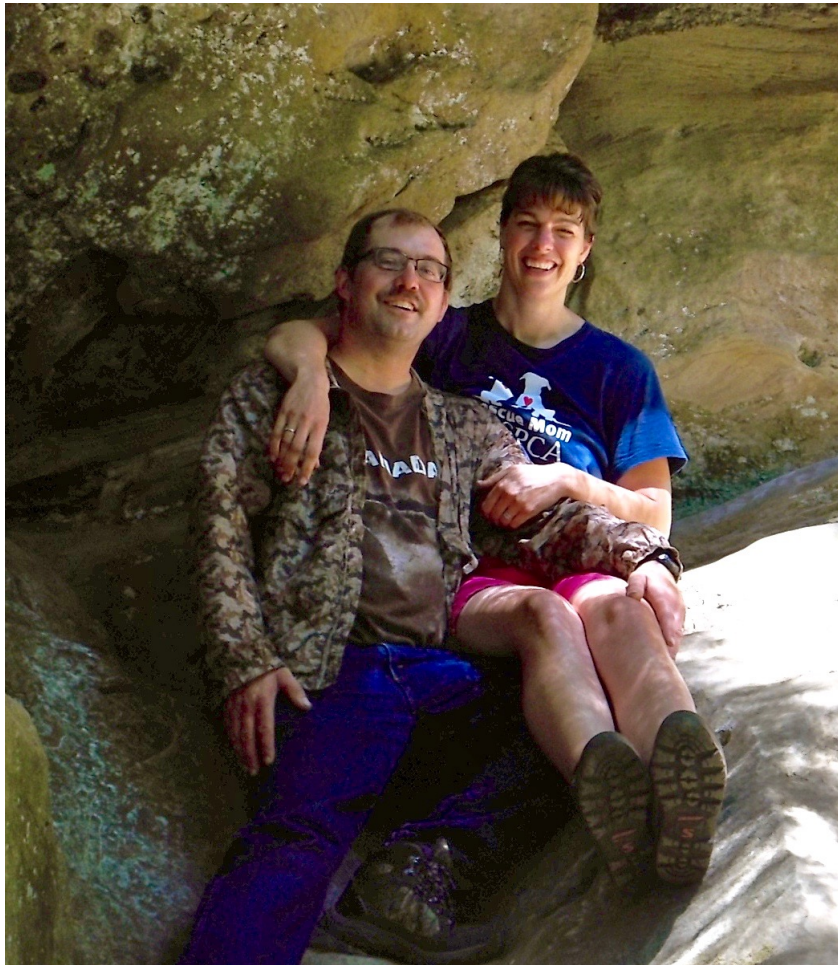


The Pentecost

Issue 105 January 2017



The Pentecost



Cover photo: The grand canyon, Arizona.

Above photo: Larabee State park, Washington.

Dear friends in this issue we will look at the gateway to heaven. What does Jesus say about it? We will also continue our studies in Ephesians by Jake Balzer. God Bless you.

Shawn Stevens

God never promised that living the christian life would be easy. We will face many trials and temptations in our life time. Yet He did promise to never leave us nor forsake us and the life that Jesus lived proves that victory is possible through Him. May you be encouraged as you read. God Bless you.

Ramona Stevens

The Parable Of The Difficult Way And The Narrow Gate

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:13-14 KJV

Jesus uses this simple parable to teach an important and sobering truth. Although God has a kingdom that is large and great, the doorway to that kingdom is small or narrow. The pathway leading to that doorway is just as surprisingly difficult, difficult to find and travel. Conversely, the fate of destruction has a wide entrance-way and a broad pathway leading to it. This picture that Jesus paints for His hearers is one that they could visualize without much difficulty.

In the Roman world there were many broad roads between major cities and population centres. Those thoroughfares were busy and well-used by travellers and merchants. Along with the main roads there were also rugged, poorly or un-maintained pathways that crisscrossed and joined the highways of the Empire. Great cities had great gates as well. Jerusalem had a magnificent entry that you could ride a coach and horses through. Then there were also small gates, suitable only for pedestrians.

