

Divine Romance - Spiritual Warfare

Message 4

Eph. 6:10-20, 23

Lord Jesus we love You. Lord, we thank You that we could be gathered here together into Your name. We tell You that You are our first love. You have the preeminence in this gathering. We honour You as our Head. We also tell You that we love You as our dear Bridegroom. Lord You are our focus and our aim. We love You Lord Jesus and we give this time to You. We ask that You would breathe on Your word. Speak to every one of us. We thank You for Your living word. We declare that we live by every word that proceeds out of Your mouth. We are hungry for more of You. Lord, we also realize that You have an enemy. As You are building Your church we know that he will always contest; even he may try to attack our thoughts here. We pray that You would give us the whole armour of God even in this meeting. Give us the shield of faith; give us the helmet of salvation; protect us. We love You Lord. Amen.

We have been enjoying the matters of the divine romance and the spiritual warfare. Actually, I don't know if you can say that we have been enjoying the spiritual warfare but we have been seeing something about the spiritual warfare. We have seen that in the scriptures these two matters of the bride and the corporate warrior have been put together quite a number of times. We saw some of these portions. For example, we just read these verses in Ephesians chapter 6, but Ephesians chapter 5 shows that the church is the bride. Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. His intention is to gain His bride that He might present the church to Himself glorious as His counterpart. In chapter 6 is the matter of warfare: "Put on the whole armour of God." So the church is a corporate warrior. Once we get to the details, the first point that I hope we can see is that though the armour has its application to us personally, actually only the church can have the whole armour of God. So, if you want to experience and enjoy the protection of the armour of God, you must be practically in the Body. You must be in the church life to have the experience of the whole armour of God.

Not only are these two matters close together in Ephesians 5 and 6, Revelation chapter 19 has these two matters just a few verses apart. There is a declaration before the Lord comes: "The bride has made herself ready." Praise the Lord! One day this will be declared. The bride has made herself ready and she is clothed with fine linen, bright and pure (vv. 7-8). Of course, then the Lord comes for His bride. Then just a few verses later we see that when the Lord comes to fight the Antichrist and his armies, He does not come alone (v. 14). The Lord comes with His armies, but it is very interesting that His armies are clothed with fine linen, bright and pure just like the bride a few verse before. So this shows us that that bride is these armies; that bride is God's corporate warrior.

Actually, these two aspects of the church combined accomplish God's desire that we see on the first page of the Bible. On the first page of the Bible, God says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion." So we see image and dominion. The meaning of our existence is God's eternal purpose; apart from God's purpose we have no meaning. God's purpose can be summarized in these two words: *image* and *dominion*. The image is for God's expression; He wants to have a corporate expression in this universe. We sang

hymn 203 today: "In the bosom of the Father, Ere the ages had begun..." Verse 4 of that hymn develops the matter of image and expression:

We're Thy total reproduction,
Thy dear Body and Thy Bride,
Thine expression and Thy fulness,
For Thee ever to abide.
We are Thy continuation,"

The bride is God's expression and then the warrior fulfills the matter of dominion to represent God and to exercise God's authority on this earth. So the bride and the warrior are linked to Genesis 1:26. No wonder they are put together so many times in the Bible.

Then we saw in the Song of Songs the story about the love affair, the love relationship, between God and His people. There the king represents Christ and the country girl that eventually becomes the queen represents us. She is brought through her relationship, through her love of the Lord, through stages to become the Shulamite. *Shulamite* is the feminine form of the name *Solomon*. So she is his match, his counterpart. Then we saw the verses where the Lord says, "You are lovely and terrible." If one of our brothers would say as he is courting his fiancée, "Oh my love, you are lovely and terrible", I don't think that she would take this in a proper way. This means that to the Lord we are lovely; to the enemy we are terrible. When a young man is courting a young girl, it really should be this way: to her beloved, lovely, and to every other guy, terrible; to every competition, terrible. Actually, the Lord is jealous over us in this way.

That brings us to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 where Paul is speaking to the Corinthian believers who are his spiritual children. In the first letter to them he tells them, "I am your spiritual father; I begot you in Christ Jesus. You don't have many fathers; you have so many teachers but you don't have many fathers. In the gospel I have begotten you." That is in the first letter, but in the second letter he says, "I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God because I betrothed you to one Husband." This is very interesting; this means that when Paul preached the gospel to them and they got saved, in Paul's thought he was betrothing them to Christ. When we got saved, we got into a love relationship with the Lord. Our Saviour became our Bridegroom; we were engaged to our Saviour.

