

CHRISTIAN WARRIOR



GENE CUNNINGHAM

As Jesus Christ prepared to send the disciples for the first time throughout Israel with His message, He included in their instructions this admonition: "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8). This six-word summary of grace explains the financial policy of the publications and audio ministries of Basic Training. All audio materials and publications are provided **without charge** to anyone who requests them. For a catalog of available materials write:



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*Take up the full armor of God,
that you may be able to resist in
the evil day, and having done
everything, to stand firm. Stand
firm therefore ...*

Ephesians 6:13–14

Before you begin any study of the Word of God, take a few moments to make sure that you are in fellowship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit. Comprehension, like everything else in the Christian life, is a gift that can be appropriated only by faith. The Bible clearly lays out three requirements that must be met before we can expect to understand God's Word. All three require nothing from us but faith.

1. *We must be believers in Jesus Christ (John 3:16).*

It is impossible for unbelievers to understand the Word of God (1 Cor. 2:14). Jesus declared to the leading religious leader of His day that apart from spiritual birth man is blind to the things of God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit ... You must be born again" (John 3:6).

2. *We must be filled with the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:12).*

Only the Spirit of God knows the thoughts of God. As believers we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but when we sin, we break fellowship with God and cease to function in the power of the Spirit. When we confess our sins, God is always faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). The moment we confess, we are restored to fellowship and are again under the control of the Holy Spirit and, therefore, able to learn.

3. *We must approach in faith (Heb. 11:6).*

Only when we approach in humility, with child-like faith, will the Word of God make sense to us (Matt. 18:4; Heb. 11:3). Where we find Scripture at odds with our ideas or our desires, we must submit to the authority of the Word. Intimacy, understanding, and power are reserved for those who are willing to do God's will (John 7:17).

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PREFACE

The elite warriors of the ancient Roman Empire were called the *Triarii*. When these battle-hardened soldiers engaged the enemy, each man knew to do one thing: Take one square yard of ground, clear it, advance; take one square yard of ground, clear it, advance. The *Triarii* never retreated; they held their ground until victory or death.

The battle cry of the *Triarii*, *Stete*, “Stand firm!” was adopted by the Apostle Paul to encourage Christians to steadfast devotion to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a cry that needs repeating today.

Every one of us lives in a war zone. All around us an invisible war rages—the angelic conflict, the struggle between truth and lies, between right and wrong, between the Lord Jesus Christ and the fallen realm. The moment we place our trust in Christ and receive eternal salvation, we enter not only the royal family of God, but also the royal army of God; we become a combatant in this battle of the ages.

We cannot choose whether or not we will be engaged in the conflict: The war wages regardless of how we feel about it. We can, however, choose whether we will be casualties or effective combatants. God’s desire is that every believer becomes a hero of faith. But heroics are costly, and God will force no one to excel. Preparation, training, and vigilance—these are matters of choice.

This book is a study of Christian combat, a manual for the soldier of faith. In it we will follow the Apostle Paul’s development of Christian warfare through the use of military terminology in his letters.

In military life, the soldier moves step-by-step to his objective. He moves from recruitment through basic training, preparation, and equipping for combat. He experiences the first taste of conflict and learns to press on in the field of battle. His courage, developed in the mud and muck of war, enables him to stand firm against the

enemy and to win battlefield victories. And when the war is over, he returns home wearing decorations he has earned for valor in the conflict.

Paul would have us understand that in the Christian life, movement from induction to decoration must come step-by-step, point-by-point. As believers in Jesus Christ, we must follow God's training program. It is a difficult program; it calls for self-sacrifice, perseverance, and endurance. It also takes time, but God gives each of us an allotment of time—exactly the right amount we need to finish the race He has set before us. There are no extra minutes in His allotment. Each moment must be redeemed or it is lost forever.

Our time in this generation is running out. I believe we are on the threshold of the Rapture of the Church. We do not have any idea how many days we have left, but we know one thing: However many there are, they are just enough and that's all. We have no time to waste. Each of us has just enough days, if we redeem them, to accomplish the task for which we are here. That task is to lift up the Person of Jesus Christ, to show the world through our lives, the grace, the honor, the courage, the stability, the commitment, and the love of the King of kings and Lord of lords—our awesome God.

G.C.

I. OPERATIONS

Philippians 1:1–14

The Apostle Paul's favorite analogy of the Christian life was that of the believer as warrior and soldier of faith. Paul used military terminology in almost all his letters, but in none so much as in the Philippian Epistle.

Why would Paul so stress the military perspective in writing to these people? The reason has to do with the history and population of the city of Philippi. Named for Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, Philippi was built at a strategic point between Europe and Asia. From the very beginning it was a military outpost.

Philippi was made a Roman colony and eventually became a retirement center for Roman military personnel. Because of this, when the Apostle Paul came to the city and began to win people to Christ, he found people who understood order, authority, and discipline—people who were willing to endure hardship and to put their lives on the line for a cause.

The Philippian church became one of the greatest churches of the First Century in large part because these believers recognized that Paul was a four-star general in the spiritual conflict, and they were willing to follow his instructions.

In Philippians 1:1–14, Paul sketches out five aspects of military operations that apply to Christian warfare: organization, communication, logistics, plan of attack, and strategy.

ORGANIZATION

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Phil. 1:1–2

In order to function, any organization must have three things: a system of authority, clearly defined policies, and an objective.

Authority

The first thing a believer must understand if he is to be effective in the plan of God is authority. What is it? Where does it come from? From whom does the believer receive his orders? How is he to know what his duties are? In Paul's first words to the Philippians, we see three aspects of authority.

Authority requires humility. Paul's Hebrew name was *Saulos*, his family name *Paulos*, and his tribal name *Benjamitis*. *Saulos* means "mighty." Saulos Paulos Benjamitis became mighty in the human realm, advancing beyond his contemporaries in the faith of Judaism (Gal. 1:14). But after he met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul realized he was not as big as he had thought. In time, he began using his family name *Paulos*, which means "little or small."

Authority means service. Paul begins by pointing not to his authority, but to his submission to authority. He says not "Paul the apostle," but "Paul the bond-servant." The word used here is *doulos*, which means "born into slavery." Paul became a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ by regeneration. Now he belongs to the Savior of the world and his job is to do the work of his Master.

Authority means responsibility. Those in authority must work harder and their task is more difficult because they are responsible for the people under them. Paul addresses this to the "*saints*," from *hagios*, the root of three key New Testament words: "saint," "sanctified," and "holy." Believers are not always holy in their practice, but they are always holy in their position in Christ.

Paul also includes in his greeting the overseers, who are the pastors of local churches, and the deacons, administrators with responsibility for different areas of service.

From a study of the New Testament, we can draw an organizational chart for the church of Paul's day and for today. Paul as an apostle was in authority. Apostles received direct revelation from Jesus Christ, so their authority was based on the spoken Word of God. When the Canon of Scripture was completed around A.D. 100, the office of apostle ended and the written Word became the ultimate authority. Next in rank is the pastor, then deacons, and then the saints or members of the congregation.

Policy

God's policy is always and only grace. Grace means everything God is able to do for you because Jesus died on the cross. Unless you understand that, you will never amount to anything in the Christian life because only grace gives honor to God. Anything else—any system of works—is an attempt to take from God the honor that belongs to Him alone.

The way God deals with you at the moment you receive Jesus Christ as Savior is the way God deals with you the rest of your life. You are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8–9). You are told to walk in Him in the same way that you received Him (Col. 2:6). How can you fulfill your ministry? One way: grace. Depend on God to supply, to lead, to produce results. The policy is that God supplies everything.

Objective

When you align yourself with grace and simply receive what God has to offer instead of trying to give to Him, you will have something amazing in your life: peace—reconciliation with God. This is the objective.

The word *eirene* means “reconciliation, peace, prosperity.” Paul introduced his letters with “*grace and peace*” and never with “*peace and grace*” because only grace produces reconciliation with God (Rom. 5:1). Peace in your life and spiritual prosperity are based on your reconciliation to God by grace through faith. Every time Paul wrote the phrase “*grace and peace*,” he was summarizing the entire plan of God.

COMMUNICATION

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

Phil. 1:3–4

In wartime, communication is a life-and-death matter. Orders from the commander and requests from the field must be heard and understood.

Three areas of spiritual combat communication are highlighted here: prayer—illustrated by Paul’s prayer support of these believers; guidance—illustrated by the Philippian church’s financial support and encouragement to Paul; and the Word of God—illustrated by Paul’s teaching ministry.

1. Prayer. How are you going to communicate with the Lord? How are you going to communicate your needs and the needs of other people? Through prayer. Simple, clear, direct prayer. Paul begins his prayer for the Philippians with thanksgiving—*eucharisto*, a word that means “to acknowledge how good grace is.”
2. Guidance. God wants you to understand His will much more than you want to. He wants you to be in the right place, doing the right thing, making the right decisions. But guidance requires that you be filled with the Holy Spirit and that you have the Word of God in your soul. The Philippians understood guidance and so were able to participate in Paul’s work. Paul makes it very clear in Philippians 4:13–19 that whenever he was in need, a gift came from the Philippians, no matter where he was. How is it that their gift always came right when Paul needed it most? They were being guided (by God the Holy Spirit) in their giving.
3. The Word of God. The Bible is the greatest communication manual the world has ever known. But to be effective in your life, the Word must be met with faith. Biblically, faith is defined three ways: Reception of the Word, trust in the Word, and application of the Word. First you receive the Word; then you believe it; and then—this is the tough one—you act on it.

LOGISTICS

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. Phil. 1:6, 7

Logistics is the military science of procuring, maintaining, and transporting materiel and personnel. Every army that ever marched had to have open supply lines. How does God supply His children with what they need to face the conflict?

Paul covers the principle of provision beginning in the last part of verse 5 when he talks about the Philippian believers' participation in the Gospel. The word *koinonia* means "participation or involvement," but it can also be translated "fellowship." The Philippians could not just be spectators; they had to be involved. Fellowship with God demands involvement in God's work. Fellowship with believers demands involvement in a local church. The sense of belonging that we all crave, the feeling of being part of a team, only comes from being actively involved with other believers in God's work.

Paul had needs; he could not go out and work for his living; he could not provide for himself. Paul was in Rome. The Philippians were in Asia Minor. But Paul had one thing he was sure of—the supply line would stay open. Because of the Philippians' faithfulness in the past, Paul knew that they would continue to participate in his work, and he was confident that God would finish what He had started in their lives. This is a marvelous confidence that he could not have in many other people.

In verse 7, he says it is only right for him to feel this way because he has them in his heart. This is one of the most interesting phrases in the Bible because it can be read two ways: "I, Paul, have you in my heart" or "You, Philippians, have me in your heart." Both are accurate translations from the Greek.

Because the Apostle Paul had them in his heart, he prayed for them and they gave to him. Therefore, the bridges were kept open so that the supply could continue to come through. Because the supply continued, the Philippians became partakers of grace with Paul.

When God sends supplies, He does not want the rations stockpiled. He wants them distributed to meet the needs of the troops. God wanted Paul to be able to do his job, but He always works through people. He wanted to find a supply line that was open. He found poor believers in Philippi who were willing to be channels. And when God found a pipeline that did not get clogged, He sent all the supply through it!

The word translated "*partakers*" is *koinonia* again, but this time it is used with a preposition that means "to do something together." Paul is saying, "God supplies me but in doing it He supplies you because you are open to the supply line system."

PLAN OF ATTACK

For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
Phil. 1:8-11

Every soldier ought to have a desire to do damage to the enemy. How will you as a Christian go on the attack? If you want to frustrate and damage your enemy, take in and be positive to the Word of God. That is the foundation of everything involved in the attack.

Paul begins to speak of the assault in verses 8-11. He first recognizes a fundamental principle of conflict: You will have very little time to spend with those you care about. Under combat situations you develop the greatest, most lasting friendships you will ever have because you are welded together in the fires of

adversity. Paul had this kind of friends in Philippi and he longed for them *“with the affection of Christ.”*

“Affection” here means *“the capacity to appreciate.”* Paul is saying, *“Jesus Christ appreciates you, Philippians, and I appreciate you as much as He does. I long for you and have a desire to be with you, but I can’t because you must stand on your battlefield and I on mine.”*

In verses 9–11, he makes three requests that will indicate how they will carry out the assault:

1. *“That your love may abound still more and more.”* What would be the foremost love Paul is talking about? Love for Jesus Christ. How are you going to manifest love for Jesus? In knowledge and discernment. The word *epignosis* means *“full knowledge, applied knowledge.”* *“Discernment”* is *“understanding, the result of having learned and applied.”* Paul says you need to learn and apply more. Don’t give up. Keep studying. Keep advancing.
2. *“That you may approve the things that are excellent.”* *“Approve”* means *“to test and prove.”* The word translated *“excellent”* refers to *“that which carries through.”* Paul is saying that when you study the Word of God you will come to the point where you are able to test and prove what works. You want to advance; you want to carry the assault forward. How able are you to find out what works, what will carry you through the obstacles to the goal?
3. *“In order to be sincere and blameless.”* *“Sincere”* means *“to be judged by the light.”* If you can, through your life, prove and test what works, you will stand in the light of the glory and be judged with honor. What will the light display? That you are *“blameless until the day of Christ.”* The word *“blameless”* carries the idea that no obstacle held you back, no sin could make you give up. You kept on pressing forward. You were unstoppable! This is the goal.

Paul wants these people to press the attack, something they can do only as they are filled with the Holy Spirit.

STRATEGY

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known, throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the Word of God without fear. Phil. 1:12–14

In combat, you must be able to evaluate your environment and turn it to your advantage. Your plan—your strategy for victory—must be tailored to the conditions under which you fight.

Paul evaluated his environment. He had disobeyed repeated orders from God and gone to Jerusalem (Acts 21). The discipline God imposed on him was four years in a Roman prison. Now, chained to a Roman soldier in what people might call the least conducive environment for service, Paul recognized the principle of Romans 8:28, that *“God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him.”* Paul knew God had not lost control; he knew Christ was still on the throne; therefore he knew he was where he was for a reason.

Paul’s strategy is revealed in Philippians 1:14. His plan was that his example of valor on the battlefield would stimulate other believers, and it worked. In the face of persecution, believers in Rome said, *“Wait, Paul is unafraid. We can take courage; we can be bold.”*

But Paul’s strategy was even more far-reaching. The Praetorian guards to whom Paul was chained were among the most highly respected warriors in the Roman Empire. There were 10,000 members of the Praetorian Guard in Rome. These men had been handpicked from among the *Triarii*, Rome’s toughest combat veterans.

When the soldiers were chained to Paul’s wrist, Rome thought, *“We’ve got you, Paul.”* But Paul said, *“No, I’ve got you!”* He witnessed night and day to these men and won a multitude to Christ.

The influence of these men in the generation following the Apostle Paul was so great that the time of the Antonine Caesars from A.D. 90–190 is considered by many historians to be the greatest time of freedom and liberty in world history. This was the time of *Pax Romana*, the “peace of Rome.” But the *Pax Romana* did not happen by accident. It happened because of Christianity in the first century and because of one man—chained in a Roman cell, supplied by a band of believers in Philippi who knew that God is able, in spite of circumstances—to change the course of history.

II. RECRUITMENT

2 Timothy 2:1–6

Every person who believes in Jesus Christ has become a new recruit in the army of God. But a recruit without training is of no use on the battlefield. The recruit must understand his purpose; he must understand himself and his limitations; he must understand his enemy.

In 2 Timothy chapter 2, Paul sends instructions to a young man he had recruited on his second missionary journey. From Acts 16 we know that Timothy was raised amidst conflict. He was born in the area of Lystra, where Paul had faced tremendous opposition on his first missionary journey. Timothy must have seen battles of another sort at home in the struggle between the faith of his Jewish mother and grandmother, and the unbelief of his Greek father.

People saw Timothy's motivation and commitment and spoke well of the young man (Acts 16:2). Paul had been looking for someone to train and when he heard about and saw Timothy, he knew he had found his man. The Greek in Acts 16:3 says that, emphatically, **this** is the man Paul had been looking for. So Paul took him. The verb translated "took" means "to seize." Paul probably marched up to Timothy's mother and said, "Lois, kiss your son goodbye. He's coming with me." And he took him.

Acts 16:4–5 tells us that Paul, Silas, and Timothy passed through a number of cities, delivering the apostolic letter of Acts 15:23–29 and encouraging the young churches on their route.

THE POWER SOURCE

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

2 Tim. 2:1

Paul calls Timothy his "son." The word *teknon* has a different meaning depending on whether it is applied to the son of a woman or the son of a man. For the son of a woman, *teknon* means "birth." But when it is used for the son of a man, it implies "training." In the ancient world, while the mother bore the child, the father was responsible for the child's instruction and training.

“*Be strong*” here is *endunamis*. *Dunamis* means “power, ability;” *en* means “within.” This is inner power, inner strength. The verb is a present middle imperative. The present tense tells Timothy to keep on being strengthened. The middle voice, which is something we don’t have in English, is reflexive. It tells the person being spoken to that he must produce the action of the verb, but that this action will be to his benefit. As an imperative, this is a command from Timothy’s spiritual father, Paul. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul is saying, “Timothy, you must keep on being strengthened. You must keep on disciplining yourself as a student. You must keep on in the principles of academic discipline that I instilled in you while you were under my instruction.”

Paul wanted Timothy to be powerful in the faith. But he knew that to achieve that, Timothy had to understand the need for self-discipline in the area of study. So Paul tells him to keep on being strengthened within in the sphere of grace. From references to Timothy throughout Paul’s writings, we know that Timothy had problems with timidity, that he had difficulty asserting authority and leadership. In 2 Timothy 1:7, Paul reminded him that “*God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.*” Again and again Paul emphasized to this young recruit the power of God that was available to him. Timothy had hang-ups; he had problems. But Paul wanted him to know that God’s grace can overcome all personal limitation.

Because we are born into a fallen realm, because we are born with a sin nature, we all have flaws and shortcomings. All of us are born broken. We come into the world cracked, flawed, insufficient. But the grace of God is our glue; salvation and spiritual growth mend our cracks and fill our deficiencies.

God wants His children to grow up. He wants them to move from the point of salvation through spiritual infancy, through the difficult stage of adolescence to the point of spiritual maturity. In order for us to achieve this, God gives us His power. Christians give all kinds of excuses for why they can’t do the things God wants them to do, but none of the excuses are valid. Grace will fill every deficiency in our lives if we will let it.

This is why Paul challenges his student Timothy to keep on growing, to keep on being strong in the sphere of grace. Grace means that God supplies everything, and this grace is “*in Christ Jesus.*”

What does it mean to be “*in Christ*”? At the moment of your salvation, the Holy Spirit placed you into eternal union with Jesus Christ. Positionally, this means two things:

First, since you have been united with Christ in His death, the power of sin has been broken in your life. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for every sin ever committed. When you are identified with Him in His death, Romans 8:1 becomes true of your life: There is no condemnation for you because you are in Christ. Sin can no longer master you because you are under grace and not under law (Rom. 6:14).