So consider with me, the wide gate that leads to destruction. It is a comfortable road, one that is sloped downward. It is

the type of road that you can coast along and freewheel to the bottom. It is user-friendly and accommodating. It is a decorated and respected road, and the pride of most who travel it. It is paved with good intentions, self-sufficiency and self-righteousness. This way is inoffensive and inclusive of others. It is permissive and non-judgmental. This is the road of choice for most respectable people in society and is traveled by both great and small and strong and weak. This road is described in Ephesians 2:2: "Wherein in time 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:" (KJV)

This road is the road to destruction. This destruction is hell. This road is one "... which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12 KJV). Jesus does not lead us this way.

There is another path, that leads to another gate. The narrow gate symbolizes the more difficult, yet righteous, pathway that Jesus calls us to choose. Some have said that the narrow gate is actually an illustration of a turnstile. A turnstile allows one person entrance at a time and with no extra baggage. It is tight to get through and this is the point that Jesus is making. To pass through the narrow gate a man or woman must be stripped of pride, self-righteousness, self-rule and any other encumbrance, that would keep him or her from making a full surrender to Jesus' lordship. Jesus said:

... Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:3 KJV

Children are the epitome of dependence. Becoming childlike means becoming dependent on God and this is not something adults naturally choose to be.

Jesus says elsewhere:

Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Luke 13:24 KJV

From these words we see that one does not automatically fall through the gate but, rather, strives to enter it. In fact, some make it through the gate and others do not. Why is this? Is it because God does not want many in His kingdom? No, far from it, God wants all humanity to receive the salvation that He offers. However, the commitment that Christ calls for is very high.

You do not just fall through the gate automatically, nor do you start out your life on the difficult road automatically. This road must be found.

Each of us makes many choices in our lifetime. We choose what clothing we wear, what car we drive, what occupation we enter. Some choices are minor and other choices are major. Jesus is calling us to make the most important choice of entering God's kingdom. The rewards and consequences of this choice are eternal. Jesus' call is much like God's call in Jeremiah where He says:

And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you

*the way of life, and the way of death.
Jeremiah 21:8 KJV*

The choice and way that Jesus is calling us to is narrow. This is not simply a choice between religion and secular belief or between being pleasant over being cruel. Jesus is calling us to salvation through repentance and faith in Himself. Nothing short of total commitment will do. Jesus' call cuts across and contradicts the syncretism and inclusivism of our age. There are not many good religions or many good philosophies; there is one way that is right and that is Jesus' difficult path and narrow gate. All other paths lead away from God's kingdom and join with the broad road to destruction. All other pathways involve self-sufficiency and self-righteousness and are, in fact, hypocrisy. Jesus' way is for us an admission that we are sinners and that we need Him to save us. Jesus' way is substitution of Himself, dying for us, and Him rising from the dead. Jesus' way is also a call to full commitment to Himself and to His truth.

Jesus taught a narrow gospel. Jesus taught a gospel which included confession of sin, obedience to God, childlike faith, righteousness and true love. All of these things go against human nature. These things also go against man-made religion.

Jesus' gospel is not narrow because it is too complex for most people to understand. To the contrary, Jesus' gospel is simple, simple enough for a child to understand. Jesus' gospel is us repenting from our own way, our own will and surrendering to Him. It is coming to Jesus and trusting in His sacrifice on

Calvary and in His resurrection. Jesus' gospel is us coming to Jesus. Jesus' gospel is simple but it is also humbling. There is nothing built into Christ's gospel to inflate our ego or sense of self-sufficiency. Instead, it shatters both of these.

What makes Jesus' gospel so narrow? It is narrow because it requires repentance and not just belief of the mind. Many religions are based on philosophies that call men to believe intellectually with the mind. However, Jesus calls us to repent. Matthew records Jesus beginning His public preaching ministry with this call to repentance.

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 4:17 KJV

Jesus also called men and women to faith, but it was not a faith devoid of repentance. Repentance and faith go together. In fact, faith without repentance is merely faith of the mind. It is not a faith of the heart. Repentance is the factor to activating faith as a response of the heart. The difficult road is the road of repentance and heart-faith.

