my affairs,* and *how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things*:

22. *Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts.*

Rather than filling his letter with personal information about how he is doing, Paul commits this responsibility to Tychicus, who, when he arrives in Ephesus, will elaborate on Paul's situation, and comfort the Ephesians concerning Paul's imprisonment.

[100] Vine's "novice."

23. *Peace* be *to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

24. *Grace* be *with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.*