Second, since you were identified with Christ in His resurrection and are united with Him now at His throne, you can walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). God has transferred you to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13); you have been raised up with Christ (Col. 3:1); you have died and your new life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

Positional truth becomes a practical reality only when you know it and apply it. You have to act on it. You have to live by faith—to live as if what you **know** to be true really **is** true. Timothy was living by faith.

TRAINING

And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.

2 Tim. 2:2

Paul now shifts to an analogy of the businessman, specifically the banker. Timothy had been taught many things (many truths and doctrines) as he traveled with Paul and Silas. “*Entrust*” is from a Greek word that means “to place on deposit for safekeeping.” The same word is used by Paul in 2 Timothy 1:12 to explain that he had placed his soul in safekeeping with the Lord.

He used the word again in 2 Timothy 1:14 when he told Timothy to “*guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.*” Paul had entrusted his teaching—the spiritual riches of his wisdom and understanding—to his spiritual son Timothy.

The only way to keep truth safe is to deposit it in someone else’s life. Paul says that these truths must be entrusted, deposited in the safekeeping of faithful men “*who will be able to teach others.*” “*Able to teach*” means “*capable, qualified, sufficient.*” It indicates that there are people who, like Paul and Timothy, have a teaching gift. Having mastered the discipline of the student, Timothy must now master the discipline of the teacher. Paul is asking him to deposit the treasures he learned into the lives of others.

COMBAT

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.

2 Tim. 2:3

A soldier is designed for combat; combat demands extreme self-discipline. The way of growth is not easy—it is not designed to be easy. It is designed to demand a great deal of discipline and concentration. It demanded a lot from Timothy. But Paul knows that if Timothy is serious about advancing, he must prepare; if he is preparing, he has to know why. Paul tells Timothy why—because he is going to face the enemy.

“*Suffer hardship*” is a triple compound word, *sunkakopattheo*. *Pattheo* is our word “*pathos.*” It means “*to suffer.*” *Sun* means “*together.*” “*Kako*” is from *kakos* and means “*evil, hardship, pain.*” Evil is Satan’s policy for attacking the army of God. Timothy had to recognize that he had been recruited for this. He had to understand that Paul was about to depart in victory (2 Tim. 4:6–8), and he was determined to leave a heritage behind in the life of Timothy. Paul was about to go down in martyrdom; someone would have to pick up the colors for the next generation. Who would do it if Timothy did not?

Paul had given Timothy an example to follow. Before he was recruited, Timothy saw Paul display tremendous spiritual heroics by returning to Lystra where he had been stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19–20). In spite of this attempt on his life, Paul realized that there were people there who were hungry for the Gospel. Because he had the courage to go back to the city of his assailants, because he was committed to the cause of Christ, even possibly at the cost of his own life, he found something in Lystra. He found Timothy, the man he would groom and train to carry the truth to the next generation.

MOTIVATION

No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.
2 Tim. 2:4

Being a soldier demands hardship. What could possibly motivate the soldier to endure the rigors of boot camp and military life.

Verse 4 tells us. The “*soldier in active service*” simply refers to one who is serving in a military campaign. A campaign is tough, and the soldier who intends to stand cannot afford to entangle himself in the distractions of civilian life. You cannot be a soldier and a civilian at the same time. You have to be one or the other. You cannot live the Christian way of life and be involved in cosmic activity at the same time. You have to choose one or the other.

Paul is saying this: At any point of time you are either in fellowship or out of fellowship; you are either in the battle or out of the battle; you are either with the cause of Christ or an enemy of the cause of Christ.

No soldier has time for the occupations of the civilian. Why? The military dictates every moment of the soldier’s life. The soldier must be here at a certain time; he must be there at a certain time. He is told when to go, when to stay, what to do, and how to do it. He is expected to do what he is told, and he does. That is—or should be—the Christian life for the individual believer under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

No soldier involved in a campaign entangles himself in the activities or the occupations of a civilian. Why? *“So that he may please the one who enlisted him.”* *“That he may please”* is a contingency. The subjunctive mood indicates that this is based on personal response. You make your own free-will decision to please God, to commit yourself to the service He has enlisted you for. The word “enlist” is *stratologeō*; it actually means “to call into service.”

In the ancient world, if a man wanted to be a commander, he went out and signed up however many people he could. If he signed up 50, if he signed up 100—those were his troops. He was the commander and he led the men he recruited into battle. The man who wanted to be a commander had to be the kind of man people could trust or else no one would volunteer to follow him.

Jesus Christ is signing up troops for His army, and He challenges you to follow Him. One of the highest motivations you could have in life is to please the One who enlisted you, to have the Lord Jesus Christ tell you that you did well in combat, you succeeded, you were victorious.

REWARD

And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules. The hard working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.

2 Tim. 2:5–6

Here, with the analogies of the athlete and the farmer, Paul introduces another motivation for involvement. The athlete runs. Why? He wants to win the prize. He is motivated. The farmer works. Why? Why would he sweat day after day in the sun? To be the first to share the crop. He is motivated.

God knows that you need motivation and He has provided it. Why should you as a believer be motivated to get involved in the royal army of God? For reward! The exhortation to “*endure hardship*” in 2 Timothy 2:3 is setting up an announcement of battlefield decorations. Then in verses 11–13, a portion of an early Christian hymn, lists four conditions and four results:

1. "If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him." In other words, if you are united with Christ, you have salvation and eternal life.
2. "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." "Endure" here is the same as "suffer hardship" from verse 3. This means that you are faithful, loyal, willing to take the training, the adversity, the rigors of military life. In your endurance, you will reign with Him. This is something beyond salvation and eternal life; it is rank and authority in eternity; it is eternal reward.
3. "If we deny Him, He will also deny us." This is not loss of salvation, but defeat in the Christian way of life. It is denial of Jesus Christ by your practice, by your existence. If you deny Him in your life, He will deny you reward before the Judgment Seat of Christ. (See Chapter XIV.)
4. "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself." This indicates security. Paul writes this to remind you that though you can lose reward, you can never lose your salvation.

III. DRILL

Philippians 3:12–18

The first military discipline a new recruit learns is how to march. In Philippians 3:16 Paul uses another military term that the Philippian believers would certainly have understood. *Stoicheo* was used by the Roman army for the precision marching that took a body of soldiers from place to place. The new recruit had to learn to follow the voice of the one calling cadence and to move in unison with other soldiers. The recruit did not, of course, know where he was going. But he listened to the call of someone who did know where the troops needed to be and how to get them there in the fastest and most efficient way.

The new Christian, like the new soldier, has no idea where he is going in life or how to get there. But God provides pastor-teachers who do understand the goals and objectives God has for every one of His children. The believer's first task is to listen to instruction and learn to march.

OBJECTIVE

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:12–14

When Paul became a believer in Jesus Christ, human success lost its appeal. He counted all things loss because he found Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:8–9). But Paul did not want to sit at the foot of the cross the rest of his days; he wanted to move from the point of his salvation to what he calls in verses 13 and 14 “*the goal*.”

Christianity is goal oriented. Paul says he presses on “*toward the goal for the prize of the upward call*,” the purpose of God for his life. Paul knew there was a reason for his existence, that he had a destiny—a call from God—and he wanted to lay hold of it. He knew

that if he attained the goal, he would receive the prize. He knew that God has laid up eternal reward for every Christian who fulfills the plan of God for his life.

Central to God's plan is a growth process designed to take every believer from the point of spiritual birth to maturity and beyond. The Word describes five stages of spiritual growth. In Romans 1:17, the Apostle Paul says that believers go "*from faith to faith.*" There are five Hebrew words for faith found in the Old Testament and they parallel five stages of growth.

The Babe

Peter told his readers in 1 Peter 2:2 that they should, like newborn babes, desire the milk of the Word. Babies cannot (and are not expected to) do much except eat, sleep, and cry. They cannot take care of themselves. All believers enter the family of God as infants when they exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. From the point of salvation, God's plan is always upward. With time and the nourishment of the Word of God, the young believer will grow out of infancy.

Amen means to lean on for support. In Genesis 15:6, Abraham "believed" the Lord and it was reckoned to him as righteousness. This is his saving faith. What a perfect analogy for the babe, who is totally helpless and must depend on his parents for everything.

The Adolescent

Passages like 1 John 2:13–14 describe the adolescent believer as the "*young*" and "*strong.*" These are believers who have grown to the point where they understand some principles of truth and are beginning to apply them to life. But like most adolescents they have the growing pains of arrogance and rebellion against authority; they are sometimes too eager to act on their own, and this gets them into trouble.

Batach is a wrestling term that means "to body slam your opponent to the mat." It is usually translated "*trust,*" as in Psalms 37:3 and 55:23. First Peter 5:7 is an illustration of *batach*: Cast all your cares on the Lord. The believer with *batach* faith is the adolescent who is entering that wrestling phase where he learns to live his own

life, to make his own decisions, to trust in the Lord instead of other people for the solutions to his problems.

The Mature

The mature believer is the person who has a reservoir of the Word of God in his soul. Hebrews 5:14 and 6:1 tell us that the mature believer is able to take in meat—the advanced doctrine of the Word. He is trained, disciplined. He exercises himself and builds spiritual muscle in life. A Christian who has arrived at spiritual maturity knows enough about the Bible to take responsibility for his own life. He is not ready to take on everyone else's problems, but he can take control of his own life. He understands that God has a plan for his life, and he becomes occupied with fulfilling that plan.

Chasah means "to find refuge." It pictures a rabbit fleeing from a wolf into the cleft of a rock. Psalm 57:1, written while David was hiding from Saul in the cave of Adullam, speaks of this kind of faith, which parallels the trust of maturity. In maturity, the believer has confidence because he is learning to rest in the Lord, to relax. He does not fall apart every time pressure hits because he knows that the Lord is the Rock of his salvation.

The Hero of Faith

All of Hebrews 11 speaks of men and women who were mighty in faith. The heroes of faith are the ones who have gone beyond maturity and have learned to stand firm in the face of conflict. These people still fall, but they always stand back up. They advance beyond simply taking responsibility for their own lives to becoming responsible for the lives of other people. They are there to pick up their fallen comrades, to treat their wounds, to encourage them, and to supply their needs.

Yachal means "to apply healing to a wound." If you are ever going to enter into hero-of-faith status, you will have to find in faith the healing for the wounds you will suffer in battle—the wounds inflicted by things, by people, by circumstances. The cure is always faith, and it comes only from the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). In Lamentations 3:21, the prophet Jeremiah found healing in a time of terrible pain and suffering.

The Friend of God

The highest of all attainments in the Christian life is to become a friend of God, illustrated by Abraham and Rahab in James 2:23–25. Very few Christians progress this far in the spiritual life, but every believer has the potential and the assets necessary to move from spiritual infancy to friend-of-God status.

Qawah is the strongest Hebrew word for faith. The word means “to weave together many small strands into an unbreakable rope.” This is the faith of Isaiah 40:31—the endurance, persistence, tenacity of the believer who consistently weaves promises, principles, and doctrines together—and **never quits**. This is the faith of the friend of God.

To be a friend of God is the greatest possible achievement in this life. There will be **nothing** to compare with the joy of standing before the throne of Jesus Christ in eternity, with all of the multitudes of those who are saved throughout all ages, and being identified with those very few who kept perspective in life and who pressed on continually for all that God had for them!

ATTITUDE

Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. Phil. 3:15–16

Spiritual maturity begins with an attitude. The word “*perfect*” in verse 15 comes from *teleios* and means “to be accomplished, advanced, developed, mature.” “*Attitude*,” *phroneo*, means “a system of thinking.” *Phroneo* is a present subjective, which means “a present potential thought pattern.” This is something that you can choose to live by or to reject.

Paul is urging those in the Philippian church who have reached maturity to think by a particular standard. He presents four challenges to the mature believers:

1. Do not think you have “arrived.” Paul tells the Philippians that even he does not regard himself as having reached the goal. This great believer took the attitude that he still had a long way to go.
2. Be single minded. Paul is saying, “I am not at the pinnacle of success in the spiritual realm, but I have reduced life down to one thing, and I will make everything else subordinate to the cause of pleasing Jesus Christ and fulfilling the plan of God for my life.”
3. Live in the present tense. Paul says he forgot what was behind and he pressed on to what was ahead. This does not mean that the past has no value and meaning. It does not mean that you don’t look forward to what is ahead. But you press on—**now**. Focus on today!
4. Press the spiritual advance. The word translated “*press on*” was used in two ways in the ancient world. It was used for the runner in the athletic competition who came to the last hundred yards and entered his final sprint. He pressed on, exerting all his energy toward the one goal of crossing the line and breaking the tape. It was also used for those in military service who saw the enemy ahead and pressed the advance—they attacked. Believers should be on the offensive.

Once the believer has the attitude, he must have the application. Knowledge and learning demand production. “*Let us keep living*” is from the word *stoicheo*, “to march in ranks.” Marching is the most basic discipline that a new recruit must learn because it teaches him to do things under command, under authority, to get from point A to point B with a group of people in the shortest possible time.

That is exactly what we are supposed to be doing in the local church. We are going from point A to point B and moving a mass of people, but we have to do it in the shortest possible time. How in the world will it ever be done? We must all learn to march. Paul therefore is saying, “Let us march, let us advance by that standard which we have attained.”

Paul is telling these believers to look at where they are and how they got there and draw some conclusions for the future. Are you a baby believer? How did you become a babe? Someone gave you the Gospel and you believed and entered the family of God. In Colossians 2:6 we are told to walk in Christ in the same way that we were born. How did you become a babe? By grace. So, walk in grace.

Are you an adolescent? How did you advance from being a babe to an adolescent? There is only one way. Ephesians 4:11–16 clearly spells it out: You grew because somebody taught you. You grew in grace and in the knowledge of Christ (2 Pet. 3:18). So, continue in grace.

Are you mature? How did you get to maturity? You took in advanced doctrine (Heb. 5:14). Because someone took the time to give you that advanced information and you used it in life, you had your senses trained through exercise and practical application to discern good and evil. You became a mature believer by grace. Keep on pressing forward in grace.

Philippians 3:16 is simply telling you to keep marching in step according to that which you have attained. Stay in the ranks. Don't get out of step now just because you have grown. Don't be that foolish (Gal. 3:3)!

PATTERN

Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.

Phil. 3:17–18

To “*join in following my example*” literally means “become mimics of me.” In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul was able to say, “be an imitator of me, as I am of Christ.” Here again is the idea of being in a row, in ranks. Jesus Christ led the way, Paul followed Christ; the Philippians followed Paul. Where are you? Are you in that line? Are you still marching? You have to march before you can fight.

If you think that you do not need the local church, that you do not need Bible instruction, you are not in the ranks. You are a revolutionary, and you will never seize and hold the high ground. Alone, you will never become a hero in the faith because God does everything He does in the Church—the Body of Christ.

Paul tells the Philippians to look at and focus on those who walk according to the pattern that they have in him. He uses a different word for walking here than he did in verse 16. This is *peripateo*. *Pateo* means “to walk,” *peri* means “around.” This word is not used for marching; it is used to describe people walking individually.

Paul says there are people who, in their individual lives, walk according to the pattern that he and the other apostles had given. But verse 18 says there are many who walk according to another pattern. Paul had warned the Ephesians that, after he left, savage wolves would come in among them. Even from among their own ranks, men would arise, speaking perverse things to draw the disciples away from truth, to follow them. These would be men who wanted a following, but who were not in step with Christ.

Paul calls these people “*enemies of the cross of Christ.*” Understand this: he is talking about believers. He is talking about people who are out of step with the will, the plan, the purpose, and the Word of God. James 4:4 makes it very clear that if you are a friend of the world, then you are an enemy of God. John 15:18 makes it very clear that if you are a friend of God, then you are an enemy of the world. Who is your friend and who is your enemy today?

As a recruit you have to learn to keep in step with the advance of the army of God. The Bible has a lot to say about how to walk:

1. Walk in faith (2 Cor. 5:7).
2. Walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).
3. Walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25; Eph. 5:17–18).
4. Walk in good works (Eph. 2:10).
5. Walk worthy of the Lord (Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10).
6. Walk in love (John 15:12; Eph. 5:1–2; 2 John 5–6).
7. Walk in the light (1 John 1:7).
8. Walk in grace (Col. 2:6–7).

IV. COMMANDS

I Corinthians 14:8, 19
Ephesians 4:11–16

When the man calling cadence says “Left face, forward march,” the soldier is expected to turn left and start moving. Especially in wartime, it is imperative that every soldier be in the right place at the right time doing the right thing. But for that to happen, the soldier must hear and understand commands.

In the ancient world, a battle trumpet was used to move massed forces to, around, and from the battlefield. The *salpigx*, sometimes translated “bugle,” sounded high, clear notes that could be heard above the tumult of conflict, when voice commands would have been impossible to hear. From anywhere in the field, the soldier could hear the trumpet and identify its command.

The Christian soldier must have clear communication to direct him through the tumult of life. Like any combat communication, it must be simple and direct; above all, it must be understood. Somehow, the Word of God has to cut through all the garbage and all the tangles and all the confusion of modern life to clarify issues for the believer. If the issues of life are not clarified, the believer will fall as a casualty in the battle. To successfully meet and defeat the enemy, the Christian soldier must understand where he is in history, his purpose in God’s plan, and the assets and equipment that belong to him.

THE TRUMPET

For if the bugle produces an indistinct sound, who shall prepare himself for battle?
1 Cor. 14:8

Paul starts out here with the explanatory phrase “for if” because he was having a real problem with the Corinthian church. When the Corinthians heard about the gift of tongues, they apparently went crazy. They all got together in their assembly and they ranted, they raved, they howled, they moaned, and everyone walked out on an emotional high, having learned nothing. They were not prepared for life, but they had gotten an emotional kick in the seat of the pants.

In 1 Corinthians 12–14, Paul devotes a full three chapters to a rebuke on the use of tongues. In 1 Corinthians 14:8, he sets up his military analogy using the Greek *salpigx*.

From Numbers 10 we know what the sound of the trumpet meant to the Jews. The trumpet was used to call the assembly together; to sound the alarm and thus give the people time to prepare for an attack; and to sound the attack itself, telling them when and how to attack and when not to attack. In Revelation 1:10 and 4:1, the trumpet is a symbol for the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul is not talking to the Corinthians about hearing a trumpet on a battlefield. He is talking about hearing and understanding the voice of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. God intends His children to understand every word and passage of Scripture. There is no passage that does not have an explanation; all of it is designed to be understood. The Word of God is the Voice of Christ, and when Christ speaks to you, He wants you to understand what He is saying. Therefore, when the bugle sounds the alarm, it has to make a distinct sound so you know exactly what it means and what to do.

Paul is using the analogy of the bugle for Bible teaching. An indistinct sound helps no one and confuses everyone. Paul has a church full of believers confused as to what God wanted them to do. So he writes and says that he wants them to understand, from a military point of view, that when they face the enemy, they had better know what to do and how to do it. Tongues were only going to confuse the troops—they needed clear teaching.