Some might say, "Can't I just be a good person and love others and won't God accept that as my expression of faith?" My friend, hard as this may sound, without the righteousness of Christ working in you, you are not loving others in the way that you may think you are. Jesus has much to say about loving others but His love was displayed by giving Himself up sacrificially to die on our behalf for our sins. This is intense love. This is radical all-consuming love. When a man or woman understands Christ's love for them they receive His

love and His love begins to work and show itself through them. Christian love is a direct result of Christ's own love at work in the life of one of His followers. Without the understanding of Christ's love and without the heart-faith experience of Christ's love at work in you, what foundation do you have for loving? How deep is your love for others? How untainted is it? How sacrificial is it? Is your love something you have generated or mustered up? How enduring is your love? Is it something that flows out of the never-ending stream of divine love, freshly experienced through faith?

Friend, do not claim to be loving if you are only drawing feelings from your own personal emotional resources. Do not claim to be loving if you merely helped someone out in some way. Christ's way is a way of love but true love is a spiritual experience that is entered into and lived out through the experience of heart-faith. If you do not have heart-faith do not claim to be loving, and do not claim to be a good person. The broad road is a road of sin and rebellion against God. Friend, is this true of your life-course? Are you willing, and choosing and walking the rebellion road?

Only the righteousness of Christ will suffice to substitute for your life and mine. Only the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient to pay the price that we owe. Only the love of Christ is worthy to be called love and is able to fill and animate your life and mine.

Are you offended? Friend, remember that this is a difficult road. This is a narrow gate. This is the humble path that few men and women choose to follow. Most do not follow this pathway but before you make the same decision as they, I hope that you will hear the words of Jesus Christ. I hope that you will not dismiss

lightly the words of someone Who, in fact, died for you and for me. He is the One Who said that the way that leads to life is difficult. He is also the One Who said:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

John 3:16-21 KJV

Friend, God has so loved this world, and yourself and myself personally, that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die for your sins and for mine. God does not want to condemn you. God wants to save you. Being saved means leaving the broad road. Being saved means you choosing the difficult road. Being saved means believing in Christ. Being saved means repentance and heart-faith. Light has now come to your path and you must choose between God's light and the darkness of evil. Even in the message of this short article there is enough light for you to make a choice for the right path. It is a humble choice. It is a childlike

dependant choice.

If you have not yet chosen to follow Jesus Christ, pray with me now.

God, I have been journeying for a long time, not really knowing where I am going. Today I have heard Your words and learned that I am on the broad path. Oh Lord, I am on the wrong path. I have learned that there is another way, a difficult way that leads to life, and this is now my choice. I want to be on Your side, in Your kingdom and living with Your love in my heart. Lord, I lay down anything and everything that would prevent me from passing through the narrow gate. I lay down and part with my pride, self-sufficiency, self-righteousness and self-rule. I am a sinner in need of Your forgiveness and for Your forgiveness I now plead. Jesus, you died for my sins and then You rose again from the dead. I choose to believe, and I choose to believe and trust in You personally. I choose the difficult road and the narrow gate. I repent. All along it has been my will that has been the problem. I now surrender my will to You. Accept my life and my faith as I give it completely to You in a childlike way. Thank you for Your great love. Thank You for the road to life. Thank You for the open gate. Thank You for dying for me. Thank You for loving me. Amen.

Shawn Stevens

REFERENCES

Booth, Catherine. *Papers on Godliness*. The Salvation Army Supplies And Purchasing Department. Atlanta, Georgia.

Hendrickson, William. *New Testament Commentary: Exposition Of The Gospel According To Matthew*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1973.

MacArthur, John. *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Matthew 8–15*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1987.

Wenham, David. *The Parables Of Jesus*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

KING JAMES TRANSLATION BIBLE USED.

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS PART 6 (CHATER 6)

TEXT : EPHESIANS 6:1-9

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

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.

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

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;

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

7 With good will doing service,

as to the Lord, and not to men:

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

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.

TOPIC : RELATIONSHIPS INTRODUCTION :

DEVELOPING WHOLESOME RELATIONSHIPS IS AN ON-GOING CHALLENGE FOR ALL OF US.