After Paul says, "For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God", he goes on to say, "But I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your thoughts would be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity toward Christ" (v. 3). When we meet the Lord, things are very simple; we just love Him. But the enemy will attack that simple love for the Lord all the time. The enemy wants to interrupt that sweet dispensing that we experience. This is not only when we are first saved; every morning when we want to spend time with the Lord and open to Him, it seems that the enemy is threatened by this. So he will come in to interject what seem to be benign thoughts, just little thoughts. We think that those are our thoughts, our thoughts about our day or our thoughts about yesterday. Sometimes we are praying and remember a dream, and we just get distracted for 2 or 3 minutes. If you are distracted for 2 or 3 minutes but you are only planning on spending 10 minutes with the Lord, that is significant. But the thing is that it does not happen only once; as soon as you realize: "Oh, oh, amen, Lord Jesus I love You" and you come back, isn't it your experience that after 30 seconds, another thought comes from the other side? Then you get carried away for another 2 minutes. Now we are up to 4

or 5 minutes, then we come back but the time is up. Have you never experienced this? What is that? That is the divine romance and the spiritual warfare in your bedroom; that is the divine romance and the spiritual warfare wherever it is that you set apart a time to be with the Lord. This is very subjective and personal.

In this message we want to focus on the matter of the whole armour of God. We will cover a certain number of details, but I want to make my burden clear at the beginning so that you do not lose the focus. My burden this morning is simply on the matter of the shield of faith. Ephesians 6:16 says, "Having taken up the shield of faith." I specifically added verse 23 to the reading concerning the armour of God. Verse 23 is almost the final verse of the book of Ephesians. The book of Ephesians unveils the church more than any other book in the whole Bible. It covers at least 12 aspects of the church, and the final 2 are the bride and the corporate warrior, but the book ends with faith; actually faith and love. Verses 23 and 24 say, "Peace to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility." These verses mention four things: peace, love, faith, and grace. A number of the epistles begin with a greeting concerning grace and peace. Paul often started his letters with grace and peace saying, "Grace and peace to you." So here he concludes this letter with grace and peace, but in between these he inserted two things: love and faith.

Here Paul writes in a very particular way: not love and faith but love with faith. These two matters, love and faith, are so basic in our Christian life. In the first message I gave a little bit of my testimony. I know that all our experiences of salvation are so varied. No two of us got saved in exactly the same way. We all have a personal story and history with the Lord; all of these are precious. But that night, Friday July 13, when I was seven years old, do you know what I experienced? It was not first grace and peace; I experienced love with faith. First love came through the preaching of the simple gospel through my sister. That love that reached me, those words that reached me, somehow produced faith. So love came from God to me and faith went from me to God and connected me with Him. Since that night the triune God and I have been connected. How? Love with faith. You too, wherever you were, somehow love reached you through someone sharing the gospel; whether it was personal, one on one, whether it was in a gospel meeting, or whether for some of our second generation it was even in the children's meeting. I had the privilege to bring the gospel to each of my three children in my study. I knelt down with them one by one at different times to help them experience love and faith.

First Thessalonians talks about the armour in a little different way. This letter was to younger believers and it actually talks about the breastplate of love and faith (5:8). Love and faith are a kind of breastplate because they both have to do with our heart. Love with faith is so important every day of our Christian journey.

Sometimes we call Ephesians 3:16-17 the heart of the heart of the heart of the divine revelation. Those verses are a prayer that the Father would grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man that Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith that you, being rooted and grounded in love.... I don't know exactly when it was, but a number of years ago I was inspired in a conference meeting, maybe a semi-annual training, and from that time, these verses have become my prayer every day of my life, especially in the morning. I was about 16 or 17 and I have been praying these two verses day after day: "Lord, please make more of Your home in my heart today, even a little bit more." Then this day counts. If by the time my head hits the pillow the Lord has made His home in my heart just a little bit more, that was a good day; that day counts.

Some may not have heard why we call these verses the heart of the heart of the heart of the divine revelation? We consider that the heart of the divine revelation is really found in the books Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. These four books unveil the church in a very particular way. But of all these, Ephesians is the heart; and then of Ephesians, these verses are the heart. They are the personal experience of Christ making His home in our heart. That is how Christ builds the church. By building Himself into you a little bit more every day, and into me a little bit more every day, and then we come together and there is more building of the church. But do you realize that faith and love are here? This is my point in bringing this out. Christ is making His home in our hearts through *faith* that you being rooted and grounded in *love*. Even in these most critical verses are faith and love.