The question, “*Who shall prepare himself for battle?*” recognizes that the battle is coming. The word translated “*prepare*” is *paraskeuazo*. *Skeuazo* means “to prepare, to equip.” It means that when you are called on for a certain course of action, you must have the resources to carry out that action. *Para* is a preposition, which means “beside.” Used together these words mean “to have your equipment beside you.” You hear the alarm and you grab your equipment because you have it beside you. It becomes an illustration for the Christian who has the resources of the Word close to him when he needs them—not in the mind of the pastor, not in the Bible on the shelf, but in the spiritual survival kit of his own soul. He has, in the rucksack of his soul, answers for his life.

Paul says the bugle sounds so that the believer can understand it and be prepared. The inability to clarify issues of the Word of God will only lead to confusion and failure in the Christian life.

INSTRUCTION

However, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue. 1 Cor. 14:19

Paul's desire was to communicate things that would edify other believers. The word "*instruct*" here is translated "teaching accurately" in Acts 18:25. Clear and accurate teaching leads to knowledge; garbled instruction edifies no one. According to the Apostle Paul, God places great value on clear communication.

The Bible is called the mind of Christ, the voice of the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God. Paul had a desire to do one thing in life: To make the Word clear so that people would be challenged, so that they would fall in love with the Lord Jesus Christ, so that their lives would be transformed and they could become heroes in the strife.

From the Word, we can derive five basic principles of clear teaching for those who "call cadence" in the church—the pastor-teachers:

1. The Command: Teach the Word (2 Tim. 4:2). The Word is all that is to be taught. The command is not, "Teach social issues." It is not, "Teach personal opinions." This is the command to the pastor-teacher to clearly communicate the issues of the Word of God, which are the issues of life.
2. The Preparation: Study (2 Tim. 2:15). In this passage, Paul tells Timothy that God is holding him accountable to rightly divide the Word of truth. The word translated "*rightly dividing*" means to take a sword and cut a very distinct, straight line. It is the ability to take the Word of God and handle it accurately. This requires study.

3. The Mechanics: Line-upon-Line, Precept-upon-Precept (Isa. 28:10). Every Christian, but especially every pastor, has to learn the building blocks of the Bible, to build truth-upon-truth. If a new believer came to you to be instructed, would you know what to teach him? Would you understand how to get him moving from where he is to where God intends him to be? Would you know how to lay the building blocks of life, how to start with the grace of God and help the new believer get his feet on the ground by understanding, first of all, what he has in Christ?
4. The Objective: Service (Eph. 4:1–16). The pastor’s purpose is not just to teach his people to defend themselves as they meet the trials and the adversities of life. He needs to get them to the point of achievement, to make them functional—equipped for the work of their ministry—front-line combatants in the work of the Church.
5. The Incentive: Reward (1 Pet. 5:4). Peter tells the pastors to whom he is writing that if they are faithful in one thing—teaching the Word—if they hold to the Word regardless of whether it is popular or not, if they stick with it, then some day the Lord will give them a crown of glory.

INSTRUCTORS

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers.

Eph. 4:11

Because the phrase “*and He gave*” uses the intensive personal pronoun *autos*, the emphasis here is on the giver, Jesus Christ. Ephesians 4:7 says that grace was given to “*each one.*” If you are a believer in Jesus Christ you need to understand that when you believed, you directed your faith to Him but He directed His grace to you. And everything in His plan begins with grace.

Grace is the policy of God. This is the first message that must be clearly sounded and understood: Salvation is by faith alone; it is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8–9). No one is ever saved by being baptized, by joining a church, by agonizing, by giving money, or by doing

good deeds. There is only one thing you must do to receive eternal life: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts. 16:31).

This grace was given *“according to the measure of Christ’s gift”* (Eph. 4:7). This means there are no limitations on God’s grace to you. When you received Christ, you received more than just eternal life. According to Ephesians 1:3, at the moment you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, you received *“every spiritual blessing.”* He made you rich! What are your needs today? What kind of problems do you face? Whatever you need, your account is greater, because when God gave you Jesus Christ, He gave you everything. He put His power, His guidance, His wealth, and His riches at your disposal. The only “problem” that you and I have is that we are not willing to write checks on what the Word says God has put in our account.

The word translated “to give,” *didomi*, means “to give in grace.” It is an aorist active indicative, which means that at the moment you believed, God gave you grace. At that point, God poured out upon you wealth and riches beyond your wildest imagination.

Some of the most precious gifts of God are named in Ephesians 4:11. Paul says that God gave to some men the gift of apostleship, to some the gift of prophecy, to some the gift of evangelism, to some the gift of pastor-teacher. The men to whom God gave these gifts are themselves gifts to every believer.

The first gifts God gave were the apostles and prophets. These men received direct revelation from God for the purpose of recording God’s Word and putting it together in the Canon of Scripture—the Bible. Anything that you ever get out of the Word of God you get because God gave you apostles and prophets. He gave men like Paul, Matthew, Peter, John, James, and others to the whole Body of Christ as a gift.

Apostleship and prophecy were temporary gifts. Once the Word of God was written down, they were no longer needed and so they passed from the scene by the end of the First Century.

As God gave apostles and prophets to complete and record the Word, He gave evangelists and pastor-teachers to communicate the Word to succeeding generations. The evangelist is the communicator of the Gospel. His purpose is to win people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The evangelist was given to the

Church with the ability to clarify the Gospel and present it with power. Somewhere along the line every believer has benefited from the gift of evangelism. Someone led you to Jesus Christ; that person was led to the Lord by someone else, who was led by another, and somewhere in each of those people's background was the influence of an evangelist whose gift was to clarify the issues of sin and salvation.

The Greek construction here indicates that the phrase "*pastors and teachers*" refers to one person; this is a hyphenated gift—pastor-teachers—from *poimen*, an ancient Greek word for "shepherd," and the noun *didaskalos*, "teacher." The Bible uses three main titles to refer to the pastor of the local church:

1. Shepherd or "*pastor*" is from *poimen*. The work of the shepherd is to feed the sheep. The pastor feeds the believers through the teaching ministry of the Word of God. Jesus Christ challenged Peter three times in John 21:15–17 to feed His sheep. This challenge is later reflected in 1 Peter 5:14, where Peter indicates the importance of the teaching ministry as a priority for the pastor.
2. Elder is from *presbuteros*, a word for the elderly, the aged. The title "*elder*" relates to the pastor's seniority or authority in the local church. This designation is used in passages like 1 Timothy 5:17–19 and 1 Peter 5:1.
3. Overseer, from the Greek word *episkopos*, is translated in the King James Bible "bishop." This is a compound of the preposition *epi*, which means "over," and *skopeo*, which means "to observe, to view." The word was used in ancient Greek society for the defender of a village. A village would find its most athletic man, its most skilled warrior, and would make him the *episkopos*, the overseer. He was a one-man police force whose job was to keep the peace. When criminals attacked from within, he had to rally the troops. He was the defender of the village, as the pastor is to be the defender of the local church. The pastor is a guardian, charged with the defense of the flock. This word is used in such verses as 1 Peter 5:1 and 1 Timothy 3:1.

What does it take to be a pastor-teacher? The one thing a pastor-teacher **must** have is the spiritual gift. Equipment that is important for his work includes:

1. Personal spiritual growth. The pastor-teacher needs to have come to the point of basic maturity himself because no one can lead where he has not gone. He cannot bless when he has nothing to bless with. He cannot teach what he does not know. He has to have a training period for his own spiritual growth during which he learns the basics.
2. Academic preparation. His academic training should include at least three areas of thought: history, biblical languages, and systematic theology. He needs some understanding of history because the Bible must be interpreted in the context of the time in which it was written. He needs some tools in the area of languages because his job is to present the teachings of the Bible clearly. People will come to him in confusion over a passage and ask, "What in the world does this mean?" He has to be able to dig the answers out of the text. There is no passage in Scripture that he is not accountable to be able to find the answer for. He needs some basic preparation in the area of systematic theology because he has to understand the full scope of what the Bible is teaching.
3. Faithfulness. The pastor-teacher has to be sensitive to God, not to man. He will need thick skin, because he cannot afford to worry about whether people like him or not. His concern must be to wait on God, to remain faithful to the One who called him.

In Ezekiel 34, God outlines seven duties for which He holds every pastor accountable: Feed the flock, strengthen the sick, heal the diseased, bind up the broken, bring in the scattered, seek the lost, and protect the sheep from the wolves.

THE PLAN

... for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, in the building up of the body of Christ. Eph. 4:12

Why does Paul stress the importance of God giving, as gifts, those who would write and communicate the Word of God? He tells us in verse 12. In three prepositional phrases Paul outlines the immediate objective: “for the equipping of the saints,” “for the work of service,” “to the building up of the body of Christ.”

This section has a controlling prepositional phrase that begins with the preposition *pros*, which means “with a view toward.” God gave the Church those who would communicate because He had a plan, a program. He had a view toward the equipping of the saints. The word “*equipping*,” from *katartizo*, was used in the medical realm for setting a broken bone. It was used by merchants of the ancient world to mean “to have an adequate supply of goods for sale.” It was also used in the ancient military to speak of logistical supply for the troops. This last meaning is the idea in this passage.

You are the troops. You have to go out every day and wage spiritual warfare against seen and unseen enemies. Who is going to give you the supplies and equipment you need? They come from the Word. God had in mind that in the local church, the Word of God would be taught so that when you go out into the world, you would have answers to life, you would understand the world you live in. This is what He calls “*the equipping of the saints*.” Without consistent biblical instruction, you will not be equipped; without your equipment, you will never reach maturity; and short of maturity, you will never accomplish the plan of God for your life.

In the second prepositional phrase, the word translated “*for*” is not *pros* but *eis*. *Eis* tells us that it is not the pastor who is doing “*the work of the service*,” now it is the saint who must act. Why does the pastor teach? To equip the people in his flock. The reason he equips his people is so that each one, as an individual, can perform the work of his or her own ministry. What is called here “*the work of the service*” is actually the ministry of the believer. Every believer has to be equipped to fulfill three areas of service:

1. Priesthood. Every believer is a priest to God; every believer has the right to represent himself before the throne of grace (1 Pet. 2:5, 9) and, through confession and cleansing (1 John 1:9), to live out his life in the presence of God.
2. Ambassadorship. Every believer is an ambassador to the unbelieving world. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation so that we might serve as ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:17–20). It is the responsibility of every believer to represent Christ to the people he comes in contact with every day.
3. Ministry. Every believer is a minister to the Body of Christ. Every believer is given a spiritual gift the moment he places his faith in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:4–7). This gift outlines the plan of God for his life and answers the question, “What does God want me to do?” It is through the gifts of the Spirit that the Body of Christ—the Church—is built up and strengthened.

The third prepositional phrase in this verse, “*to the building up of the body of Christ*,” gives the goal of the pastor’s teaching and the believers’ service. No pastor can build up the Body of Christ alone. All the pastors in the world cannot build up the Body of Christ by themselves. Christians want to sit around waiting for the pastor to evangelize, to edify, and to do whatever needs to be done. This passage says that the pastor is to communicate to the congregation so that the members of the congregation can go out and perform their individual ministries. When many individuals do this, the Body is built up for its work on earth.

THE OBJECTIVE

... until we all attain the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.

Eph. 4:13

What is the purpose of this teaching which equips believers to do their ministries for the ultimate building up of the Body of Christ? The word translated “*attain*” means “to possess or acquire by arriving at an objective.” What is the grand objective that will be attained when clear doctrinal teaching is met by positive volition on the part of the people? Unity.

Three spheres of unity are named in Scripture:

1. Positional unity (Eph. 4:3–6). Paul tells us to be diligent to preserve “*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” What is this unity built on? It is built on the fact that there is one Body, composed of every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; there is one Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God; one hope, the hope of eternal life; one Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ; one faith, faith in the Word; and one baptism, the baptism of the Holy Spirit. All Christians have positional unity. We are all one in Christ and there is one God and Father “*over all and through all and in all.*”
2. Practical unity (Acts 1:14). While all Christians have positional unity, not all have practical unity. Practical unity is possible when people who may have doctrinal disagreements are able to come together for a common purpose, such as prayer or evangelism. As long as your goals and objectives are the same and as long as your principles are not compromised, you can have practical unity with many different organizations and denominations.
3. Doctrinal unity (Eph. 4:13). When Paul talks about “*the unity of the faith,*” he is using the accusative of cause which says that it is the faith—the body of doctrines believed—that causes this unity. In other words, Christians have doctrinal soundness and functional effectiveness because of their understanding of the Word of God. He says that this unity is “*the knowledge of the Son of God.*” This is not just academic knowledge. The word is *epignosis*, “applied knowledge.”

One of the reasons there are a multitude of conflicts between so many Christians and Christian organizations is that the doctrinal positions on which they stand have not been proven in the fire of experience; their knowledge is *gnosis*, “information,” not *epignosis*, “experience.” In the final analysis, only one thing works—that is consistent, faithful feeding on the Bread of Life. When the Word of God meets with faith, things begin to happen. When people try things by faith, apply the knowledge that they have received, and it works, guess what happens? They all have doctrinal unity; they have agreement because they know that what they have really works.

This practical knowledge of the Son of God leads to spiritual maturity. Get a principle from this: We cannot get to maturity on knowledge alone; we can only get to maturity by way of applied knowledge. What we know has to be used; it has to become practical; it has to get down to where we live. It has to work in the family, in the workplace, in everyday life. And when we become a mature believer, our measure is filled up to the fullness of Christ. This reminds us that Jesus Christ has the desire to give us abundant life. The fullness of life spoken of here is the abundance of the life committed to letting Christ live through us.

DANGER

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming;

Eph. 4:14

God’s desire is that His children grow up. The word translated “children,” *nepios*, is a word for “baby.” It speaks of a believer who has been a believer for years but has never grown. This is a child who should not be a child.

Paul says this person is tossed about by waves and winds of doctrine. There is nothing more unstable than wind and water working together. The believer who runs after this new idea and runs after that new idea, is constantly shifting, constantly blown

about because he does not understand that not everyone who talks about the Lord has true motives.

The “*trickery of men*” Paul talks about is from an ancient term that means “sleight of hand in a dice game.” Paul says there are people who deal with the Word just as if they were in a game with you, and they are going to make sure they win. So they use trickery and craftiness. The word “*craftiness*” is from a compound word that means “willingness to do anything.” On top of all this, they use deceitful “*scheming*,” from *methodeia*, a word that means “method or strategy.” They have a strategy for deception.

Paul is describing the loser, the person who, because he is unclear about the Word of God, is susceptible to every false doctrine. God does not want you to be unstable in life. His desire is that you firmly plant your feet on the Rock of Truth. Only there will you find stability. And while the whole world around you is in confusion, you will know **why** you are here, **where** you are going, and **what** you are doing. But you cannot do this without growing up, without learning what life is about from the teaching of the Word.

THE ANALOGY

... but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being filled and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

Eph. 4:15–16

The priority of the local church: to speak the truth in love. This is the communication of truth from the Word of God. “*Speaking*” is a present participle that refers to a habitual action of teaching or maintaining the truth, standing for the truth without equivocation. You do not pound people on the head with the Word. You simply take your stand and let other people take theirs. And you do it in the sphere of love; you have that balance between grace and truth.

Every believer is “to grow up ... into” Christ. *Auxano* refers to the natural growth of something that is properly nourished. When we are properly nourished from the Word, we will be conformed to Jesus Christ in the sphere of all things. This means that every aspect of our lives comes under the authority of Christ, who is called here “*the head*.” Therefore, Jesus Christ becomes the ultimate authority in our lives.

Finally, in verse 16, we see the function of the Body of Christ. In this analogy, comparing the spiritual with the physical, Paul talks about the head and the body. Christ is the authority in the Church. In His Body we are all members with a function. We are all important—all the way down to the little toe. As we learn about His authority through the teaching of His Word, the whole Body pulls together for a common function. But what does Paul mean when he says “*by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part*”?

Look at your own body. Your hand is important and your mouth is important—they both have a function. How does your hand bring food to your mouth? You look and see what you want to eat and your hand performs its task. But your hand can’t get to your mouth by itself. In your body you have members that could help move the hand—you have ligaments and muscles. But they all function around a joint, and you cannot work a muscle without a joint.

Paul draws a distinction in this passage between the joints and the members of the body. This is because of the analogy that he wants all of us to understand—the analogy of the communicators of the Word of God. In Paul’s picture, the joints are the pastor-teachers. Get a principle here: No member of the Body of Christ will function properly without the teaching of the Word of God.

Remember what Paul said in verses 11–12 that the communication gifts are designed for the equipping of the saints. Now he turns to this analogy of the body and says that the whole body is “*fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies*,” the joint being the key to a strong body. If you are going to build muscle, you have to work a joint. Therefore, he says that when

the teacher (the joint) properly supplies clear communication of the Word, there is a proper working of each individual part.

How are you going to prepare for battle? You are going to have to listen to the sound of the bugle. The more you understand the Word of God, the clearer your life will be. Problems in life are only problems when you don't have the answers. The Bible has answers for every problem you will ever face: your loneliness, your economic woes, your fears, your sins. God has answers for all your questions about where to go and what to do. But answers only come in **His** time, through the teaching of His Word.

V. THE GARRISON Philippians 4:4–9

In wartime, an army must have safe, fortified compounds where soldiers can train and prepare for (or rest from) the heat of battle. Soldiers need a garrison. The Greek word for a garrison comes from *phroureo*, which means “to mount a guard.”

As a Christian soldier, you also need a garrison. You live in a hostile environment; you live in *kosmos diabolicus*—the devil’s world. Where do you go to prepare to meet the enemy? Where do you pull back to recover from the wounds of life? The only safe place to build a garrison is in your own soul. In Philippians 4, Paul, the four-star general, the apostle inspired by God Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit, issues five orders for building that garrison.

FIRST ORDER

Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, rejoice!

Phil. 4:4

Paul’s first command is “*Rejoice.*” This is the present imperative of the verb *chairo*. The present tense tells us this is something that we should always do, something that should become habitual in our lives. Paul is not asking us if we feel like rejoicing. He is not telling us to blindly rejoice. He is telling us to open our eyes, look at the world as it really is, and rejoice in spite of what we see.

This is completely opposed to the human concept of happiness. Human happiness is based on circumstances. People are happy when everything is going their way, but when everything is not going their way they are no longer happy. However, Paul, with the thunder of the power and authority of his apostleship, not only commands us to rejoice, but says that rejoicing ought to become a way of life.

The active voice means that we have to make a voluntary decision. We have to choose to rejoice. Joy is not a matter of what happens around us, it is a matter of our mental attitude, of how we **respond** to what happens.

The imperative (mood) indicates that this is a command coming ultimately from the Lord. We know that God never orders us to do the impossible. It is amazing that the Bible commands us to have good mental health, to have a sound, stable, healthy mind. Nowhere in the Bible are we commanded to have physical health, but in many places we are told to have a sound mental attitude and an ability to cope with life.