1. PARENTS AND CHILDREN'S RELATIONSHIPS EPHESIANS 6:1-4

The question often asked by children is: "Why should we honour and obey our parents?"

It seems like a one-way street of benefits to the parents and not to the children.

The Bible gives us three good reasons:

1.1 We should honour and obey our parents because it pleases God.

God Himself initiated this planned relationship because it will greatly benefit both parents and their children. Why? Because it is a response of obedience. When we obey the Lord we receive directly related benefits from it. When

children honour and obey their parents they are honouring and obeying the Lord and learning vital lessons for the rest of their lives.

1.2 We should honour and obey our parents because God will enrich our lives.

“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).

This is the first commandment with promise : “ ... that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”

The promise assures us of a long life with God’s blessings upon us. Yes, if we truly honour our parents God will shower His blessings upon us and we will have the assurance of Him being well pleased with us. Our lives will be enriched beyond our imagination. Moreover, we will have a positive legacy to hand down to our children who will greatly benefit from God’s blessing upon our family.

Furthermore, we will not let the devil get a foothold in our families’ lives because God is protecting us when we honour and obey Him.

1.3 We should honour and obey our parents because we are following Jesus’ example as a young boy here on Earth. He truly honoured and obeyed his parents.

Even though Jesus’ parents didn’t always understand their son’s actions, Jesus still honoured and obeyed them.

Children, especially in their teens, sometimes have a hard time understanding their parents rules and regulations. Nevertheless, they need to

give their parents the benefit of doubt and respect them.

PARENTS ALSO HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO THEIR CHILDREN.

FATHERS :

“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PROVOKE YOUR CHILDREN?

1. Don’t over-power them by expecting more from them than they are able to perform. Keep in mind their age, abilities and their temperaments. Each child is different and often needs different treatments from the parents. Both parents need to be consistent in their expectations of each child.
2. Don’t annoy or harp on the child until he becomes totally discouraged or fights back.
3. But, rather, take the child and lead him in the way of the Lord, both by your example and by your teachings. Be aware of those “teachable moments” that help to build good relationships and opportunities for training.

2. EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEES RELATIONSHIPS (See EPHESIANS 6:5-9)

Our text speaks about slaves and their earthly master’s relationships and responsibilities. The same instructions

may be applied today for employees and employers. Let's examine them.

2.1 EMPLOYEES RELATIONSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO THEIR EMPLOYER.

2.1.1 EMPLOYEES ARE TO RESPECT AND OBEY THEIR EMPLOYERS WITH SINCERITY OF HEART JUST AS THEY WOULD RESPECT AND OBEY CHRIST.

This kind of motivation is first centred in a growing relationship to Christ which then can be transferred to a respectful and faithful relationship to his employer. We often are just concerned about our relationship to the employer and, thereby, fail to be empowered by Christ to do our work as unto Him.

Furthermore, our motivation should not only be to please our employer, which is important, but we need to do our work as fulfilling God's will, thereby doing our work wholeheartedly just as though we were serving the Lord.

The bottom line is not only to get paid for our work from our employer but, also, looking forward to the reward from God in due time.

This will make a big difference, especially when we think our employer is not treating us fairly or paying us fairly. We will still be motivated to do our work well for Christ's sake and for the reward He will give us in due time.

2.1.2 EMPLOYERS ARE TO TREAT THEIR EMPLOYEES WITH RESPECT

AND THOUGHTFULNESS.

Employers are not to abuse or threaten their employees. They are to remember Jesus is their master just like He is the master of their employees. Moreover, the employers will be held accountable by Jesus who will in due time reward them either for good or evil, depending on how they treated their employees.

The bottom line for both employers and employees is that one day each one will stand before Jesus Christ to give an account of their relationship to each other here on Earth. Furthermore, they will each receive their reward for what they have done, be it good or evil.

GOD'S PRESCRIPTION FOR A HAPPY HOME

TEXT : EPHESIANS 6:1-4

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

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.

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

INTRODUCTION :

Norman Wright describes four changes that have taken place in family life in recent years. One is the move toward a nuclear family. This is the

mother, father and children. In the past, it was common for families to involve the extended members as well. The second change is the selection of the mate being left up to the individual. The mate at one time was selected for the person. Third, the parents are now desiring fluid rather than fixed roles.