We are talking about the divine romance and the spiritual warfare. Even though in a sense we are going to focus on the spiritual warfare today by covering the armour of God, our focus should be the divine romance. Our focus should be on the Lord Himself, on building up that sweet, intimate relationship with Him. Of course, as we do that the enemy will come, but the goal is to enter into this fellowship with the Lord. For this, we need love with faith. Our love for the Lord depends on the health of our faith. Hebrews says that Christ is the author and perfecter of our faith (12:2). Verse 1 of that chapter gives the picture of a race. How can you have the endurance to run this Christian race under so much adversity? You need to look away unto Jesus. What does it mean to look away unto Jesus? What does it mean to look at Jesus? We don't see Jesus physically. Actually, this is talking about faith; faith sees the unseen things. We need to be healthy in our faith. When we have faith, we will have love. If our faith is attacked or weakened, it is possible that our love for the Lord wanes and we can't do anything about it. We need to get our faith renewed and this is my burden in this message: the shield of faith.

Let us start with Ephesians 6, verse 10 which says, "Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the might of His strength." As we pointed out previously, it does not say here, "Be powerful." Thank the Lord that it does not say that. Many of would quit right here. Instead of "Be powerful" it says, "Be empowered." This means that it is only demanding your cooperation, not your power. It is demanding your will and your cooperation, but not your self energy. Be empowered! When we cooperate with the Lord He will empower us.

Verse 11 says, "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the stratagems of the devil." I would like to emphasize here a point that I mentioned briefly before. To put on the whole armour is a matter of the Body. We must be practically in the fellowship of the Body of Christ. We are not expected to be super Christians; we are expected to be members of the Body. When we are in the Body, we have the protection of the Body. In a good sense, the Body is the armour. The Body of Christ already has the armour; when you get into the Body, you have the protection of the armour. Imagine, and we have seen stories like this in history, that there is a battle and one of the soldiers gets separated from the rest of his battalion. Isn't that dangerous to be in enemy territory all by yourself? The protection is in the army. The protection for us is in the Body.

What the enemy would want to do is to isolate us. How does he come to isolate us? I am not saying that we need to be together all the time, that the enemy will attack every time we are not with other saints. No. We can be by ourselves at school, at work, at home, but we are in the Body. Prison did not isolate Paul from the Body. Actually, Paul wrote all of these verses in Ephesians 6 from a prison. Not only was he in prison, he was chained as he wrote, "I am an ambassador in a chain." That means that when he was writing he was chained to the soldier next

to him. He could not get away. Paul was also in prison when he wrote Philippians. There he said, “I know that this will turn out to my salvation through your petition and the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (1:19). Wherever we are we can have the supply of the Body; we can have the supply of the Spirit. That is why we must pray for one another. Sisters, don't you think of some of the saints as you are about your daily affairs? The thought of some of the saints is the Spirit moving in you. You may not realize that that particular saint is going through a particular attack of the enemy right at that time. We should just offer a prayer, even if the prayer is just to mention their name: “Oh Lord, remember so and so.” Maybe you think of the brothers who minister here and there, I hope you would pray for us; we need the Lord's protection. So it is not a small thing for a believer to just remember someone. Through our prayer they receive the bountiful supply of the Spirit. So the armour is for the Body.

Verse 12 says, “For our wrestling is not against blood and flesh but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies.” This is very fundamental but we must remember that our fighting is not against blood and flesh. No human being is our enemy; we should never take any human being as our enemy. There is an enemy behind and we need to have our warfare in that realm. We pray; we don't take any person as our enemy.

Now we come to the details of the armour. Verses 13 and 14 say, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.” The details of the armour begin here. First it talks about the girdle of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. The truth actually is for supporting our whole being. That is to strengthen your being. My father will turn 99 in a month. He is in the church life there in New York. His salvation is another story; I wish I had time to talk about that. He got saved when he was 69. That was a battle, but anyway the Lord won that battle. He was a carpenter for many years and very often he would wear a girdle so that he could climb up stairs and be on a ladder hammering. The girdle would strengthen his back. What is the girdle for the Christian, for the believer? Truth. What does this mean? Does this mean that we need to study the Bible so that we know the word? The word *truth* in Greek is *alitheia*. It has very many denotation in the New Testament, but we can say how to understand it here because this is in the context of Ephesians. This is not the first time this word appears; it is also in chapter 4. There you could say that truth is actually God in Christ realized by us and lived out of us. That is reality; you could translate this as reality. The triune God Himself in our experience often is conveyed to us through the Word. Yes, truth is related to the Bible, to the Word of God, but when that truth is spoken to us, it brings Christ to us. Then when we experience the reality of what we heard, that truth strengthens our being for the fight.