Remember that the man writing this is in a Roman prison chained to a Roman soldier. He writes to a group of free people and commands them to stop feeling sorry for themselves, to stop being self-centered and start recognizing what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

People like to be told why they are not happy. There are reasons why, when we are under pressure, we suffer. One of the reasons is because we live in a hostile environment—the enemy’s world. However, while there may be reasons, there are no excuses for unhappiness. We want to be able to say, “Well, I would be happy and I would have joy but for this or that circumstance.” Paul gives us no ground to do that. If you are an unhappy believer, there is only one explanation: You are not occupied with the grace of God.

Notice that Paul does not say, “Do this and this and this and then you will rejoice.” He starts backwards from the way most people want to learn. Most books on the subject will give you steps. They will tell you to do step one, step two, step three and, hopefully, by the time you do all these things, you will be happy. This is starting backwards. Paul starts the correct way: He is saying, “Right where you are, without changing a thing, without any shift in circumstances, you make up your mind to celebrate the grace of God, and you will be amazed at what will happen in your life.”

So, how can we fulfill this command, which is so important for life? First, we need to understand what the Bible has to say about joy and rejoicing:

1. Joy begins at salvation. When you place your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have the joy of salvation that David speaks of in Psalm 51:12. This is the same joy Paul speaks of in Philippians 1:25 and 3:1. You are able to rejoice

because you have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ (see also Rom. 15:13).

2. Joy is produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is never the believer's job to produce joy. In Galatians 5:22, Paul tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, and peace. Only the Spirit of God can give you that joy (see also Rom. 14:17).
3. Joy is sustained by our maintaining fellowship with God. Jesus said in John 15:11, "*These things I have spoken to you [referring to His command to abide in fellowship with Him] that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full*" (see also 1 John 1:3-4).
4. Joy is based on seeing life from divine viewpoint. When you look at life from God's perspective you have joy in conditions that people say you could not have joy in. What kind of attitude did the Lord Jesus Christ have on His way to the cross? Hebrews 12:2 says it was "*joy.*" In the Upper Room, while His disciples huddled in fear of the things He was telling them were going to take place, He said, "*If you loved Me, you would have rejoiced*" (John 14:28).
5. Joy is contagious. Joyful people attract other people (Phil. 2:17-18).
6. Joy is found in the Word. The Word of God is a sword of joy. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:6 that love does not rejoice in unrighteousness but in the truth. It is unrighteous for us to push Jesus Christ out of our lives, to ignore His guidance. It is unrighteous for us to come to Him for eternal life and then turn our backs on Him and say, "Now leave me alone to live my life." This love that binds us to the person of Jesus Christ rejoices in the truth. God's Word is truth (John 17:17). David says in Psalm 19:8 that the precepts of the Lord rejoice the heart. There is no joy like the joy that comes from studying, knowing, and applying the Word of God.

7. Joy is eternal. God has reserved for us in Heaven an ultimate joy beyond anything we can experience or imagine in time (Jude 24).

Paul does not say just “rejoice,” but “rejoice in the Lord.” We have joy because of what we have in Christ. Our happiness, our joy in life, is going to be exactly as great as the value we place on the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you committed yourself to Him for salvation and have tried to block Him out of your life, there is no way you are going to be happy. If you leave Him out of the decisions of your life, if you don’t allow Him to be the director of your life, the friend of your life—the guide of your life—you are not going to be happy. If you think that you can spurn Him, reject Him, shut Him out of your life and still have joy, you are fooling yourself and robbing yourself of the inner happiness that God intends you to have!

If I had the power to put ten million dollars in your bank account today, some of you would be deliriously happy. Think how miserable you get when you encounter some difficulty, say a flat tire. But if I had just deposited that money in your account and you walked outside and found four flat tires on your car, how frustrated do you think you would be? You wouldn’t be frustrated at all. If you had ten million dollars you would just laugh. Nothing would seem like a problem to you.

That kind of confidence is exactly what carries people through life when they understand what they have in Jesus Christ. The Lord was not kidding when He said that where your treasure is, your heart will be (Matt. 6:21). When you begin to understand what you have as a believer in Jesus Christ, you begin to laugh at the hardships of life!

The last word in Paul’s command here is “*always*.” You are to rejoice in the Lord always, regardless of circumstances. Why? Because you understand what Paul said in Romans 8:28–32, that God causes all things to work together for good (“*for those who love God*”).

Stop and think about what it means to be a child of God. Your Father owns the universe! His wealth and power are beyond your wildest imagination! Your Father **loves** you, and He has promised

to always be with you, to guide you, and to supply all your needs. What could you possibly have to be unhappy about?

This is so important that Paul repeats himself: *“Again I will say, rejoice.”* Remember, he is not **asking** these believers to rejoice—He is **commanding** them. From Paul’s command to rejoice, we can draw three principles:

1. Faith should be a thermostat and not a thermometer. A thermometer only reflects the state of the environment outside itself. A thermostat controls the environment. If you have the thermostat of faith in your soul, when you walk into a miserable environment, you are going to change that environment instead of letting that environment change you.
2. The Christian life has to be lived from the center to the circumference. God’s design is spirit, soul, and body. Most believers live with their priorities upside down. They think first of serving the body, then the soul, and last of all, the spirit. Ninety-nine percent of the things that we complain about are things that affect the body. Everything that affects the body affects the soul—which is the mind—which affects the spirit. So we are miserable most of the time. Instead, we should live life from the center—from the garrison of the soul. When you live in the garrison, you can shout over the walls, you can hoot at the enemy and know that he cannot hurt you because your spirit is in control and he cannot touch your spirit.
3. The secret of life is to subjugate all things to the knowledge of Christ. To rejoice in all things is to recognize that everything in life is subject to Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul says to take *“every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”* Take every distraction of life, every detail, everything that occupies your mind and put it under the light of Jesus Christ. Your life takes on a different appearance when you look at it in the light of possessing a relationship with Jesus Christ.

SECOND ORDER

Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.
Phil. 4:5

Paul's second command is to let something be known. There is something the Apostle Paul wants you to manifest in life—something called your “*forbearing spirit*.” “*Forbearing*” in Greek is *epieikeo*, a word with many shades of meaning.

Part of the meaning of this word is “to overcome through submission.” The idea here is that you live your life not **under** the circumstances but **above** the circumstances, and you do that through submission. Do you want to master your circumstances? Do you want to come out on top of the pressures? Show forbearance.

This word implies a willingness to submit, instead of demanding, your rights. Paul says that in your relationships with other people, if you want to reveal the inner joy you have because of a relationship with Christ, you must stop demanding everything. *Epieikeo* also has the idea of justice tempered with mercy. It means to tolerate those who oppose you, to be lenient with those who offend you, to show courtesy to those who are undeserving. All this is simply a carryover of celebrating the grace of God.

When Paul says to let your forbearing spirit be known, the passive voice of the imperative mood indicates that you should allow other people to see the manifestation of your understanding and appreciation for God's grace. Christians often ask why it is so hard to witness. It is probably one of two reasons. First, they are not impressed with Christ. Second, other people cannot see in them anything that relates to Christ. The greatest witnessing situation in the world is what Peter describes in 1 Peter 3:15. When people come to you and ask what it is that makes you different, you just give them the answer: “It is Christ in my life.” It is not hard to witness in that kind of situation.

If you really appreciate the grace of God, if you really appreciate what you have in Christ, other people are going to see it. By allowing other people to see how impressed you are with Jesus Christ, you create the opportunity to fulfill your own ambassadorship, to lead other people to a saving knowledge of

Jesus Christ so that they will become impressed with the One you are impressed with.

When Paul says in this verse that the Lord is “near,” he is talking not of time, but of proximity. If you are a believer, Jesus Christ is **in** you. Why should you live the way He wants you to live? Because He indwells you. Do you ever ask yourself the question, “What would I do if Jesus were here?” Well, He is! Paul’s command is to manifest to the world the grace we have from God because Jesus Christ is right here.

THIRD ORDER

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

Phil. 4:6

This is another imperative. *Merimnao*, translated “anxious,” means “to be of a divided mind.” The reason the mind is divided is because of worry. Paul is saying, “Stop worrying.” Again, the present imperative tells us to keep on conquering our worry.

Any time the active voice is used with an imperative, it means that you must choose to do what is commanded. People say, “I just can’t stop worrying.” That is not true. There is a solution to anxiety. Paul does not say, “Don’t be anxious about little things, just worry about the big ones.” He says, “Don’t worry about **anything**. Don’t allow your mind to be divided and, therefore, distracted from the marvelous grace that you have in Christ.”

God never commands you to do anything you cannot do. Victory over worry is attainable. Worry is the inevitable result of human interference with the divine plan. God has a plan for your life and He will work out that plan. Worry and faith are incompatible.

Paul uses the strongest contrast possible in the Greek language to show something that is totally separate from worry and that is, prayer. He uses three different words here. The first word, *proseuchomai*, is translated “prayer.” It means “to approach for the purpose of making your requests,” emphasizing the fact that

you are face-to-face with the Lord. You come before Him or, as some say, you “take it to the Lord.”

After you have approached Him, you make supplication. *Deesis* means that you “make a request or express your need.” Jesus said that our Father knows what we need before we even ask (Matt. 6:8). So why does He want us to pray? Because prayer is part of our communication with Him. God realizes, even though we often don’t, that fellowship demands honest, objective communication. Relationships cannot be built without communication.

We are to pray “*with thanksgiving.*” This is, again, *eucharisteo*, from *charis*, the word for “grace.” *Eu* is a preposition that means “good or well.” *Teo* is the end of the verb “to give.” When you give thanks you are expressing appreciation for God’s grace. Thanksgiving says that you know grace is a gift that you do not deserve and cannot earn. It says you understand that you have grace only because God is gracious. The whole system of prayer is built on the principle of grace. When you go before the Lord, you let Him know your requests, then you thank Him in advance for taking care of them.

There is a wild idea going around among Christians that if you pray, and just believe enough, you will get whatever you want. The Bible does not teach this anywhere. What God gives you is based on His will. The secret to prayer is revealed in 1 John 5:14–15. Do you want to have powerful prayer? It is simple: Pray according to God’s will. You say, “But I don’t know His will.” There is a solution for that—find out! His will is that you be thankful with His decisions. We are told in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to “*pray without ceasing,*” and in the very next verse we are told “*in everything give thanks.*” The Word says first seek God’s will, find out what He wants, then pray regarding it, and you can have the confidence that you are going to receive it.

CONSEQUENCE OF OBEDIENCE

*And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension,
shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Phil. 4:7

This is the heart of the passage. It tells us what God is going to do for us as a result of our obedience. The word translated “*peace*,” *eirene*, means “spiritual prosperity.” Peace, in the biblical sense, does not mean the absence of turmoil or adverse circumstances. It refers to the calm you have in your soul, regardless of the circumstances. This is why it is called “*the peace of God*.” It belongs to Him. How worried do you think God is today? Do you think that the omnipotent God is wringing His hands over the world situation or over your circumstances?

The peace of God is a spiritual prosperity that reminds you how rich you are to belong to Him. It reminds you that no matter what you go through in life, no matter how poor you may be regarding the world’s riches, you have the greatest possession possible—you have the Lord Jesus Christ!

This peace surpasses **all** comprehension. The word for “*surpass*” means “to carry beyond.” God’s peace will carry you beyond the power of the mind. Paul is saying that the peace of God is contrary to human reason and goes beyond the ability of the mind to comprehend. Yet it is something that will guard your heart and your mind, which need protection in the world we live in.

“*Guard*,” *phroureo*, means “to look out for, to mount guard, to stand as a sentry.” Paul is saying that the peace of God becomes the garrison of your soul. The garrison is a fortified place, a safe position. In enemy territory, you have one place you can go where it is possible to find peace.

You need a refuge from the turmoil of life. You will search in vain for a place of peace in this world. Peace can only be found in the soul that is resting upon the power of God.

FOURTH ORDER

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.

Phil. 4:8

In this verse Paul gives three couplets, each presenting a principle and its application. “*Whatever is true*” is honorable activity. “*Whatever is right*” or “*righteous*” is pure, innocent, blameless and untainted. “*Whatever is lovely*,” means to attract love, is that which is friendly and of good reputation. “*Excellence*” means virtue, and virtue is the ability to get things done right.

Paul says to “*let your mind dwell on these things.*” The verb here is *logizomai* which means “to reckon with.” This is Paul’s fourth command: “Reckon with these things.” Have you ever reckoned with righteousness in your life? With truth? Do you day-by-day reckon with, focus on, and concentrate on principles of virtue in your life?

This verse is talking about divine-viewpoint thinking. Paul is saying, “Stop thinking the way man thinks; start thinking the way God thinks. Think on righteousness, on truth, on the Word of God. Concentrate. Occupy your mind with these things.” This is another present imperative, so it tells us to keep on occupying our minds with these things, to keep on thinking the way God thinks.

FIFTH ORDER

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace shall be with you.
Phil. 4:9

The things that the Philippians “*learned and received*” had to do with the academic side of their training. The things they had “*heard and seen*” in Paul and others had to do with the experiential. Paul tells them to practice all of it. The verb *prasso* is another imperative. Paul’s fifth command is to constantly practice these things, constantly let the things that you have learned be applied to your life.

There are five imperatives in this passage: rejoice, let your forbearing spirit be known, pray, think, and practice. If you want your soul to be guarded against whatever happens, if you want perfect peace in the middle of anything that the enemy could ever throw at you, you have to choose. There is absolutely nothing that can shake the peace of a soul that is focused on the grace of God!

VI. FORMATION OF A TEAM I Thessalonians 5:11–22

No army will become an effective fighting force until the soldiers in that army become a team. Every commander faces the task of forging a group of individuals with different backgrounds, different temperaments, and different skills into a single fighting unit with a common objective.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul describes a model fighting unit of the royal army and gives some instruction for creating an effective local church. The model he points to is the Thessalonian church.

Paul's first contact with the Thessalonians was brief. Acts 17 tells us that the opposition to Paul's ministry in Thessalonica was so intense, the hatred for him was so great, that he had to be smuggled out of the city. Though he was only able to stay three months, Paul left behind a strong, motivated local church. Because he could not return to the city, he wrote what we would call an "underground letter" to these young believers. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul challenges them to continue in the truth that he had established, and he reviews at least eleven major doctrines that he had been able to teach these hungry people in the short time he was there.

ESPRIT DE CORPS

*Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another,
just as you also are doing.* 1 Thess. 5:11

Esprit de corps—team spirit—should be the hallmark of the army of God. Paul had just reminded the Thessalonian believers that they were involved in spiritual warfare (1 Thess. 5:8–9). "Therefore," he is saying to this congregation—and to every local church—"because you are soldiers of the cross, you have responsibilities to each other."

"Encourage" is *parakaleo*. *Para* means "beside." *Kaleo* means "to call." The word was used for calling a child to one's side for the purpose of giving comfort and encouragement. From this word comes *paraklete*, the name given in John 16:7 to the Holy Spirit. *Parakaleo* was also used to describe the cheering of spectators as they watched athletes compete in the Olympic games.

The present imperative tells us to keep on encouraging, to never stop. You don't encourage someone once and then stop; you just keep on encouraging. There must be an attitude of grace and toleration among members of the royal army because God promotes and protects individual freedom and individuality.

There are two Greek words for "one another." The word used here is *allellos*, meaning "another of the same kind." Paul is talking about believers encouraging other believers. Your responsibility toward unbelievers is not to encourage but to evangelize. When it comes to dealing with other believers, you encourage.

The verb for "build up" or "edify" is *oikodomeo*. *Oikos* means "house, structure;" *domeo* is from the word that means "to build." Therefore, Paul is indicating that as you encourage one another, you are doing something else: You are building each other up.

Notice, he does not say, "Encourage one another as you tear each other down." It is discouraging when people criticize and malign you. But it is encouraging when people build you up. The reason you need to be built up is because there is a lack in your life somewhere, because you are still growing. No Christian is perfect.

The local church is the one place above all others where respect for freedom, individuality, and privacy should reign. In the local church people ought to be able to be themselves and be accepted as they are. Their individuality, expressed through their individual spiritual gifts, is essential for the effective functioning of the church.

Consequently, there must be recognition in the local church that people are people and we all have faults, flaws, and failures; that is why we have needs. Why should we study the Word? Because we all have needs and inadequacies in our lives, because we have frailties and besetting sins. The only way we will overcome these is by studying and working together, encouraging and building each other up in the local assembly.

Because *oikodomeo* is related to the idea of building a structure or a complex, we call the result of this process of the believer's growth the "edification complex of the soul."

Every building must begin with a foundation. There is only one that counts—Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11). If you have not placed your

faith in Jesus Christ,—if you are not a believer—you don't even **have** a foundation to build on. You are living on sinking sand, and at the first good rain, whatever you think you have will fall.

All believers have the same foundation (of the Lord Jesus Christ), so the question for each of us is: How much of the house have you built? Do you have the foundation, but nowhere to live? Do people see this beautiful foundation you have laid for a wonderful mansion and ask you: But where is the building?

If you stand on a foundation in the storm, it does not do you much good. You get wet, you get blown around, and you get cold. That is exactly what happens to many Christians in their souls. They have the foundation—they have eternal life, but they are unhappy in time. They do not understand why life blows them to and fro, why they are so insecure, why they are so unstable, why they have no sense of direction or guidance. The answer is simple: They have not built a house, they have no place to live, they have no shelter, and they are battling the storms of life.

How do we build on the foundation of Christ? What are the floors of the house of the soul? There are five. They are comparable to the five stages of the believer's growth toward conformity to Christ and to the five Hebrew words for faith.

***Amen*—Grace Orientation**

The first thing you have to build in this house is grace orientation. You have to understand what grace is all about. This is *amen*—leaning faith. You have to lay hold of the thinking of Christ toward you. He always looks at you in grace; His thoughts toward you are nothing but love and care at all times. You have to understand that what God does for you, He does in grace. He does not do what He does because of who you are or because you work hard or because you sincerely try to live a good life. God does what He does for you because of His perfect Son (see John 3:16; Eph. 4:7–16; Phil. 2:5–9; Col. 2:9–14; Heb. 10:5–10).

Too many Christians accept Jesus Christ's victory for salvation, but spend the rest of their lives defeated by their sins. How do you resolve the fact that you sin after coming to Christ? You must come

to terms with grace. Understand that you are a sinner by nature and that no one in the entire Bible—with the exception of Jesus—ever lived a perfect life.

Accept the fact that you will have a sin nature until you die and that you will fall, over and over—just like Abraham, Sarah, Moses, David, Samson, Elijah, and Jeremiah, and every other man or woman God ever used. But understand, too, that God’s grace is greater than all your sins. So, you confess your sins, He forgives your sins as He has promised to do (1 John 1:9), and you move forward.

***Batach*—Mastery Over the Details of Life**

You have to come to the point at which you learn to put things in their proper perspective; you must lay hold of the thinking of Christ toward all things. This life is filled with little details. The details are important, but they are not primary. They have to be kept in a secondary place. Where you work is a detail of life. The kind of car you drive is a detail of life. Whether you are a success or a failure in men’s eyes is only a detail of life.