Finally, there has been a change in sexual morality, specifically the lack of it. Without a doubt, the family structure for the most part has greatly departed from what God intended and still intends. The rate of failure in families is astounding. This leads us to enforce the belief that being a mother, father and family is a full-time thing. If the family is to be successful, it takes hard work like anything else.

Dr. Charles Shedd tells of one occasion when he was taking a plane to Los Angeles. Beside him was a young man who was reading about teenagers and the various scenes they are involved in, especially the drug scene. All of a sudden, he exclaimed; "Oh, God-I wonder why? I suppose nobody knows. But if a father can make the difference, I sure want to make the difference."

Here was a successful businessman concerned about the family. This is not to say that the responsibility for holding a family together lies solely with the father but rather it is a consolidated effort. An old African proverb says that it takes a whole village to raise a child.

When God first created the family, there was no problem, and no problems entered the picture until sin did. Since this time, various problems have plagued the family, and it seems as if the problems increase in intensity as the generations go by. There are several causes of these problems. Sin is the first. It is our sinful nature that causes men to be chauvinistic

and treat women like servants. It is also sin that leads women to be feminists who want to throw off God's design for the family. It is sin that leads children to chaff under the authority God has given to parents.

A second cause is the environment we live in. God has always intended that his people be distinct and separate from the world system. However, Christians are often drawn into the mold of the world rather than the other way around. Then there is the influence of the humanistic society we live in. It is the position that we must allow children the freedom to express themselves without restraint because punishment and discipline hinder them from being able to do this. One of the goals of Marxist socialism is to free the children from the home and make them wards of the state.

Such a bleak picture, and yet Paul gives to us in these verses words of comfort. If we would heed the word of God, we would go a long way in building families that would be pleasing in the sight of God.

I. CHILDREN ARE TO BE SUBMISSIVE

In contrast to humanistic philosophy that would tell children to liberate themselves from parents and parents to liberate their children, is the instruction of God that children are to obey their parents. Such a philosophy of humanism has liberated children from traditional morals, values, punishment, parental and adult authority, patriotism, sexual restraint and a host of other things, but the word of God says we are to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and that the children are to obey the parents.

Children and grandchildren are gifts

from God, and we are to care for them with faithfulness and gratitude.

Paul begins this passage by addressing the children. This does not refer to merely young children but to all offspring, regardless of the age. The instruction is simple: they are to obey their parents. Not only are they to obey their parents but they are also to honour them. The obedience has to do with action while the honour has to do with attitude. We understand that it is possible to do the first without doing the second.

To obey is to listen with attentiveness. It is to respond in a positive manner to what is heard. The obedience is not to stop when the child becomes a teenager or even after the child leaves the home. The obedience is to be for as long as the parent lives. This obedience should be in the Lord. The children are to obey the parents for the Lord's sake. Their obedience to the parents is to be a reflection of their obedience to the Lord.

The parents then stand in the gap between the children and the Lord. The parent must understand that the child is a loan from God. They are stewards of the child just as they are of their time, talents and gifts that also come from God. Paul says; "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." (Ephesians 6:1). Perhaps the only exception to this rule is when the parent might instruct the child to do something wrong.

The reason children are to obey the parents is because it is right. This means that it is correct, just and righteous. There must be right acts of obedience, but there must also be right attitudes that precede the right acts of obedience. The right attitude is one of honouring the parents. Honouring the father and mother in the family is the

foundation for all human relationships in society. Obedience and honour for the parents are what teach children to have respect for other authority figures in society. Honouring one's parents includes providing for them when they are no longer able to provide for themselves. This certainly includes financial support. To adequately honour our parents, we must be personally involved in their lives.