I don't know when you have your prayer meeting here—Tuesday. Suppose that the whole day on Tuesday you live your work day, at school or at home, with no reality, no experience of Christ, but now you come to the prayer meeting. Actually, I wonder if you even want to come to the prayer meeting, but you do come. Do you turn, do you pray? Of course, the blood cleanses, but you don't have much base for the spiritual warfare that night. To fight the spiritual warfare we need a base of reality in our living. When we experience the Lord in our living, the enemy takes note. Paul was in prison when he wrote many of his epistles, but the enemy took note of him because even there he was living out the reality of the triune God. There is a story in Acts 19:13-16 where seven sons of Sceva saw that Paul could cast out demons, so they tried to do the

same thing. They came to a demon possessed person and said, "I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches." The demon said, "Jesus I know of, and with Paul I am acquainted; but who are you?" Then the demon possessed man jumped on them and overpowered them. "Jesus I know of, and with Paul I am acquainted; but who are you?" When we come to fight the spiritual warfare, the enemy should know who we are already. How does the enemy know who we are? When we live Christ. When you live Christ, the enemy knows, he recognizes Christ in you. We need the reality in our daily living.

Then we need the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness is in the blood of Christ. When we were saved, we were clothed with righteousness; we were clothed with Christ as our righteousness. As we go through each item of the armour, we need to realize that each item is Christ. It is not a thing, but it is our experience of Christ. Whenever you want to fight the spiritual warfare (that may sound like an intimidating phrase), whenever you consider to preach the gospel, that is part of the warfare. Whenever you consider to visit a brother or sister who hasn't been with us for some time, that recovering is part of the spiritual warfare. Whenever you consider to give a little testimony in the meeting, that is part of the spiritual warfare because that is building the church. Whenever you even consider to do any of these activities, the enemy will come to your conscience to accuse you: "Are you going to speak today? You? Didn't you do this? Didn't you say that? Didn't you have an attitude toward your spouse, toward your mother, toward your boss, or toward your coworker?" Right away it is possible that if we don't have the breastplate of righteousness we are defeated in our chair. What does this mean? This means that to fight the spiritual warfare we need to confess our sins. It is not that we need to be perfect; but we do need to be righteous. When we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). That is how we apply the breastplate of righteousness. We confess our sins, we claim the blood, and gain the righteousness that is in the blood. So when we come to a prayer meeting, in a sense it does not matter what the day was. As long as we turn and confess, we are sitting there with the breastplate of righteousness. Then we are equipped to fight the battle.

Verse 15 says, "And having shod your feet with the firm foundation of the gospel of peace." Now we come to the shoes which are related to the gospel of peace. Strictly speaking, this does not mean that we need to preach the gospel. It means that on the cross the Lord Jesus accomplished peace in two ways. According to Romans 5:1 He made peace between us and God, but in Ephesians 2 He also made peace between the Jews and the Gentiles, between men. So He made peace vertically and He made peace horizontally. That becomes the foundation for us to stand on and that is what we wear as our shoes. Over and over in this section, it does not say *fight*, it says *stand*. Our fighting in the Christian life is just to stand. After all the enemy's attacks, the church will be standing there and the battle is won. We need to stand, but to stand we cannot have sneakers on; we cannot have flip flops on. I think that many of us have spiritual flip flops. We need a firm foundation of the gospel of peace. What does that mean? That means that if you come to preach the gospel, shepherd, or recover saints, share in the meeting, pray in the prayer meeting, but there was discord between you and your spouse, you are defeated already. If there is no peace at home, if there is no peace at work as far as it depends on you, if there is no peace between you and God, and then you come to pray, the enemy will say that that is a joke. You have no foundation. We must have the peace with God and the peace with man. Then we are equipped for the fight.