Everything, except Jesus Christ, is a detail of life. You can live without money, without social life, without a car, without friends; you cannot live without the Word of God—the living Word Who is revealed in the written Word. You have to master the details if you want to grow, but you will not achieve this without effort. That is why mastery over the details of life is analogous to *batach*—wrestling faith (see Matt. 6:33; Luke 10:41–42, 12:13–34; 1 Cor. 6:12; Phil. 4:6–7, 11–12; 1 Tim. 6:6–10).

Say you’re successful, you get promoted, everything that you always wanted has happened for you—and then you lose it all. Can you remain stable in life? Can you shrug your shoulders and say, God gives and God takes away? This was the magnificence of Job. He had lost everything and his attitude was, “God gave and God took away. So what? Those are just details” (Job 1:21).

***Chasah*—Relaxed Mental Attitude**

The next step is to gain the mind of Christ regarding other people. At this stage you begin to understand *chasah*—faith that takes refuge in God. You will have to learn how to take rejection and criticism without letting it disturb your peace. You will have to

learn how to accept the weaknesses of other people (see Matt. 7:1–3, 18:23–35; Luke 23:34; 1 Cor. 6, 7: Col. 3:12–13).

There is a lot of talk today about mental attitude. The greatest attitude to have is one that is relaxed, at peace. Relaxation is the opposite of work. In a relaxed mental attitude, you are able to move through life with inner tranquility. You will never begin to know peace until you master the details of life, and not until you are relaxed about yourself and about other people can you move to the higher ground of love.

***Yachal*—Categories of Love**

At this point you enter into the love of Christ; you begin to find that you have His love for God, His love for your mate, for your family, for friends, for strangers, and even for enemies. All of these are different categories of love. You do not love your mate as you love God. You do not love your friends as you love your mate. You have to learn how to properly place love in your life in different directions and how to let that love determine your priorities.

Here *yachal*—healing faith—will have to become real in your life because you will need healing from the wounds you suffer. Eventually, you will become a source of healing for others (see Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:39, 25:37; Eph. 5:22–33; Col. 3:18–21; 1 John 4:18).

***Qawah*—Inner Happiness**

This is the penthouse of the soul—the place where you have peace, security, tranquility, and joy—regardless of what is happening. Here you begin to understand what it means to rejoice in suffering, to endure with joy. You experience the strongest faith, *qawah*—the waiting faith that enables you to exchange your strength for God’s strength. Not until you have grown to this point can you really be stable in life. Not until you are here, will you really understand what Christian joy is all about. And certainly not until this point does life become what it ought to be in Christ.

Few Christians come to the point where their faith is a thermostat of their life and therefore in control of circumstances around them. Things go badly, these people enjoy life. Things go well, they enjoy life. They have mastered the details. They learn to

love life, to love even the conflict and the struggle. Even Christ “learned obedience from the things which He suffered,” (Heb 5:8) for which reason “God highly exalted Him” (Phil. 2:9). We are following on the same path. Therefore, we learn to face all things with great joy (see Col. 3:15; 2 Tim. 1:7; Heb. 12:1–2; James 1:1–3, 5:11; 1 Pet. 1:6–9, 3:14, 4:14; 1 John 1:4).

This is edification. Paul tells the Thessalonians to build one another up “just as you also are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11). This church was doing it right. The Thessalonians realized that there was an objective in the Christian life, and they were advancing toward it. They were going from the point of salvation, spiritual infancy, through adolescence to maturity and beyond to become heroes of faith and friends of God. But they knew that none of them would reach the objective in isolation. They needed each other because the only way to achieve maturity was through teamwork within the local assembly.

RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.

1 Thess. 5:12–13

There must be respect for authority and leadership in the local church. As an apostle, Paul had great authority, but he speaks here to the Thessalonian saints as an equal. The word translated “request,” *eroteo*, indicates the request of an equal. Paul is not speaking here from superiority. In a local church, the pastor is in authority, but he is still an equal. There are no superior people in God’s plan. Every believer has the same privileges and the same opportunities as every other believer.

In this translation, Paul asks the brothers to “appreciate” those who labor. It is wonderful to be appreciated, but the word here does not mean to appreciate at all. The word is *oida*, from the verb *horao*, which means “to see, to identify.” The perfect tense means to

identify in the past with the result that you keep on identifying in the future.

Why would Paul say “identify” instead of “appreciate”? It has to do with a very important principle of the teaching of the Word of God, one that you need to understand: If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, God has a teacher for you. You are a sheep in the flock of God. In God’s flock there are many under shepherds—we call them pastors. You need to identify your pastor and put yourself under his care.

Paul gives three functions of the pastor these believers must identify. They all have the same article, which means that they are describing one person. These three things identify those who communicate the Word:

The first is “*labor*.” The Greek *kopiazo* means “to work to the point of exhaustion.” The communicator of the Word has a responsibility and an obligation to labor to the point of exhaustion—to study, to analyze, to not speak until he understands and is able to communicate clearly.

After he has studied, the communicator then stands before the people in his congregation. *Prohistemi* means “to be set in front of.” It does not mean to lead or have authority or anything else; it simply means to stand in front of.

The third function comes from a compound: *nous*, which means “mind,” and *tithemi* which means “to put.” It literally means “to put in mind.” What does this man do after he studies and then stands up in front of people? He puts what he has studied into their minds. He instructs; he teaches.

So, Paul is saying this, “Identify those who labor to the point of exhaustion, who stand before you, and who put the Truth in your mind.”

After you identify these people, you are to do something else: “*esteem them very highly*.” “*Esteem*” is *hegeomai*; it means “to add up the facts and come to a sound conclusion.” As a member of a local church, you look at these people who provide instruction, you evaluate them, and you come to a conclusion. Then you esteem them very highly in the sphere of love because of their work.

You do not esteem these men because you like them or because they please you. Too often people come into a church, observe the pastor, and say, "I really don't like that guy." So what? Paul says to add up the **facts**. Not liking someone is not a fact; it's a feeling. The pastor is to be esteemed because of his "*work*." The word used here is *ergon* and it means "productive labor." What are the facts? Did the man labor in the Word; did he stand up in front of you; did he communicate the Word of God to you; did he give you spiritual food? That is the criteria for evaluation.

The congregation has to recognize that the test of a man is not his personality, but his communication. Does he feed you the Word of God and can you eat what he serves? Your evaluation of him is always to be based on the communication of the Word.

Paul is telling you, believer, that you should identify the man who can communicate truth to you because you want to grow. Once you have identified that man, don't get disillusioned by him. He is a human being just like you are, only with double the pressure, double the demands, double the stress. So you look at him and say, "I don't know how in the world God can use this cluck, but He taught a Bible class through Balaam's ass—I guess He can work through this guy" (see Num. 22:21–41). You have to understand that this is the way God has always worked because every one of us is a product of grace. You will only be used by God in one way—through grace. Therefore, respect your pastor because of his work. Your honor toward him should increase as his communication to you becomes productive, and you see it work in your life.

EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY

And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men. See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that which is good for one another and for all men.

I Thess. 5:14–15

There must be wise and balanced exercise of authority. Paul is the general speaking to the commanders in the field. The field commanders are the pastors. Again Paul uses the word *parakaleo*, translated “urge,” meaning “to call to one’s side for the purpose of exhortation and encouragement.”

“Brethren” refers to the pastors. The word translated “admonish” is the same word used in verse 12 to describe the work of those who give instruction. It is from *nous* and *tithemi*. *Tithemi* means “to place, to put.” *Nous* is “mind.” Your mind is the battlefield in the Christian life. What you think, what you decide, what you choose—these are the struggles of the Christian life. Because of this, the primary responsibility of the communicator is to admonish, to teach, to instruct, and to put the truth into people’s minds.

When Paul says to “admonish the unruly,” he is turning this into a military analogy. “The unruly” is *ataktos*. It was a military word for someone who was not in ranks. It was used for someone who went AWOL, someone who was rebellious. It could mean someone who was not doing his job. The unruly are identified again in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 7 and 11 as those who are undisciplined, nonproductive, busybodies. Paul is comparing the pastor to a drill instructor whose task it is to identify the unruly and put them in place.

“Encourage” here is not *parakaleo* but *paramutheomai*, a word that means “to instill courage through verbal commands.” “Fainthearted” is the compound *oligopsuchos*. *Oligos* is “small” and *psuchos* is “soul.” You will always find people in life who are small in soul. They are little in their thinking, in their minds. These people are always timid and fearful. They need encouragement. Give them courage. How? Through verbal command. Teach them. Challenge them.

“Help the weak” literally means to hold up those who are spiritually and morally frail. Some Christians are prone to constant sinning. Man’s way of dealing with these people is to jump on them, to browbeat them. But God says to hold them up. If they are too weak to stand on their own, hold them up. What does the soldier do if he is on a battlefield and someone, through his own stupidity,

steps on a mine? He goes out there and carries him off. That is part of military protocol. In the military, you never leave a wounded comrade behind.

As a Christian, can you do any less? Can you see a fellow Christian fall into some terrible area of sin and just look at him and say, “Well it serves him right”? You hear about some believer who is going through a divorce, a believer who got caught up in some area of immorality, what do you do? Too often you don’t walk out and offer first aid to that person. Instead, you go tell someone else, and that person tells someone else, and pretty soon there is sniping going on, and then fellow believers are throwing grenades in and blowing this poor person to bits. He has already been wounded enough. What he does not need is for someone from his own army attacking him. He needs someone who will brave both enemy fire and “friendly” fire and pull him to safety. Why don’t you do it? **You** go out and pick him up and **you** become his strength.

Paul tells his readers to “*be patient with all men*” because when you are dealing with people, you have to be patient.

It is the pastor’s responsibility as the commander in the field to “*see to it that no one repays another with evil for evil.*” He has to stop the fights in the congregation. Paying back evil for evil simply increases and intensifies evil by repetition. Paul tells these men to seek after *agathos*, a word that always refers to intrinsic good. This is not situational good—this is what is **always** good. With the definite article, this is “the good.” “The good” is divine good. The word for “*seek*” means “to pursue with a passion.” These men are to always seek divine good—with a passion.

CODE OF HONOR

Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophetic utterances. But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil. 1 Thess. 5:16–22

This introduces us to “the protocol system.” Divine good is the standard, the protocol, the code of honor for the royal army.

An army must have a code of honor—a protocol—for maintaining discipline to achieve the goals of that army. A code of honor is not for perfect people, but for frail people. A code of honor recognizes that in order for us to achieve the objective, we must have a system and a standard of conduct inside, as well as outside, our organization.

The ideas of *esprit de corps*, team spirit, and the indomitable spirit cannot be sustained apart from a concept of personal honor and a conviction of the nobility of the cause you serve. You have to believe in the cause to be committed to it. If you want to have a noble life, let me give you a suggestion—find a noble cause. If you want to have an honorable life, commit yourself to an honorable cause. It is the cause you serve that makes you what you are. The great men and women of the Old Testament, and the heroes of Hebrews 11, were people who sinned terribly; however, they were honored and great in God’s sight because, by faith, they served a noble cause. If you want an honorable life, commit yourself to the cause of Jesus Christ.

Paul’s honor code (outlined in finer detail in Romans 12) is composed of eight simple exhortations:

1. “Rejoice.” The verb *chairō* comes from the Greek word for “grace.” To rejoice is to celebrate the grace of God. As a warrior of the cause of Christ, you can drive the enemy crazy by celebrating regardless of what happens. Whether things go well or badly, you celebrate. This reflects your inner joy, peace, and tranquility—it shows that you are sure of the victory. You may be in defeat right now, but you are assured of ultimate victory—rejoice! You may be sad now, but you are sure of ultimate blessing and joy—rejoice also! This is having an eternal perspective. All the commands that follow shore up this principle of constant celebration.
2. “Pray without ceasing.” This phrase in the Greek means consistent, persistent prayer. Do you want to be **persistent** in prayer? Be **consistent** in prayer. This does not mean that you pray 24 hours a day; it means that a day never

goes by without prayer. “*Pray without ceasing*” means, “Don’t stop your prayer life, keep it up.” But you say, I can only pray for five minutes. Well, if the content of your soul has run out in five minutes, pray for three—do it morning, noon, and night. “*Pray without ceasing.*” This is an imperative. The middle voice says that you will receive the benefit of the action.

3. “*In everything give thanks.*” Only when you develop a prayer life can you really do this. Giving thanks in everything (also an imperative) indicates that the believer, as a warrior, is thankful for everything that happens because **everything** provides an opportunity to prove his mettle, his temper, his character.
4. “*Do not quench the Spirit.*” This is one of four commands in Scripture having to do with our relationship with the Holy Spirit. We are commanded in Ephesians 5:18 to “*be filled with the Spirit.*” This means we give the Spirit of God control of our lives. We are commanded in Galatians 5:16 to “*walk by the Spirit.*” This means we have to let our lifestyles be directed by the Holy Spirit, maintained by the constant filling of the Spirit. We are commanded in Ephesians 4:30 to “*not grieve the Holy Spirit.*” We grieve Him when we sin. We are commanded (1 Thess. 5:19) to “*not quench the Spirit.*” We quench the Spirit through apathy and indifference. The Greek *sbennumi* means “to be extinguished, to die from lack of material.” We starve our souls when we do not feed on the Word of God.

Paul tells us here what causes the flame to go out because the command to not quench the Holy Spirit is connected with the command to “*not despise prophetic utterance.*” In those days there were prophets—people who would stand up and teach the Word while others listened—just as in modern Bible class. And just as they do today, some people would say, “Oh, not this again, I’ve heard this before.” The hungry soul never says that. The hungry soul can never hear Truth too many times. This is one way of despising the Word of God. Apathy and indifference to the Word quench the Spirit and the flame goes out.

5. Despise not prophecy. Remember that prophecy is not just the telling of the future, but is also the communication of the Word of God. “*Despise*” means “to discount, to count as nothing, to disregard as worthless.” Do not disregard the Word of God as worthless, because it is your breath—your life.
6. “Examine everything.” “*Examine*,” *dokimazo*, means “to prove out, to put to the test for the purpose of proving.” The present imperative requires that you take the Word of God, the instruction that is given, and you test it. That puts the responsibility on you because you have to apply it.
7. “Hold fast to that which is good.” “*Hold fast*” literally means “to hold down, to master the content of the instruction.” The “*good*” is *kalos*, that which is noble and honorable. You are able to master the content of the honorable instruction, the information that lifts you out of yourself and challenges you.

This is how you attain rank. No one ever earned rank in any organization without being tested. Sometimes you pass; sometimes you fail. The fact that you fail does not mean that you can never attain higher rank; it just means that it will take you a little longer. So you keep going.

8. “Abstain from evil.” The word “*abstain*” means “to hold away from you.” What is translated “*every form of evil*,” is not “*form*” at all. The verse says to abstain from every “*kind*” or “*category*” of evil. This is not saying to abstain from anything that appears evil, because almost anything you do may appear evil to someone.

Paul’s idea is this: You cannot change the world, but you can change where you stand. That is all God is asking of you as a believer. Plant your feet, claim an area of this earth, and make a change—make a difference. There is only one way you will ever change the world—change the ground that you are standing on right now. Christian, you are going to have to plant your feet and stand

on the honor code, believe in the cause you are fighting for, and never retreat!

This is the formation of an effective unit, a local church, from many individuals. Paul has given us four requirements for forging a team: (1) a team spirit must be established; (2) there must be respect for the leadership; (3) there must be wise and balanced exercise of authority; and (4) there must be a protocol—a code of honor.

The Thessalonian church was called the model church by Paul, not because its members were all wonderful people (they had as many stinkers in Thessalonica as anywhere else). It was because they had one goal—to wage war against their common enemy in their unity in Christ.

VII. COMBAT BRIEFING Ephesians 6:10–18

Before any military expedition, the troops must be briefed. They must be rallied behind their cause, reminded of their objective, warned of their enemy's strength and position, and given a final review of their own armaments.

Ephesians 6:10–18 is Paul's great combat briefing for the royal army of God. He was writing this from a Roman prison where he spent 24 hours a day watching, listening to, and talking with members of the most honored military force in the Roman world. From the Praetorian guards to whom he was chained, this greatest of Christian warriors gleaned illustrations that would instruct and prepare his comrades in Christ for more than 2,000 years to come.

CALL TO ARMS

*Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His
might.* Eph. 6:10

"Finally," from *loipos*, means "from now on, for the duration." Paul is saying that from now on the recipients of this letter are accountable for this information. Every time a believer hears the Word taught, he stands forever accountable to God for what he does with that information. "For the duration" also reminds us that we are in this struggle until death or the Rapture removes us. What will we do with the information Paul is giving us?

Three words for power are used in this sentence. The first is *endunamis*, "be strong" or "be strengthened." *Dunamis* is dynamic power. *En* is the preposition "within." Paul wants us to have dynamic power within. The middle voice indicates that we must be engaged in the strengthening process, we must make choices. We have to choose to study the Word of God, to apply the things we learn, to walk away from temptation, to be more than conquerors through Christ. As we make those choices we are strengthened within. The present tense indicates that we have to keep on constantly receiving this strength. The imperative is a command

from the Lord Jesus Christ, reminding us that He expects all of us to grow to spiritual maturity.

“In the Lord” reminds us of the Lord’s words in John 15:5: *“Apart from Me, you can do nothing.”* Jesus made it very clear that the growth process demands two sources of power: the Spirit of God and the Word of God. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives the moment we believe, but our souls have to be fed the Word of God daily. That is what spiritual growth is all about—consistently filling the soul with the Word so we have that day-to-day balance of residence between the Spirit and the Word—together they can become the power and the dynamic of our lives.

The second word for power here is *kratos*, *“strength.”* *Kratos* is ruling authority. The third word, *ischuos*, is translated *“might.”* It refers to the omnipotence of God. It means that there is no limitation to God’s power—that He is, in fact, the Almighty.

This challenge to be strong *“in the strength of His might”* reminds us that Christianity is for the weak. Christianity acknowledges the basic weakness of human nature by telling us, from the very start, that there is nothing **we** can do. It teaches us that Jesus Christ has done everything **for** us. Because He paid the price of sin on the cross, because He has provided for us all spiritual blessings, we have the ability—His ability—to stand.

Paul is saying, allow the omnipotence of God to rule you. It is important to recognize that this word is *“rule,”* because God demands obedience. The principle stands from the beginning to the present day, illustrated by every person who ever became great in the faith. Samson is a good example. Samson was strong when he obeyed, but weak as a baby when he disobeyed (see Judges 13:24–16:31). When does a believer have the omnipotence—the almighty power of God available in his life? When he obeys in faith.

Be strong in the Lord, don’t be a weakling in life. The whole struggle is that we become strong by faith. We are all helpless in ourselves. We all have areas of weakness. We all fall and fail, as James says, in many ways (James 3:2).

OBJECTIVE

Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Eph. 6:11

Now Paul states the objective: “*that you may be able to stand firm.*” To do that, you must put on the armor of God. The word translated “*put on*” is *enduo*, which means “to be clothed.” The armor of God becomes the garment of your life. The aorist tense indicates that you put on the full armor at a point of time, “once and for all.” Put on the armor of God and don’t ever take it off.