When obedience and honour are not forthcoming, there are serious consequences. In the United States each year, there are at least eight million assaults made on parents by children. In recent years, we have been confronted with children murdering their parents or having someone else to do it. We think of Lyle and Erik Menendez. Some children are divorcing themselves from their parents. This lack of obedience and honour in the home carries over into society as children show no respect for authority figures. We think now of the many teachers are assaulted and killed by their students. When we understand that all other relationships grow out of the relationship we have with parents, we will understand how important this relationship is. When we liberate the children, we will produce a society filled with chaos and destruction. A child must grow intellectually, spiritually, mentally and socially, and it is the responsibility of the parent to provide the atmosphere where this type of growth can take place.

When the children obey and honour the parents, the result will be long life and that things will go well with them. They will have a quality of life that cannot be surpassed. Children must submit to the parents.

II. PARENTS ARE TO BE SUBMISSIVE

Fathers are not to provoke their

children to anger. Sometimes “father” is used in a restrictive sense but at other times it is used in a general sense. Here it seems to be used in a general sense. Since the father was the dominant figure in the home, it would be more likely for him to provoke the child.

To provoke carries the idea of a repeated ongoing pattern of treatment that gradually builds up a deep-seated anger and resentment that boils over in outward hostility. There are perhaps seven ways this can be done: over-protection, favouritism, pushing achievement, discouragement, parents failure to sacrifice for the children, failure to let them grow at a normal pace, using love as a tool of reward or punishment and physical and verbal abuse.

This command of Paul’s was a new concept for his day. Mutual love was almost unheard of in his time. In ancient Greece, parents were at liberty to abandon children to cold, hunger, beasts and all with no threat of punishment. A father had life and death power over his entire household. He could cast them out, sell them or kill them. At birth, the father determined the child’s fate. If the father picked the child up, it could stay in the home.

If the father walked away, the child was disposed of. The discarded healthy infants were usually raised as slaves or prostitutes.

Paul concludes by saying that parents are to bring up their children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This refers to a systematic training that includes correction for wrong doing. It involves punishment but also a teaching element. The key is that it is to be done in the Lord.

The mother of John and Charles

Wesley stated the following: “The parent who studies to subdue [self-will] in his child works together with God in the renewing and saving a soul. The parent who indulges it does the devil’s work, makes religion impracticable, salvation unattainable, and does all that in him lies to damn his child, soul and body forever.” (Susannah Wesley, quoted in *The Journal of John Wesley*. Chicago: Moody Press, n.d. Pg. 106).

CONCLUSION

The experiment is often related of how one can place a frog in a pan of cold water on a stove. If the heat is slowly increased, it is imperceptible to the frog. Even as the water begins to boil, he remains in the water and eventually boils to death, all because he adjusts to the heat as it increases.

Rather than adjusting to the damaging changes that are taking place in the family, we need to proclaim the submissiveness of parents to the children and of the children to the parents.

TEXT : EPHESIANS 6:10-23

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

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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,

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

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.

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.

TOPIC : GOD'S PROVISION FOR OUR SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS

INTRODUCTION :

Where was Paul when he wrote this epistle? (See Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). A prisoner in chains for Christ's sake.

Notice: In 1:3 believers are blessed in heavenly places blessed with all spiritual blessings.

In 6:11-20 believers are on Earth in our spiritual conflicts.

Let's remember, however, that is God who blesses us in heavenly places and provides for us here on Earth with equipment for our spiritual conflicts.

As we consider God's provision for our spiritual conflicts, let's keep in mind the following outline:

- 1. THE ENABLING FOR OUR SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS**
- 2. THE ENEMY IN OUR SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS**
- 3. THE EQUIPMENT FOR OUR SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS**

As soon as we commit ourselves to Jesus Christ, Who becomes our Saviour and Lord, we enter into a spiritual conflict with Satan. But we must remember "... greater is he that is in you, than he that is

in the world.” (1 John 4:4). Yes, we can be more than a conqueror through Him who loved us.

1. THE ENABLING FOR OUR SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS (See 6:10)

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” (Ephesians 6:10).

It is crucial to realize we are enabled through the indwelling Holy Spirit to overcome the evil one and all his attacks. “... Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.” (Zechariah 4.6). We recognize the evil one, but we are not overcome by him because we draw on the strength of the Lord to be overcomers.