Now we come to my burden. "Besides all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with

which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one” (v. 16). Faith is a shield. I don't know if it is popular here but in the States a lot of the teenagers and even the children know about a cartoon and movie called The Avengers. It has Captain America but there is no Captain Canada. I used to read these comic books when I was a little boy, and Captain America has a shield. Sometimes in a place like an airport you see people with the emblem of the shield. He fights with his shield. Many of us have a spiritual shield that is about the size of our hand or even smaller. We need a bigger shield of faith. I saw some documentaries that reenact battles from old times and in some places I saw that they have shields that are the full length of the person with a little slit so that you can see. They carry that, put it down, and then send arrows the other way. That is a good picture of the shield of faith. If I have a shield of faith and my brother has an even bigger shield of faith, when we stand together our faith becomes like a wall. I would like to stand behind his shield of faith. That is the body. We need a shield of faith; we need faith to increase. We need to pray, “Lord, increase my faith.” Then He will say, “Look away to the Author of faith. Just look at Me. When you look at Me, you will have more faith.”

We need to quench the flaming darts as we shared in the first message. Faith quenches the flaming darts. What are these darts? These darts in the old time were flaming arrows. They would wrap the end of the arrow with cloth, saturate it with oil, light it on fire, and then shoot it over the wall. They would send many arrows. They did not need to be precise but sooner or later something flammable will be hit if they shot enough arrows. In the old time many of the rooftops were straw so just hitting one corner of the house would set it on fire. That is how the enemy attacks us with thoughts and more thoughts. Has it never happened to you that when you are sitting in the meeting and you are thinking, “What is for lunch?” I won't ask you to raise hands if you thought that already today, but then you are thinking, “I had Chinese yesterday and the day before, maybe Italian would be good today.” You were distracted three minutes in the meeting and you think that does not mean anything. Actually, that was the enemy. Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). So if you were distracted for 5 minutes in the meeting, that is 5 minutes less shield.

You have the potential to have a bigger shield after this meeting; not because of my speaking but because we are presenting the word of God. The word brings faith. That is also why we need to read the word every day. Don't think, “Oh, I don't understand; oh it's a little stale, it's a little boring. I like it when there are the stories. Many of us are studying Leviticus in these days. We have heard many testimonies: “Genesis I can take and I can take half of Exodus, up to chapter 20. After that it is really hard. Leviticus—Ohhh, can I skip to Numbers. Aren't there stories in Numbers somewhere?” If you read Leviticus, your shield gets bigger. Read any book and your shield gets bigger. Satan attacks us with temptations, proposals, doubts, questions, and lies. Sometimes—I don't know if this ever happened to you—you would just get a thought, “Why doesn't that brother like me?” It is not that that brother does not like me. What happened? Maybe in the meeting I was standing there and he walked by another brother and greeted him. Then when I walked by, he did not say anything. I nodded to him and he didn't say anything. I was not expecting a hug; I was not expecting “Hello” but at least a little smile. It could be that just at that moment he got something in his eye and he didn't see me when I walked by. Then the next morning: “Oh Lord, I love You. Lord, You are the author of faith... That brother, I don't know what is wrong with him. I don't know why he doesn't like me. What did I ever do to him?” Is this a joke? Did this never happen to you? The enemy lies about the brothers and sisters. This morning we sang these wonderful hymns saying that we are one. We are eating; we are drinking;

we are testifying of our oneness. Is this true or not? It is true! We love one another! But the enemy comes with suggestions. We need a bigger shield of faith.

What should we have faith in? I would like to give seven points. Firstly, we should have faith in God, that He is real, living, present, and He is for us. He is real; He is living; He is present; and He is for us. Because He is for us, He is available. Sometimes in my younger Christian life I would pray and I would feel like, "God, where are You?" Did you never feel this way? You feel, "Oh Lord, where are You? Two weeks ago when I called, even two days ago, when I called, it was so rich. Today, I feel like 'Where are You? I can't touch You.'" Then it is possible that right there a thought comes: "God doesn't love you. God loves him a lot. God loves that family but not my family. We suffer all the time. We can't get a break. We finish one problem and boom, another problem. Even we don't finish the second problem when third and fourth problems come." God is available. Don't trust your feelings. God is present; He is living and He is for us.

Secondly, we must have faith in God's heart. God's heart is always good toward us. Dear saints, God has no intention to punish us, to injure us, or to cause us harm. I know that sometimes it is not easy to see this because all of us sooner or later suffer loss in different ways: physically, even of loved ones, and sometimes of loved ones prematurely. I know young people who have lost their parents. I know parents who have lost their children. At that juncture there is a temptation to blame God. We need to have faith in God's heart. We don't have time to read the verses but I think that you are familiar with Romans chapter 8: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or anguish or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" (v. 35). Paul says that not even death nor life can separate us from God's love. There is a temptation when we experience death of those close to us, especially when it seems so premature. When someone is elderly and passes away we experience the loss but it doesn't sting the way it does when it seems premature. But we need faith in God's heart.