To “*be able*” is another phrase from *dunamis*. It is a present passive infinitive. The present tense means you keep on doing it, but the passive voice means you must receive the action of the verb. You do not produce this ability to stand; you can only receive it.

“*Stand,*” from the Greek word *histemi*, is an aorist infinitive emphasizing the urgency. It is in the active voice, meaning you must act. In the contrasts here between the action “*put on*” and “*stand*” and the passive “*may be able,*” Paul is saying this: “Believer, until you start allowing God to work in your life, until you start submitting to His plan, until you start being passive in His hands, you will never be active on the battlefield.”

You have to be passive in Bible class. You have one responsibility in class: receive and respond to the Word of God. When you leave class and walk back into the world, God says, “Now it’s time for the test; now it’s your turn to act. Let’s see what you can do with what you have been given. You did not have to work for it, you did not earn it or deserve it. It was given as a gift. Now, what will you do with what you have?”

Paul says to put on the full armor so that you may be able to stand “*against the schemes of the devil.*” “*Schemes*” is *methodeias*, meaning “strategy or methods.” This word reminds us that there is an enemy out there who attacks each and every one of us, and he is pretty ingenious in his attacks. He does not attack all of us the same way because he knows that we are all different. But God’s purpose is that we stand firm.

“Stand firm” was the battle cry of Rome’s veteran soldiers, the *Triarii*. Paul uses a form of the Greek word *histemi* four times in Ephesians 6:11–14. He is thinking of these soldiers and the Christians’ goal to press on to maturity, to be able to take their stand in the conflict and never retreat.

There are three levels in the Roman military:

1. *Hastati*. These were the raw recruits. The name comes from the Latin word for the javelin, *hasta*. As the army advanced toward the enemy, the *hastati* are analogous to Christians in spiritual infancy. A baby believer can take a promise or a principle from the Word and hurl it at the enemy, but he can’t stand for long in the battle.
2. *Principes*. These were the strong and vigorous young men who had a little battle training, a little experience. They were gung ho, eager, and ready to take on the enemy, but they lacked the fine-tuning of experience. They could fight furiously for a while, but when things got really hot, they too had to retreat. The *principes* are analogous to adolescent believers.
3. *Triarii*. These were the veterans—the men who had come through conflict after conflict and were still alive, still strong, still able to fight. They had acquired the wisdom that comes with experience. Each of the *Triarii* could take one square yard of ground and hold that ground against an army. When they engaged the enemy, the *Triarii* never gave up ground. They knew to do only one thing: Take one square yard of ground, clear it, advance; take one square yard of ground, clear it, advance. The Roman *Triarii* are analogous to mature believers.

Paul wrote Ephesians from a Roman prison, chained day and night to members of the Praetorian Guard. The Praetorian Guard was the most elite force of Roman soldiers, composed of men chosen by the emperor from among the *Triarii*. They are a perfect picture of the

royal knighthood of the Lord Jesus Christ—those designated in Scripture as heroes of faith.

Here is Paul, the battle-hardened hero of faith who had taken the message of God throughout the known civilized world, who never retreated and never gave ground to the enemy, who won an empire for the Lord Jesus Christ. This man is saying, “I’ve done it; I’ve stood firm. You can do it too.” The goal, he says, is that you may be able to stand, as the *Triarii* stood. Maybe you are not able yet, but this is the goal and it is attainable. Every one of the *Triarii* started out as a *hastatus*. Every hero of faith starts out as a babe in Christ.

How do you become a soldier? You walk on to the base, someone hands you a loaded M-16, points you in the direction of the enemy and says, “Go get ‘em!” Right? Wrong! You learn one step at a time. You get off the bus, you meet your drill instructor, someone takes you to your barracks, someone hands you a uniform, and then you’re almost ready to get started. You are not given a weapon until you’ve been grounded in certain other things. You have to learn to march, to take commands, to be obedient. By each slow step you are forged into an effective soldier.

How do you become a spiritual warrior? Step-by-step, line-by-line, and precept-by-precept (Isa. 28:10). God’s plan is to take you, by the teaching of the Word, through the ranks—promoting you until you are able to stand.

The principle of stability comes from Isaiah 33:6: “*He shall be the stability of your times.*” The Hebrew word *emunah* means “the ability to draw all things together, to put things in order.” The function of spiritual maturity is to be able to put all things in order in Christ.

To reach the point where you have that stability, you have to learn to put a lot of things together. You have to know God’s plan, His purpose, and your place. As you learn these things, as they are developed through your own spiritual growth, you can fulfill the infinitive in Ephesians 6:11, “*that you may be able to stand.*” That you, being enabled, may stand. You passively receive the strength by grace. Then, apply the strength when you take on the enemy in active, aggressive, combat faith.

If you stand, you will do it by faith and faith alone, not by human effort or human ingenuity. The only way you can stand is

by faith through grace—this means that God does the work and you receive the benefits.

ENEMY STRENGTH

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Eph. 6:12

Now Paul is ready to give us an idea of what it is we have to stand against. “Our struggle,” he says, “is not against flesh and blood.” “Struggle” is *pale*, which means “individual confrontation, hand-to-hand combat.” When I go through a temptation or a trial, you may be right there with me, but you are not going to suffer as I suffer. You may give me words of support and encouragement, but you cannot fight my fight. You are engaged in your own hand-to-hand struggle.

Paul could have used many other words to describe the conflict, but the Holy Spirit inspired him to remind us that we are to put on the armor of God because we each face a personal conflict that will win for us either personal commendation or personal rebuke from the Lord. And our struggle, our hand-to-hand conflict, is not against flesh and blood; we are not fighting human enemies. We are facing a sophisticated, four-tiered enemy force that Paul now names:

1. “Rulers.” *Archas* refers to the “highest authorities.” These would be four-star generals, Satan’s Pentagon staff, his Strategic Air Command.
2. “Powers.” *Exousias* is a word for “authority.” We would call these field officers or field marshals. These are Satan’s forces in control on the earth. He has some type of board of fallen angelic beings who sit at a panel and look at their maps, check their radar, look at their information, and plot their offensive. Then they send word down to the others.
3. “World forces.” *Kosmokratoras*. *Kosmos* is “world,” *kratos* is “ruler.” A few of these are revealed in Daniel 10. These are demons, each assigned to a nation of this world. The

greater the nation, the more powerful the demon in charge. There is one coming to this world in the future called *Apollyon* in the Greek and *Abaddon* in the Hebrew (Rev. 9:11). This is the super demon who is in charge of all the world forces. He is called “the destroyer,” and during the Tribulation he will unleash 200,000,000 demons from the bottomless pit to invade the world.

4. *“Spiritual forces of wickedness.” Pneumatika tes ponerias* means “wicked spirits.” These are the rank and file evil spirits, the everyday demons.

As a believer you have another enemy; you are fighting on two fronts. On the outside is the spiritual conflict with the world and the devil. This is where you face persecution, relationship problems, money testing, and all the other fears and anxieties of daily life. But you also have an inner war, a war against the flesh—your old sin nature within.

While you fight on these two fronts in a real way, you must understand something: There is often another, an unnecessary civil war raging in the Church. You must remember that your war is never against other believers. Christians fight other believers because it’s easier than facing the real enemy. But you must stay focused on the real enemy. Fight the enemy out there in the world; fight the enemy in your own sin nature; but don’t carry on civil war against members of the royal family of God.

OBJECTIVE REPEATED

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.
Eph. 6:13

Again, Paul reminds the troops of their objective. “Therefore” looks back to the previous three verses which indicate that we are engaged in the angelic conflict. Because you are in the angelic conflict, because there is strength available (v. 10), because you know the

strategy of the enemy (v. 11), because the enemy has a highly sophisticated organization (v. 12), “therefore,” Paul is saying, “take up the full armor of God.” Inevitably, as a believer in Jesus Christ, you are in the war whether you like it or not.

The word “take up” indicates, with the urgency of the aorist imperative, the need to “arm yourself.” The aorist looks at the urgency and literally says, “Do it now! There is no time to delay!” The active voice indicates that you have to **choose** to do this. The imperative is a command from the authority of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament Lord of Hosts. (The title “Lord of Hosts” is used more than 300 times in the Old Testament; the Hebrew word translated “hosts,” *tsabaoth*, is a military word better translated “armies.”)

The armor lies before you, placed there by God under the provisions of logistical grace. You have to choose to take it up and to use it. “Therefore, take up the full armor of God.” Here we have the Greek word *panoplia*, from which we get the English word “panoply.” Panoply is defined by Webster as “a complete suit of armor lacking nothing; defensive and offensive weaponry.” The Word of God provides you with everything you need. Put on the panoply “that you may be able to resist.” The purpose clause here indicates the possibility that you **can** stand. “May be able” is, again, from *dunamis*, a verb of ability. The subjunctive mood indicates that this is potential. It is **possible** for you to stand.

“Resist” is from the military word, *histemi*. It can mean “to set or place.” It has the connotation that you have been placed in that position. The word is used here with the preposition *anti*, “against.” It means, therefore, “to stand against or resist.” As James 4:7 says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” The devil is the biggest coward in the world. When you stand with resistance, when you oppose the enemy in the power of God’s omnipotence, he flees. The aorist infinitive is the infinitive of purpose, and it indicates that you are now functioning according to God’s perfect plan.

You are to resist in the evil day, but just when is the evil day? It is whenever you are under attack. Whenever you find yourself under personal attack, you must be able to resist. Paul says then, “having done everything, to stand firm.” Here he uses the infinitive again, following the compound verb *katergazomai*, which means

that you have worked this out according to divine standard. *Ergazomai* from *ergon* refers to a productive work of labor. *Kata* means according to a set norm and standard. God has established the norm and standard by which you and I can become effective and productive. When you become productive according to the divine standard, according to the filling of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, then the infinitive is fulfilled, and you stand in your place. You are unshakable!

ARMS REVIEW

Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.

Eph. 6:14–18

If you are going to stand in the face of the opposition, in the face of enemies—visible and invisible, physical and spiritual—you have to take up and be able to use your weaponry.

“Stand” is the main verb of this section. It is followed by a list of aorist participles. The aorist participle in Greek precedes the action of the main verb. Paul says if you want to stand, you will have to do what follows. He is outlining a system, a training procedure. If you will consistently follow the procedure, an amazing thing will happen in your life without you even consciously worrying about it or working for it: You will start to stand; this objective will become a reality in your life.

What Paul gives here are the daily disciplines of the Christian life. Paul had watched these great soldiers to whom he was chained. To the Roman soldier, putting on his armament was just like putting on his clothes. Paul had said to himself, “We Christians could learn

a lot from these men.” So, in this letter Paul outlines seven things the Roman soldier put on every day without fail, and he likened these to seven things the Christian warrior cannot afford to be without. Paul says you must learn to put these things on as effortlessly as you put on your clothes.

The Belt of Truth

Roman soldiers wore a belt similar to the Sam Browne belt that law enforcement officers wear today. It had a strap that went over the shoulder. The belt was the foundation for everything else the soldier put on.

Putting on the belt of truth recognizes that the Word of God must be the foundation of life and it has to be “put on” daily. In verse 13, Paul reduced the Christian life down—not to ten years or five years or even one year—but to one day, “*that you may be able to resist in the evil day.*” Remember, the evil day is the one you are in right now. How are you going to be able to stand in the evil day? You start by putting on the belt of truth, by consistently studying and being occupied with the Word of God every day.

This does not mean that you have to sit down and spend an hour reading the Bible every morning. But if you spend just five minutes a day in the Word, you would be amazed at what it would do in your life. If you would find time somewhere in your day to take five minutes to read a chapter of the Word and reflect on that portion of Truth throughout the day, it would change your life.

The Word of God becomes your source of perception for that day. Not only is your mind receptive to the information, but your volition says yes to it; you are positive, therefore the information combines with faith. However, if you have the Word and you don’t have faith, your belt is unbuckled, and everything else is going to fall off! It does not help to simply hear the Word—you have to hear it, believe it, and do it.

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The second piece of armor is “*the breastplate of righteousness.*” “Put on” is, again, *enduo*, meaning “to clothe yourself.” The

Roman breastplate, called the *thorax*, would be equivalent to a modern flak jacket or bulletproof vest. The soldier would put this armor on and buckle it to the belt. Without the belt the armor was no good; it flopped around; it wasn't secure. But once it was buckled on, once the soldier had clothed himself in this armor, he was secure in this area of his vital organs.

The analogy here is that after you have studied the Word of God, after you have taken information in, you cycle it by faith through your life and let it begin building the "edification complex in your soul."

Why is it called the breastplate of righteousness? Because the very first thing that you accept from the Bible, the very first thing that goes to work laying the foundation of truth in your soul, is the person of Jesus Christ. The Bible tells you that as soon as you put your trust in Jesus Christ, God gives you His own righteousness (Gen. 15:6; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Why is that a "*breastplate*" to your soul? Because you do not have to produce righteousness; it has been given to you as a gift. Understanding this makes life so simple because you know that whether you win or lose, whether you stand or fall, God always looks at you the same way: He looks at you as a winner because you have His righteousness implanted in your soul. You can never begin to apply that righteousness until you quit trying to produce it.

In the Christian life, only those who understand this and rest in it will ever have righteousness as an experiential part of their lives. God never intended that you produce His righteousness. He gave it to you because you **cannot** produce it. The righteousness of God is a **free gift**. When you have that righteousness and when you utilize that breastplate daily, you are using the principle of confession of your sins so that you can be filled with the Holy Spirit. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, the righteousness of God begins to manifest itself in your life. It becomes real to you, because the Spirit of God goes to work in the life of a person who is honest enough to come to God and say, "I know this is sin; I am out of line, therefore I confess it." The Spirit of God can work with honesty—He can't work with dishonesty. He can't work with the person who says,

“Well, I’m going to have to overcome this area of sin in my life.” The Spirit says, “You go ahead and try, and when you get tired, then you come back to me. I’ll be here. Because you can’t overcome anything by yourself.”

The breastplate of righteousness is a tremendous source of strength, because you begin to build strength in the soul from knowing about it.

The Sandals of the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace

The sandals worn by Roman soldiers were called the *caligae*. They were extremely sturdy so that the soldiers could march long distances with heavy packs. They made the Roman army one thing that it had to be: mobile and ready to march. The Roman soldier had one desire: to extend the borders of the empire.

As Christians, our job is to extend the borders of the empire of Jesus Christ. We live in the realm of darkness; we are behind enemy lines. We were designed to be on the march, to be on the offensive—not the defensive. If you as an individual believer can sit in the comfort and assurance of having eternal life and care less about people who do not have it, then you are not going to stand. If a local church can be anything other than mission-minded and evangelistic, then it is not going to stand.

The Roman *caligae* had hobnailed soles to give the soldiers sure footing. The Christian who understands the solid footing that reconciliation with God has given him, who understands the practical meaning of peace with God, is able to become effective in the mission and the ministry of evangelism (2 Cor. 5:18–21).

“*The preparation of the gospel of peace*” means that you are an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Who is representing Jesus Christ where you work, in your business, in your school? If it’s not you, who is it? You are where you are because God wants an ambassador in that place.

Do you want to bring others into the kingdom of God? How can you do it? Only one way: You have to be effective in witnessing, and the most effective witnessing is when you make an impression on people’s minds because of your motivation, because of your

enthusiasm for life, because of the hope they see in your life that nobody else around you has.

When Paul says to put on the sandals, he is saying you have to do this as a daily discipline. People are dying without Christ every day that you live. Every believer has the responsibility to be prepared and equipped daily to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Pet 3:15).

The Shield of Faith

The Roman *thureos* was a massive shield. Two feet wide and four feet long, it was made of a plank overlaid with bull hide and framed with iron. Sometimes the edges were sharpened so that it could be used as a weapon. The soldier could ram with it, cut with it, or gash with it. But its real value was as a defense against one of the most feared weapons in ancient warfare: the arrow tipped with pitch and set aflame. When a flaming arrow hit its target, it carried the pitch into the victim's body where it continued to smolder and burn, causing excruciating pain.

Because the arrows could come from every direction in a battle, soldiers trained for hours and hours with the shield, learning to maneuver with it and to deflect the flaming missiles.

As a Christian, you are the target of the enemy's flaming missiles every day. Every single day he finds some way to attack, to tempt, to test, to try, to distract, to badger, to irritate you. The only way to extinguish those flaming darts is by learning to rest in faith (Heb. 4:1, 3, 10–11).

"Faith" must be defined two ways. Objectively, it is "that which you believe." The object of our faith is the living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the written Word, the Bible. Subjectively, faith is "the act of believing." The faith-rest life is the ability to use the Word of God as a shield. It is your ability to take the principles, the promises, and the doctrines of the Word and apply them to life.

You will not be able to deflect the enemy's arrows without practice or training. You have to develop the skill of meeting each enemy attack with principles and promises from the Word that deal with that specific temptation or need.

Remember that, in the Garden, Eve fell for temptation because she met Satan in the strength of her own mind, her own opinions. He wiped her out. But when Satan made a personal attack on the Lord Jesus Christ, this Man—who did not even have a sin nature like you and I do—relied **only** on the Word of God. Three times He responded to the devil's advances with the phrase, "*It is written,*" followed by the perfect passage to meet the particular temptation. The enemy had no counterattack. The faith-rest technique is our ability to use the Word of God as a shield to defend ourselves.

The Helmet of Salvation

The Roman helmet covered the most vulnerable area of the body. In the spiritual war, your mind is the battlefield. Your greatest struggles are always in the mind, in your thinking and your attitudes. The helmet of salvation must be received. "*Take up*" comes from a word that means "to receive with thankfulness." You receive this because you know you need it. His bronze helmet gave the Roman soldier security. To Paul, the helmet was a picture of the believer's security.

What kind of security do you have? There is only one kind that is any good: the eternal security of salvation. Eternal security means that at some point in your life you believed in Jesus Christ and He gave you eternal life. Therefore, whether you are good or bad, you have eternal life.

What does this mean as a day-by-day discipline? Very simply this: Every day you live, no matter how bad things get, you have one security in life that no one can take away from you. If you lose everything else and go to the poor farm, you cannot lose your salvation. No one can take away your eternal reward. No one can take away what God has given you in Christ. You always have that; therefore you are always rich.

The helmet of salvation gives you the practical assurance that you need in facing not only failures but also the doubts and fears that assail you in life, so that you can move forward with perfect confidence in spiritual advance.

The Sword of the Spirit

The Roman short sword, the *machaira*, revolutionized warfare in the ancient world. Armies everywhere else were thinking bigger had to be better, so they kept making their swords bigger and bigger until they finally came up with what was called the *romphaia*. We know it as the broadsword. The Thracian broadsword stood about six feet tall. It took a giant to use it. One man would lug this thing out to the battlefield and then hand it over to the barbarian soldier, and the barbarian would just stand there with this huge sword and mow men down as they came at him.

But Roman men were small; they averaged 5'8" and 145–160 pounds. It was obvious that a six-foot sword wouldn't suit them. So they came up with the *machaira*. It was short, and each one was matched to the man who wielded it. Its length was the distance from the soldier's elbow to his fingertips because this was the most natural extension, and it made the *machaira* easy for the Roman soldier to use.