Satan is very cunning and deceptive. At times, he comes like an angel of light and at other times like a roaring lion. Therefore, we need to be continually on guard and sensitive to the leading and empowering of the Holy Spirit.

2. THE ENEMY IN OUR SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS (See 6:11,12)

Satan is a real foe who has thousands of years of experience. He knows the weak areas in our lives and comes to attack us when we least expect it.

In **2 Corinthians 2:11**, Paul says we are not ignorant of his devices. Many of us fall again and again spiritually into the snares of Satan because we fail to recognize his skillful ways of deceiving us.

We are encouraged to submit to God and to resist the devil and he will flee from us. Too often we think we can outwit the

devil, but fail to realize that we must first submit to God and then, with His enabling, overcome the evil one. One effective tool that Satan uses is to strike fear into our souls. The fear of man brings a snare but he who trusts in the Lord shall be safe. Fear of others’ reaction often keeps us from sharing Christ with them.

Furthermore, we need to recognize that there is a large force of Satan and his demons who have a stronghold in the heavenly realms. They are bent on defeating both individual followers of Christ and the Church. It truly is a spiritual warfare. Notice the key word is to **wrestle** not against fellow human beings but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms.

We can respond in one of two ways when we face our enemy. One way is to retreat and hide, pretending he is not there. Another way is to put on the whole armour of God and stand firmly against the enemy.

Let’s examine the equipment for our spiritual conflict.

3. THE EQUIPMENT FOR OUR SPIRITUAL CONFLICT (See 6:13-20)

The implication is that we cannot stand against the enemy of our soul in our own strength, even as followers of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we need to put on the whole armour of God to withstand the attacks of the devil.

Paul was in chains. He was constantly

chained to a Roman guard. Therefore, he had a very close look at the Roman armour worn by the Roman guard.

3.1 THE BELT OF TRUTH

This is the first piece of armour we are to put on.

Ephesians 1:13 “ ... the word of truth, ... ” is the gospel of salvation, that is, the system of facts concerning man, sin, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and salvation, etc.

Ephesians 4:15 “ ... the truth in love, ... ” is speaking the truth in love to each other.

Ephesians 4:21 “ ... the truth is in Jesus:” that is, he is speaking of certain facts which we have come to know only because of our relationship with Jesus.

Ephesians 4:25 We are told to speak “ ... truth ... ” with our neighbour, that is, all our conversation is to be honest, upright, and sincere.

What does Paul mean by the concept of a belt of truth?

The belt was a very vital part of the guard's armour. It helped him to keep the other parts of his armour firm and secure. Likewise, we, as Christians need to be truthful in our actions and speech so that we will be able to resist Satan and his attacks on our lives. He is the father of lies and is not truthful.

A man asked a music teacher, “What's the good news today?” The teacher struck key “a” with a tuning fork and said, “Always the same now for 5000 years.”

2. BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN ITS

PLACE

This piece of armour protects the guard's chest and stomach. It is like a bullet proof vest.

Spiritually speaking, the breast plate of righteousness is not our own ability for righteous living.

Philippians 3:9 says “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”

Jesus, during his whole life on earth, lived a righteous life, thereby overcoming the enemy again and again. Likewise, we need to appropriate the righteousness of Christ to also overcome the darts of the enemy. The breastplate of righteousness is also a protection of our emotional life.

Paul encouraged Timothy to follow after righteousness. That means we are encouraged to make godly living our daily goal through the enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

3.3 YOUR FEET FITTED WITH THE READINESS THAT COMES FROM THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Be ready to face the enemy at all times. The peace of mind and heart which Christ gives will enable us to be courageous and obedient to the Lord. (See Ephesians 6:15).

Romans 10:15 says: “ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

This gives us a sense of readiness for

the battle through Christ who demonstrated readiness at all times while on Earth.

3.4 IN ADDITION TO ALL THIS TAKE THE SHIELD OF FAITH

The shield of faith enables us to be ready for Satan's fiery darts of doubt, denial, and deceit. We must not be vulnerable to defeat but courageous in victory.