We need faith in God's faithfulness. God is faithful. He is faithful in us; He is faithful to the church; and He is faithful to His word, and He will accomplish every word that He has spoken.

We also need to have faith in God's word. We should take every word of the Bible as God's promise. In Matthew 16 the Lord declared, "I will build My church and the gates of Hades will not prevail..." In my history there were a number of times when I looked around and felt like the gates of Hades were prevailing. Did you never experience that? I know that in my experience there were a few places where I asked, "Lord, what about this? You said that the gates of Hades won't prevail." What will you believe at that time? Will you believe what you see or will you believe God's word?

We need to have faith in God's ability. Ephesians 3, verse 20 says that God is able to do superabundantly above all that we ask or think. Who wrote that? Paul. Where did he write that from? A prison in a chain. He was writing while chained to a guard and still he wrote, "Saints in Ephesus, He is able to do superabundantly." Did you ever feel, "Lord, I know that You are able to do, but why don't You do anything for me?" One song we teach the children goes, "He is able, He is able; I know my Lord is able to carry me through." Even my grandchildren know this song, but I don't know if you have ever felt, "Lord, You are able but why don't You do anything? Why have you not done anything for 10 years?" Paul was not stumbled by God. In the prison he said, "Lord, You are able to do superabundantly above all that I ask or think."

Do you know why he could say this? Because Paul also had faith in God's will. We should have faith in God's will. God's will assigns certain situations to us in which He will gain His

purpose, and the sweet dispensing can go deeper and richer. All of us know and have experienced that in times of ease in our Christian life, we tend not to be as desperate for the Lord. When there are times of turmoil somehow the Lord is able to go deeper and the dispensing is sweeter.

So, what have covered? We need to have faith in God, in God's heart, in God's faithfulness, in God's Word, in God's ability, in God's will, and the final point—in God's sovereignty. We need to have faith in God's sovereignty. All things work together for good. I know that sooner or later that will be tested in us. I hope that in our experience our faith is healthy to the point that we could say, “Lord, You could never be wrong. I am this situation. We are in this situation and we know that You know. You could never be wrong. I still love You and I still trust You.” Oh, that we would all have the shield of faith.

The next item is the helmet of salvation. You always need something on your head to fight a battle. The two most critical areas that you need to protect are your heart and your head. You need a big shield of faith and behind the shield is a breastplate—double protection for your heart. Then on top you need a helmet, salvation. Why? Because the enemy injects fear, he injects threats, worries, anxieties, and other weakening thoughts. Have you never compared yourself to another sister or brother in the church? That thought of comparison is the enemy's injection. The Bible tells us not to compare ourselves. Each one is a necessary member of the Body of Christ; each one has their portion (1 Cor. 12). We need a helmet of salvation; we need to enjoy the Lord. He saves us from our thoughts. Then the attack of the enemy has no effect on us.

Then we have the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God. Actually we need the word to be the Spirit to become the sword. This does not mean that the Spirit takes the Bible, the word of God, as the sword. This means that the sword is the Spirit as the word. When we enjoy the word of God in a living way, the word becomes the sword, not to attack people but to actually to cut off the inner enemy. The biggest enemy that the Body of Christ has is the self. In the church life, the self is a big enemy. We may have the outward enemy but we also have the inward adversary. His name is pride; his name is lust. We have inner enemies that if we are not careful will really affect our Christian life. Another one is jealousy. As we are in the word and the word becomes living as the Spirit to us, the Lord cuts away and cuts to pieces all the inner enemies. We need the living word of God.

The final point is prayer. Prayer is the way to apply all the previous items. That is why it says, “And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints, And for me, that utterance may be given to me...” (vv. 17-19a). We need to pray to apply every one of these items of the armour. Then we need to pray for all the saints. Then we need to pray for all the Lord's servants that the word could continue to go out.

The conclusion to all of this is verses 23 and 24: “Peace to the brothers and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptibility.” We need faith and love for the spiritual warfare. I hope and pray that through this brief word all of us would be strengthened in our faith and the result would be more love for the Lord. I hope that we would be strengthened to be the bride and to be the corporate warrior to fulfill God's purpose.