As the barbarians and Romans faced off, the Romans would advance, the barbarians would start a big surge with their enormous weapons, and then the Romans just backed up, letting the broadswords go by. Then they stepped in with their little *machaira*, and they just carved the barbarians to pieces. Do you know what people said in the ancient world? How will the world ever survive the *machaira*? They thought it was as bad as we think of a nuclear bomb today.

God, who understands the nature of the angelic conflict, knew exactly how to make a weapon perfectly suited to you. The Word of God is the **sword** of the Spirit.

The first thing you must learn about this weapon is that it is called the sword "*of the Spirit*" because it is His sword. He is the only one who can use it. You can know the Bible from cover to cover, but you can only use the Word of God effectively when the Spirit of God is in control of your life.

The second thing you will have to learn is that you can never use the sword offensively until you have learned to use it on yourself. Hebrews 4:12 says that "the Word of God is living and

powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of the soul and the spirit ..." and that it becomes "a critic of the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

If you want to practice with the Word of God, practice on yourself. Don't practice by bashing other people's heads in with it. Take the Word of God and start probing your own life, your own thoughts, your own heart, your own intents—your own thinking. You will become so expert at meeting the human viewpoint and the contrary thought patterns in your life, you will be able to take on anybody out there in the world.

This is your only offensive weapon. You must develop the skill of using it wisely. The fact that these small Roman soldiers learned to use their *machaira* so effectively reminds us that the promises, the principles, and the doctrines of the Word of God are not difficult, but it does take practice to learn how to use them. You have to use the Word daily. Learn to use it in every instance, in every situation, in every problem.

Prayer

In the ancient world it was said that all roads led to Rome. The Romans had such a phenomenal road system that men and material could be dispatched quickly to anywhere in the empire. The roads ensured that logistical support would always be available to Roman troops. When Paul tells us to pray, he is telling us how to get logistical support distributed to fellow soldiers anywhere in the world.

"Through the energy of the Spirit of God," Paul is saying, "led by the Spirit of God, in an attitude of humility and submission, constantly pray with this in view: Be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for the saints" (Eph. 6:18). Why? Because you may be in Conway, Arkansas; and you may have relatives in California who are dying without Christ or who are Christians lying wounded and bleeding from the conflict, and you say, how in the world can I get supplies from here to there? It's very simple: You start firing up the prayer support. You start calling coordinates on your spiritual map, and you call in the fire support from God in those people's lives. You call for the convicting ministry of the Holy

Spirit; you call for God to send some believer to give them aid and encouragement, to lift them up. You, as a believer, have the ability to support anyone in the entire world. You cannot fight anyone else's battles, but you can help—you can pray.

In the royal army, everyone fights on the front lines and everyone works in logistics for others. There is always the need to supply and support others on various parts of the battlefield. Paul, the great apostle, makes it clear that he, like every other Christian in the fray, needs effective prayer support.

James 5:16–18 reminds us of the effective prayer ministry of Elijah and tells us that such a ministry is within the grasp of every believer. The ministry of prayer is not just for those who have the gift of prayer. Prayer is a responsibility of every soldier.

Every Roman legionnaire was expected to always be ready to fight. He was expected to be prepared on a moment's notice to be on the road marching. Therefore, the first thing in the morning, the soldier began a regiment—a discipline that he went through that equipped him for whatever might happen that day.

In this listing of the armor of God, Paul has given us seven things that should be daily disciplines that will equip us for anything that might happen today:

1. Bible study is the belt that holds your life together, that gives you stability and security.
2. Confession and the filling of the Holy Spirit is the breastplate that makes the righteousness of God real in your life.
3. Evangelism puts shoes on the Gospel and extends the borders of the empire.
4. Faith-rest is the shield that can deflect every arrow of the enemy.
5. Assurance of your salvation and of your eternal security is the helmet that protects your mind from fear and doubt.
6. The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit in your hands. It is your only offensive weapon.

7. Effective prayer is the road system that links you to every other Christian and that enables you to play a part in meeting their logistical needs.

At the end of this combat briefing, you may look at Paul's description of the enemy forces, the armor he tells you to take up, the Roman soldiers to whom he compares you and you may say, "It sounds wonderful and I'd sure like it to happen, but you just don't know how weak I am."

Let me remind you of a very basic truth from the Word: God delights in taking weak things and making them powerful. God only needed two little things to drop Goliath—one small stone and one small boy who believed God is able (1 Sam. 17). In the days of Elijah, how much food did it take Him to feed a family for three and a half years? It took a little handful of meal and a little vial of oil (1 Kings 17). That is all. God is in the habit of using small things. *"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the Lord of hosts* (Zach. 4:6).

My challenge to you, believer, is this: Put this armor on in the knowledge that you need it—that you are weak. Put it on with the realization that in the armor—in Christ—you will be mighty!

VIII. STAND Galatians 5:1–4

As we have seen from Ephesians 6, the motto of the Roman *Triarii* was *stete*, “Stand firm!” from the Greek word *histemi*. In battle, the goal of each soldier was to take his stand on one square yard and hold his ground in the face of everything the enemy could throw at him.

In Galatians 5, Paul issues the same command to stand firm, and tells us where to stand, how to stand, and why to stand.

WHERE TO STAND

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
Gal. 5:1

Everyone who is in Christ, everyone who has believed in Him and received the gift of eternal life, has the greatest spiritual advantage possible: freedom. From the word *eleutheria*, freedom means “liberty”; it always connotes the ability to exercise volition. In Christ we are truly free.

The phrase “for freedom” is backed up by the foundational statement: “Christ set us free.” The verb *eleutheroo* is an aorist active indicative, meaning that Jesus Christ set us free, once and for all (John 8:31–32, 36).

In Christ, we have perfect and total freedom. We were not free before we believed in Him, but we are now and always will be. The verb points to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross and reminds us of a very important principle: The freedom that we enjoy in Christ was not won without a price. It is free to us, but only because Christ paid a great price. He won our freedom by giving up all His freedom. He pursued the will of His Father throughout His life. In Gethsemane He had to come to the point at which He would totally submit Himself to a course of action that, in Himself, He did not want to take. But He volitionally made a commitment to the cross so that you and I could have freedom. The value of freedom can be appreciated only in the light of Golgotha. You will never under-

stand the value of the freedom you have until you understand the price that was paid for it.

If it is true that Jesus Christ set us free once and for all “*for freedom,*” and if this was the objective of the work of our Lord on the cross, then it is imperative that we as believers understand this freedom. Just what are we free from? The Bible lists five things:

1. *Free from sin* (Rom. 6:7). Jesus Christ set us free from sin. Sin robs us of happiness. At first we choose to sin, but in time sin masters us and we become slaves to our desires, to the commitment of whatever sin tempts us. Then we’re stuck and don’t know how to deliver ourselves from the web we’re caught in. But, Jesus Christ set us free once and for all from sin. What does that mean? Three things:
 - ♦ We are free from the **power** of sin. Sin does not have any more power over us than we are willing to allow it to have. In Christ we have the ability to say no.
 - ♦ We are free from the **penalty** of sin. The penalty of sin is spiritual death, but when we believe in Jesus Christ, we are given eternal life.
 - ♦ We are free, ultimately, from the **presence** of sin. When we receive our glorified bodies, our sin nature will be gone. We will not be free of our sin nature until we get to Heaven, so we might as well accept its existence and not be shocked by what our or someone else’s sin nature does.
2. *Free from condemnation* (Rom. 8:1). There is “*no condemnation for anyone who is in Christ.*” This verse does not say that we are free from condemnation as long as we meet the standards of other people who want to judge us. It says that we are free from condemnation because of our standing in Christ. God will never see us any other way than in Christ, in His Son. He always looks at us with the same love that He has for His Son; He always sees in us the same righteousness that He sees in His Son, because He credited that righteousness to our account the moment we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).

3. Free from the Mosaic Law (Rom. 10:4). The Law had a two-fold purpose—to condemn us and to point us to salvation (Gal. 3:24–25). That was all the Law could do. The Law cannot provide salvation or spirituality; it cannot give us life. It can tell us that we are guilty and it can tell us where to go for help. But after we have come to justification by faith in Christ, we are set free from legalism into grace. Law and grace are antithetically opposed. They cannot be mingled.
4. Free from the judgment of others (Col. 2:16). We are free from the judgmental standards of those around us. These judgmental standards come primarily from people who are involved in religion (ritual without reality). We are not to allow any man to be our judge. This means that when someone tries to tell us how we should act with regard to food or drink or religious observances, we must stand in our freedom and on the truth. But in order to stand, we have to bring to bear the scriptural truth that applies to the subject at hand. We honor the Lord Jesus Christ when we refuse to bow to the browbeating of legalists, because truth is more important than any of us, and it is certainly more important than our feelings and our opinions. Truth is the issue of life.
5. Free from self (Matt. 16:24; Gal. 5:1; Titus 2:9–12). Finally, we are set free from one of the most tyrannical, terrible slave masters in the world: ourselves. As we experientially entrust ourselves to God’s care, we find that we are free to care about others; we have been set free from slavery to the liberty of service in God’s plan.

These five areas of freedom give us an idea of where we should stand. In much the same way that a nation has to stand for freedom or lose it, a Christian has to stand for his freedom or he loses not the possession, but the exercise of that freedom. So Paul now commands us, because of this freedom, to keep standing firm. This is the present active imperative of the military verb (*stete*) used four times in Ephesians 6. This command means to hold your ground

in the face of the enemy, to refuse to retreat under fire, to be steadfast, to exercise perseverance in the battle.

Spiritually, it means “the willingness to live by conviction.” You have heard the saying that if you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything. Paul knew this, and he used this military command to tell you that you must live by your biblical convictions, whatever the cost.

Your biblical convictions will be opposed and attacked by the enemy. In the world of grace versus law, in the world of faith versus works, you face the conflict between good and evil. The Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly told His disciples that because of what He would do on the cross, the conflict would become more and more intense until the end of the age. Today you live in a world that is in conflict. The ability to stand means that you choose daily to live and be ruled by the Word of God in spite of the opposition.

Therefore, Paul is saying, “Keep standing firm or you will lose the war because you will be enslaved again to a yoke of slavery.” The word “*to be subject*,” *enecho*, means literally “to become entangled, to be caught in a snare.” It parallels the principle of Hebrews 12:1–2. All of us have various areas where we are in danger of being entangled in life. Paul’s point is that when you allow yourself to be entangled—and the passive voice is used here because you are the recipient of this entangling process—then, he says, you enter again into a yoke of slavery.

“*The yoke of slavery*” recognizes the fact that you will lose your exercise of freedom. Notice the word “*again*.” Paul is saying something very important for you to understand: All religions are the same. Before they came to Christ, these Galatian believers were in heathenism—that is a religion. If they give in to circumcision (v. 3), they will be in Judaism—that is a religion. In their unbelief, they were in darkness, they were slaves of darkness. When they came to Jesus Christ and entered into union with Him, they were delivered from the kingdom of darkness, set free in the kingdom of God’s Son (Col. 1:13). They became therefore true free agents in the spiritual realm. But if they depart from the principles of grace, though they can never depart from their relationship with Christ, they will live, practically speaking, as if they were unbelievers.

Jesus Christ set us free once, for all. You will never be able to destroy or to lose your freedom. You will always have spiritual liberty, whether or not you choose to live like it. You may not always enjoy your liberty, but the whole point of grace is that no one can take grace from you. No one can deprive you of the provisions of grace; they are yours permanently. They do not increase; they cannot diminish. But many people, unfortunately, do not know what these provisions are and cannot rely on them. Many other people, as the Galatians did, simply choose by their activities in life to cut themselves off from the enjoyment of grace and its provisions.

HOW TO STAND

Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. Gal. 5:2-3

We know where we stand: in the realm of freedom in grace. We have to plant our feet on the grace of God. When you plant your feet on the grace of God, you will find yourself in opposition to many people who are supposedly doing the Lord's will.

In verses 2-3, we see the intrusion of works into the lives of those who believe. Notice what is happening here. There is, on the part of these believers, a gradual susceptibility to legalism, a gradual willingness to try to mingle legalism and grace. Legalism and grace do not mix. Any time you mingle the least bit of legalism with grace, you no longer have grace. Any time you promote the least concept of works for approval, works for blessing, works for anything, you have deprived yourself of grace. God's design is that it is either **all** grace or **no** grace. Paul points this out in Romans 11:6. Paul is warning these Galatian believers that the intrusion of works nullifies grace.

When Paul says "*behold*," he is telling the Galatians they had better pay attention. The Greek here is very graphic, very bold. He refers explicitly to himself: "I, Paul, am saying to you," because he is an apostle appointed by God; therefore, what he says should

carry some weight. He uses the continuous tense to indicate that what he is saying bears repetition.

These Galatians are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They have imputed righteousness. They have regeneration. They have the benefits of redemption, propitiation, and reconciliation. All their sins were wiped out on the cross. They have all the benefits of grace, all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. They have everything because they have Christ.

What do the Judaizers have to offer these people? Circumcision. They have a ritual. Can you imagine telling people who have Jesus Christ that they need something more—that they need circumcision? That is exactly what was happening in Galatia!

Circumcision was a ritual, given to Abraham in Genesis 17, explained again in Romans 4. It was a sign and a seal that Abraham already had eternal life. What is the physical act of circumcision? It is an act of removing the flesh. This removal of the flesh was a sign of the work that we call regeneration. Circumcision could not give regeneration. But it was, like water baptism, a sign that regeneration had already taken place.

The Galatians had received Christ; they had eternal life and then they were dumb enough to get duped into this circumcision deal. There are multitudes of believers today who have fallen for this kind of thing and they are totally deceived. If they have believed in Christ, they have eternal life, but they will never reach maturity if they depend on ritual (works). If they, like the Galatians, turn away from dependence on Christ, there will be a result: Christ will not benefit them—He will not bless them—in any single thing!

God did not intend that you as a believer live your life as a debtor. He intended that you live in freedom. But, if you choose to put yourself under a system of works, under the Law, then you will be a debtor (meaning you will be under obligation) to keep the whole Law. It is humanly impossible to keep the Law.

There are two absolutes in the Christian life: spirituality and carnality. Spirituality results from the filling of the Holy Spirit. Carnality is the domination of the old sin nature. They are mutually exclusive. It is impossible to have a part of one and part of the other

at the same time. The Christian cannot, at any moment of time, be a little spiritual or a little carnal; he is either filled with the Spirit or he is not. A baby believer filled with the Spirit is spiritual. A mature believer functioning in carnality is carnal. One is pleasing to God, earning eternal reward — the other is not.

Spirituality functions under the principle of grace. Carnality functions under the principle of works. Paul therefore says Jesus Christ will be of no benefit to these people. The word “benefit” means “profit.” It refers to the ability to utilize provisions. The minute you as a believer step outside the filling of the Spirit into the function of carnality, you cannot draw on the resources of grace. You will never be able to write one check on the account of your riches in grace when you are out of fellowship. Your prayers are not effective, your giving is not effective, your service is not effective, and you are earning no eternal reward when you are out of fellowship.

The sin nature is hostile to faith. Paul will point out in verse 16 that if you walk by the Spirit, you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. In that verse he uses the emphatic double negative, which says, when you are filled with the Spirit, it is absolutely impossible to sin. You **cannot** sin when you are filled with the Spirit. That is why the filling of the Spirit is your solution to sin.

Here you are in your sin nature facing some area of lust. How do you deal with it? When you sin, you confess and are restored to fellowship. *“If 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). You will never stop sinning in this life, but you can learn to spend most of your time filled with the Spirit by examining yourself and keeping short accounts with God. You cannot conquer sin in the energy of the flesh, but as long as you maintain spirituality, there is no way that you will fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit (Gal. 5:17). The word for “sets its desire” literally means “to lust.” The sin nature has a lust to dominate against the Spirit, and the Spirit of God against the flesh. These are in opposition to one another, antithetically opposed to one another. You choose every moment which one will be in control of your life.

In Colossians 2:6, in a warning to another group of Christians not to fall for the enemy's strategy of works and law, Paul says, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus as Lord, so walk in Him." This is a much more crucial verse than most people recognize because it states that, in the way you began, you will finish. If you started with the Law, you will stay with the Law thinking that the Law is the answer. Paul says we start our Christian lives by grace through faith and we must choose to continue that way.

What works did you do for salvation? None. You believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you were given eternal life. All you did was accept a gift. What did you do to receive the divine operating assets of Ephesians 1-3? To receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? You did nothing but believe. How did you start? By grace through faith. As you began, so you should walk in Him.

Satan and the world, and even many Christians, hate grace. It is too extravagant for many people to accept. Grace means Jesus Christ did all the work and we receive all the benefits. We can never earn grace and we will never deserve grace. But every day of this life we will need grace.

So, how can we stand?

1. We must stand in the grace of God (Rom. 5:2; 1 Pet. 5:12). Standing in grace means that we rely totally and completely on God, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Spirit. It means that we realize the necessity for confession and for the filling of the Holy Spirit moment-by-moment and day-by-day.
2. We must stand by faith (2 Cor. 1:24). Grace and faith are inseparable. In 1 Corinthians 16:13, Paul says to be on the alert, to stand firm in the faith, to act like men, to be strong. As believers, we should always be on the alert. Why? Because we have enemies—the world, the flesh, the devil. We have to stand firm in the faith. "The faith" in this passage is used in the objective sense for the content of our faith. "The faith" is all that the Word of God teaches. Stand firm in the Word of God. You cannot stand in the faith

- when you do not know what the faith is. To know takes constant study and the application of the Word to your life.
3. *We must stand in the power of God* (Phil. 4:1). We stand in the Lord; we stand not in our power or our might, but in His power through His Spirit (Zech. 4:6). Standing is, according to Romans 14:4, an individual issue. We stand recognizing two things about God: He is faithful and He is able. If He is faithful then He will always be there, no matter how much we have failed. If He is able, we never have to worry about the things we face that we cannot handle, because He can handle anything.
 4. *We must stand by the Holy Spirit* (Phil. 1:27). The Spirit of God indwells every believer for the purpose of filling and function. In the filling of the Holy Spirit, we are able to carry out not only the righteousness of the Law, but the perfect plan of God.
 5. *We must stand in the wisdom of God* (1 Cor. 2:4–5). We cannot stand by human wisdom. Rationalism may tempt you, it may sway you, it may persuade you, but if you rely on human reason, you will not be able to stand.

WHY STAND?

You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. Gal. 5:4

One of the best reasons for standing is that the only alternative is falling. As Hebrews 10:31 reminds us, *“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”*

Before you can understand what falling means, you must be clear on one thing: Neither Galatians 5:4 nor Hebrews 10:31, nor any other verse in the Bible, indicates that you can lose your salvation. This will **never** happen!