The shield covered the whole front part of the soldier. It was made of two pieces of wood glued together. One of the dangerous weapons in those days was the fiery dart. The tip of the dart was dipped in pitch and then, just before it was shot, it was set on fire, the idea being that the burning dart would set the people and things on fire when it hit. However, when the fiery dart hit the shield it sank into the wood and the fire went out.

Spiritually speaking, Satan has many fiery darts, or temptations, whereby he tries to defeat us. We can quench them by the shield of faith. We need faith in Jesus, and in His ability, to give us the strength to resist the temptations and obey Him.

Satan sends darts of doubt, fear, selfishness, discouragement, disappointment, etc. We can quench them through our living faith in Jesus. When exercising faith, we are saying, "Fully assured, I trust Him." Satan seeks to get us to take our eyes off Jesus and, with his fiery darts, he wants us to flinch and become defeated.

Three questions regarding the shield of faith are:

1. What is the shield of faith?

It is not some mystical experience.

It is not some sacrificial formula.

It is, however, what I believe about Jesus and my understanding of Him and His word, in which I have placed my faith.

2. Why do I need a shield of faith?

To extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy

– temptations to doubt, to lust, to worry, etc

– to trip me up and distract me from what Jesus wants me to do

– to cause us to take our eyes off of Jesus (See Hebrews 12:1,2).

– to try and get us to exchange God's truth for his lies

We need to ask ourselves several questions:

1. What takes the place of Jesus in my life?

2. What are the priorities of Jesus in my life?

3. Is there sin in my life I'm trying to justify?

SIN – believing Satan's lies over God's Truth and acting on his lies.

FAITH is the shield we raise to extinguish the arrows of Satan.

3. How do I use the shield of faith to extinguish the flaming arrows of Satan?

It is a real battle for our minds.
We need to saturate our minds with
God's Word and not listen to Satan's lies.

Through faith in Jesus Christ we need to
take captive all evil thoughts and focus
our thoughts on Him and His Word.

Note how Jesus responded to Satan's
fiery darts in Matthew 4:1-11.

Ask "Am I buying into Satan's lies or
God's Truth?"

Notes from Pastor Chris Douglas,
7/23/00. Central Heights Church.

3.5 THE HELMET OF SALVATION

The helmet protects our head and mind.
We need to keep our mind focused on
Jesus so that Satan will not get a
stronghold on our thought life. Many
spiritual battles are either lost or won in
our thought life. Satan seeks to cause us
to dwell on past sins that have been
forgiven, thereby seeking to defeat us.
Sometimes he seeks to have us become
proud, thereby causing us to sin. He
wants us to stop focusing on Scripture
and to resort to our own reasoning.

3.6 THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Truly, the Word of God is our defence
against sin and the attacks of
Satan. Jesus repeatedly
used the sword of the Spirit
to defeat Satan's
temptations.

Sometime ago, I was witnessing
to a fellow and, in response to his
objections, I quoted Scripture. Out of
frustration, he said, "Stop quoting

Scripture and let's start reasoning." I
said, "Come now, and let us reason
together, saith the LORD: ..." (Isaiah
1.18). He responded, "You are hopeless."

3.7 PRAY IN THE SPIRIT ON ALL OCCASIONS : 6:18-20

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

*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,*

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

NOTE: THE FOUR "ALLS" OF PRAYER
– **THE VARIETY OF PRAYER** – "... all
prayer and supplication ..." (Ephesians
6:18).

What are some types of prayer?

– confession of sin, profession of faith,
adoration, thanksgiving, intercession, etc.
– "Oh Lord, bless all that awaits Your
blessing."

– **THE WHEN AND WHERE OF
PRAYER** – At all times, in the Spirit.

In all your ways, acknowledge Him, in the
sphere of the Spirit, any where. No
specific location.

– **the manor of prayer** – being
on the alert in all perseverance
and supplication

– **the indirect object of prayer** –
for all saints, that is, young or old

– **that when we open our**

**mouths, words may be given
to us so that we will fearlessly
make known the gospel of
Jesus Christ, trusting the Holy
Spirit to draw people to Jesus
Christ**

**whole armour of God by faith and
exercise your faith in Christ daily.**

Jake Balzer

REMEMBER : to daily put on the

**Scripture taken from the King James
Bible.**