So, how can you be *“severed from Christ”* when Romans 8:38–39 says there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God? The answer is found in understanding the word *“severed.”* The Greek *katargeo* means *“to nullify the effect of or to render inoperative.”*

In Romans 6:6, we are told that since we died with Christ, our old man (our man of sin) might be destroyed. The word Paul uses here is *katargeo*. How many Christians do you know who no longer have a sin nature? You don't know any! We will all have our sin natures until we die. The word *katargeo* means that grace has nullified the effect of the sin nature in its dominion, rendering it inoperative. With the filling of the Holy Spirit, grace gives us a "stop valve" to the function of the sin nature.

In Galatians 5:4, *katargeo* is in the passive voice, meaning that these Galatian Christians are the recipients of the action of the verb. They have been rendered inoperative. This is always the problem with legalism. When a believer gets out of fellowship, when a believer falls for legalism, what happens? He is rendered inoperative. The Christian way of life is a supernatural way of life; no unbeliever and no believer in his own power can imitate it.

When Paul says they have "fallen" from grace, he uses the word *ekpipto*. The preposition *ek* means "out," *pipto* means "to fall." The word *ekpipto* was used in the ancient Greek theater for the actor on stage who could not remember his lines. They called this *ekpipto*, and it meant that he could not play his part. A believer in Jesus Christ who falls for legalism cannot play out his part. He cannot fulfill his ambassadorship, his priesthood, his ministry. He is unable to function. Why? It goes back to verse 2, "Jesus Christ will not benefit you in one single thing" because you have alienated yourself from His grace. You have fallen out of the sphere of grace.

What does the context of Galatians 5 define as "falling"? Seven things:

1. to live as unbelievers live (verse 1);
2. to forfeit the practical effects of union with Christ (verse 2);
3. to live as a debtor (verse 3);
4. to lose fellowship, power (verse 4);
5. to lose sight of the issue of life: union with the Lord Jesus Christ (verse 6);
6. to lose the race (verse 7); and
7. to experience a gradual and increasing deception and slavery (verses 8–9).

There are many examples in the Bible of men and women who fell from grace. In Matthew 26:31, Jesus told his disciples that before the night was over, they would all fall away, *ekipto*. Every one of them did. Did they fall from grace? Absolutely. Did they lose their salvation? Absolutely not!

Peter stood, and cursed, and swore, and denied the Son of God. Could you say that he never fell? No—he did fall. But he got back up because of grace.

Hebrews 3:12, 4:11, 6:6 and 10:31 all use this word *ekipto*. But in each passage, the fall is reversion from a stage of growth, rejection of grace, turning to legalism, and therefore living without the benefits of Jesus Christ.

Some who fell, like David, Samson, and the disciples, confessed their sins and were restored to fellowship—to the sphere of grace. Others like the Exodus generation and Saul, refused and found themselves, instead, in that “*terrifying*” place of God’s divine discipline (Heb. 10:31).

IX. STRATEGY
2 Corinthians 10:1–6
1 Samuel 17:45
2 Corinthians 13:5

Strategy is the science of planning and directing military operations. No commander leads his troops into battle without first devising a plan for victory.

In 2 Corinthians 10, the commanding general of the first century, the Apostle Paul, explains how he intends to mobilize forces for the military campaign. He knows that the spiritual war can be fought to the enemy's advantage—on his turf—or to the royal army's advantage—on God's ground. Paul does not intend to give the enemy anything.

This passage is a warning and a challenge. This is one of the greatest men who ever walked the face of the earth—a man so highly skilled, so trained with the weaponry of the spiritual realm, that he was able to establish Christianity throughout the entire civilized world. This man stands as an example of a true warrior of the faith to challenge us to fight and to follow his lead.

EXHORTATION

Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! 2 Cor. 10:11

By starting this section of his letter with three references to himself, "I, Paul, myself," Paul is emphasizing to the Corinthians that he speaks as a man with experience, a man who has suffered because of his commitment to the Word of God.

The word translated "urge" is one that we have already seen, *parakaleo*. It means "to call alongside for the purpose of encouragement or exhortation." One particular use of this word occurred in the ancient sports arenas. An athlete who had already run his race would cheer on his teammates who still had their races before them. *Parakaleo* meant to urge someone on. A victorious

athlete would pull another athlete off to the side, warn him of his opponent's strength, and give him tips about the best moves to make. He would tell him whatever he could to encourage him because he was already wearing the victor's crown, and he wanted his teammate to wear the crown too. This is how Paul feels, not only about these Corinthians, but about every single one of us.

The words "*meekness*" and "*gentleness*" lay the foundation for this entire passage. "*Gentleness*," *epieikes*, was used of someone having a strong sense of justice, a sense of right and wrong, and a desire to reward those who do good and to destroy those who do evil. It referred to someone who understood both justice and mercy, who knew when to apply the law and when not to. Paul knew that there was a time for discipline, but he knew when to apply it and when not to.

"*Meekness*" is from the Greek word *praus*. Aristotle defined *praus* as "the balance between being angry too easily and never being angry at all." It was used for someone who was never mad at the wrong time and who was always mad at the right time. Look at the life of Jesus Christ—how many times He endured abuse, how many times He restrained His power, how many times He humbled Himself. But always at the right time, He lashed out and responded to His critics, destroying the foundation they had built to destroy the work that He was doing.

"*Meekness*" **never** meant weakness. The word was used by the Greeks for a warhorse that was trained to stand or to attack on command. No matter how great the confusion of battle, no matter how much the conflict was raging, this horse that they called "meek" never lost its ability to respond to command. The horse represents your emotions, and this word illustrates how—as a believer in Jesus Christ—you must keep emotion under control so that you are able to not only take command of your emotion, but also to release it when necessary.

Paul, who has the meekness and gentleness of Christ, is about to let his anger loose on the Corinthians. The reason requires a little background information.

Acts 18 describes Paul's first trip to Corinth during his second missionary journey. For nearly two years he lived and taught in Corinth—longer than he stayed in most cities. Remember, for example, that he was able to spend less than three months establishing the Thessalonian church.

Paul then moved on to Ephesus for three years. During a long lull between the second and third missionary journeys, Paul wanted to visit the Corinthians again, but he restrained himself from going because many of the people were unruly and disobedient, and Paul did not want to have to use the rod of discipline (1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 1:15–17, 2:1).

When Paul approached Corinth, he wrote to warn them that he was getting ready to answer his critics. Paul had critics everywhere he went. From 1 Corinthians 4:18 and 21, we know that some in the church at Corinth had accused him of being a coward. They were saying that Paul wrote letters as if he were big and tough, but that he was like milquetoast when he was with them. They had misunderstood Paul's humility, his desire to deal with people in a gracious manner. So they prodded him until he actually had to deal with them with the authority that he had, and this passage serves to prepare them.

Later in 2 Corinthians 10, Paul points to his critics' charges that he is trying to frighten everyone by his *"weighty and strong"* letters, but that in person he is *"unimpressive and his speech is contemptible"* (v. 10). His answer: *"Let such a person consider this, that what we are in word by letter when absent, such as we to be in deed when present"* (v. 11). Paul is warning these people.

There are two things Paul lacked that the ancient world thought were essential. First, Paul did not have a mighty physique. We have records that describe him as short, stocky, bandy-legged, bow-legged, broad-shouldered, bald-headed, and beak-nosed, with a voice that had a very irritating quality.

Second, he did not have the ability to sweep audiences off their feet with his wonderful oratorical ability. His voice was very high and squeaky. And when he began to speak, these Greeks, who thought that physical presence and oratorical ability were

everything, looked at Paul from the standpoint of human appearance, and they said, "He's a paper tiger."

If you have been in very many churches, you probably know how easy it is for people to find fault with the communicator of the Word. But you always have to ask yourself this question: Are they finding fault with the person or with the message? In the communication of the Word of God, the teacher is **never** the issue; the message is **always** the issue. The only thing you should be concerned with is whether this person is accurately communicating the Word of God (1 John 4:1).

WARNING

I ask that when I am present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked in the flesh. 2 Cor. 10:2

In verse 1, Paul urged. Now, he asks. *Deo* means "to make a request." And what is he saying in this request? "Don't force me to display the power that I have; spare yourselves the suffering of the rod of my anger."

Every pastor, every teacher, every parent needs to learn this principle: There is a time for warning and then there is a time for action. Paul, with the meekness of Jesus Christ, is warning these people in a very gracious way: "Please don't make me use my power. Don't get me angry. If I have to use discipline, I can do it. I can be just as tough as I have to be." In 1 Corinthians 4:21, he had asked these same people: "Do you want me to come with a rod or do you want me to come in love?" He could come either way. If he had to, he would arrive as a father disciplining unruly children, but that was not his desire.

For this reason, Paul stayed away from Corinth. He is asking that when he is present he will not have to be bold with them. The word for "bold" means "to destroy your opposition in one decisive blow." Paul knows he could do this, but he did not want to.

When he talks about being courageous against "some," he is referring to those who had attacked and challenged his ministry every

step of the way. He says they regard him as if he walked according to the flesh; they look at him as if he were nothing but a normal human being. Now Paul “knew that in him there was no good thing” (Rom. 7:18), but he also knew that as an apostle he bore tremendous burdens and a weight of responsibility and authority beyond anything that anyone could imagine. Judging Paul only by appearance was a mistake.

WARFARE

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh.
2 Cor. 10:3

This is where Paul begins to use military terminology. This verse has to do with the strategy with which we face the enemy. Paul says here that we walk “in” the flesh. The preposition *en* means “in the sphere of.” Every single one of us lives our lives in the sphere of the flesh. We all have natural weaknesses and natural strengths.

Paul tells us that we cannot be afraid of our natural weaknesses or rely on our natural strengths. As far as physical qualities and capabilities, there will always be people who will match you in everything you have—talent, intellect, physical strength, beauty, craftiness. That is exactly why you cannot “*war according to the flesh*,” why you cannot use these things for your spiritual struggle. You have to turn to supernatural weapons for a supernatural struggle. This is the strategy Paul presents in 2 Corinthians, chapter 10.

Paul, as the commanding general, is saying that when he goes to war (the word for war here is from *strateia*, which means “to carry on a military campaign”), he starts mobilizing his forces. He does not want to do it physically; he does not want to war according to the flesh. We walk in the sphere of the human realm with its weaknesses and frailty, but we emphatically do **not** want to war that way. He uses the emphatic negative here, which indicates that it is not possible for us to carry on the spiritual warfare of the Christian life in human energy.

In this verse, two activities are pictured: walking and warring. One you must do in the flesh; the other you must do in the Spirit.

You walk in the sphere of the physical. This means that day-by-day you live with physical limitations, problems, and difficulties. But when you go to war, you have an entirely different standard operating procedure.

The Greek preposition *kata* means “according to a norm and standard.” The norms and standards of your intelligence are not enough to get you through combat alive. One thing you had better remember when you go to war in the **spiritual** realm: Never rely on your own ability or your own resources in the **physical** realm; they will always fail you!

WEAPONS

... for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. 2 Cor. 10:4

When Paul says that our weapons are “*not of the flesh*,” he introduces a third preposition. *En*, in verse 3, is where we walk—in the flesh. *Kata* in the same verse is how we war—according to something other than the flesh. *Ek* in verse 4 is the source—the material out of which our weapons are forged. Our weapons do not come from the source of the flesh. Human intelligence, human skill, and human capability can never produce spiritual weaponry.

Instead, our weapons are “*divinely powerful*.” The Greek literally says they are “enablement from God” or “powerful through God” for the “*destruction of fortresses*.” The word “*destruction*,” *kathairesis*, picks up the concept of demolishing our enemies. It literally means “to tear to the ground, to destroy, or to level whatever stronghold you face.”

The norms and standards of our spiritual warfare are not earthly. They defy human logic and human reason. This is exactly why we always fail when we try to reason our way through the Christian life. God did not base the Christian life on the power of human intellect. He did not make it so that the wise or the brilliant have an advantage. God did not base it on human success, so that the mighty and the successful have an advantage.

Instead, God gave us weapons that are divinely powerful. Paul uses *alla*, the intensive conjunction of contrast, which means that human weapons and divine weapons are as different as night and day. They are totally antithetical and mutually exclusive. One is of darkness, the other is of light.

THE INNER FRONT

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. 10:5

What is it that we are destroying? In verse 5, Paul moves into the mental realm. We are destroying “speculations.” This word refers to human rationalism, human empiricism, and the human process of the intellect. **Your mind is the battlefield.**

This is where you have to understand the principles of meekness and gentleness; this is where you have to know how to get mad at the right time. To stand as a believer in Jesus Christ, if someone in your periphery denounces Him and you say nothing, it is failure to get mad at the right time. Of course you have to be extremely careful how you get mad. If you react with emotional anger, you will lose the skirmish. If you can only get mad emotionally, keep silent. But if you can express indignation from doctrine in your soul, from the Word of God and the love that you have for the Lord Jesus Christ, you will do well.

Paul says we are also destroying “every lofty thing.” *Hupsoma* plus *epiairo* refers to anything that is high and exalted in opposition to the knowledge of God. Any arrogant thought, **anything** that takes the place God rightfully holds, is a target—a fortress that must be destroyed.

In the phrase, “taking every thought captive,” Paul uses a very long Greek word: *aichmalotizo*. This is a present participle that means to “keep on taking prisoners of war.” Every day that we live we must take POWs. These prisoners of war are attitudes. Paul is not only talking about the ability to subjugate our own attitudes to Christ, but also to win victory over the attitudes other people express against the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Obedience” to Christ comes from the word *hupakouo*, meaning “attentive hearkening, to listen and obey.” Here it means to put these attitudes in their proper place under Christ, under the authority of His Word.

You can expect to run into difficulties here. You will have thoughts that you know should not be in your mind, and yet they keep coming back. Maybe you read something in a book, saw something in a movie, had something said to you, and it keeps coming back. This is exactly how the enemy works. He plants thoughts and philosophies and attitudes in your mind. In struggling with these ideas, you have to take this fact by faith: Your mind and your thoughts are subject to your will. Understand that. Your will has only two choices: You can let your members become weapons of Jesus Christ or you can let them become weapons of the old sin nature (see Rom. 6:13). You have the choice.

THE OUTER FRONT

... and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete. 2 Cor. 10:6

The Greek word *hetoimazo*, “readiness,” says that Paul is in a state of preparation. It is the word used in Ephesians 6:15 for putting on the sandals of the “*preparation of the Gospel of peace.*” It means “to be prepared, equipped, and ready.” It implies eagerness and aggressiveness based on this preparation. God always uses prepared people.

The readiness in verse 6 is based on the preparation of verse 5, the act of consistently taking thoughts captive. The present active participle of the verb “to take captive” means that you must develop a consistent daily habit. Day after day, you must take thoughts captive. When you have developed the system and the discipline of taking your thought patterns captive, when you have mastered the strategy, then you are ready to attack.

What is it Paul is prepared to do? “*To punish,*” *ekdikeo*. This is an aorist infinitive that indicates the fulfillment of the plan and

purpose of God. It is a decisive act of executing justice and judgment on those who oppose.

The principle developed in verses 5 and 6 is this: You will never win on the open (outer) front, until you win in the hidden (inner) front. Until you can conquer your own mind, you will never conquer the world around you; you will never be ready to execute justice on the opposition outside until you develop the ability to master your own thinking through grace—through the power of Jesus Christ.

So Paul says he stands ready to execute justice on all disobedience. “*Disobedience*,” again from *hupakouo*, means “a refusal to hear.” This is negative volition toward the Word of God, a refusal to obey. The core problem in disobedience is the refusal to hear, unwillingness to listen with more than the ears, unwillingness to respond to the message of truth.

Paul has the Corinthian believers in mind in this passage. He is telling them that he has troops armed and prepared to come to their aid, but he cannot do anything until they are ready. Paul wanted to deliver the Corinthian church from the turmoil, the strife, the schism, and the division they were facing, but he could not until they were willing to be delivered. That is a tragic situation because this was an unhappy church. It is always tragic when unhappy people refuse solutions.

The words “*disobedience*” and “*obedience*” in this verse are direct opposites, both related to the willingness to hear the Word of God. When Paul talks about a time when their obedience is complete, he is saying that there are people in Corinth who will not listen to doctrine and that he cannot do a thing about them until the rest of the Corinthians get serious about the Word.

VICTORY

*You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I
come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the
armies of Israel.*

1 Sam 17:45

There is no better illustration of the principles laid out in this passage than young David in 1 Samuel 17:12–50. When David

engaged the enemy, he was armed with weapons not according to the flesh, but divinely powerful, and in this chapter he had five great victories in the spiritual conflict.

Victory Over Self (1 Sam. 17:12–16)

This passage states, “*David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father’s flock at Bethlehem.*” You might ask why that would be a victory. It was a victory because Saul had promoted David to the second highest position in the army (1 Sam. 16:21). Here was a young man who had lived his life in obscurity. His seven other brothers had been groomed and trained and promoted, but young David had been ignored—sent out to the wilderness to tend sheep. Now, Saul had given him instant promotion.

Few people have the discernment to know when they are being promoted and when they are being sidetracked. David knew he was being sidetracked. He knew enough to know that this was not God’s promotion, this was human promotion, and he turned his back on it. David had a desire to succeed, to leave the obscurity of the sheepfold, but his victory was in taking that desire captive to Christ.

It is important for us to remember that we are never promoted until God does the promoting. Satan loves to promote Christians. He loves to offer you what is good in order to distract you from what is best. He will offer you many things in this life; you have to have the wisdom and the discernment to recognize and turn away from everything that is not from God.

David was willing to wait and be the least for Jesus Christ. As a fellow believer, you can let Jesus Christ worry about promoting you. Not once in human history has God ever failed to promote someone who was worthy of it and ready for it.

Victory Over Family (1 Sam. 17:26–30)

When David came to the troops and began asking them about Goliath and his boasting, his oldest brother Eliab heard and began to scorn David. The passage says that Eliab’s anger burned against David—this was emotional anger. He did everything he could to get a rise out of David, to produce an angry response.

But David knew when to get mad and when not to. His response to Eliab in verse 29, *“Is there not a cause?”* is a Hebrew idiom meaning this: “Eliab, are you going to go fight him? If not, leave me alone. If you want to take him on, fine. If you don’t, I’ll do the job.”

David won a great victory that day. If he had gotten sidetracked in an argument with Eliab, he might never have faced Goliath. And, even if David did go up against him, he would have been out of fellowship and he would have lost.

You can never win a spiritual battle in the energy of the flesh. Satan will always throw something at you to get you out of fellowship—something to distract you, someone to scorn you, malign you, irritate and aggravate you until you come to the end of your patience and explode. This is the point at which the big test usually comes. This is where we find ourselves so often saying, “Boy, I didn’t even see that coming. I wish I had been ready.” Why weren’t we? Because we let ourselves be sidetracked by the little things.

Christians need to go to war, but we will never meet the real enemy until we stop fighting among the family. You will have family members laugh at you, scorn you, criticize you. But you must learn to do as David did: Refuse to get entangled in arguments. You will never win an argument. Anyone who is convinced against his will remains unconvinced still. You may argue someone into the ground and your debaters’ technique may win, but in the end, **you** will lose.

The great evangelist D.L. Moody understood this principle. When a man came to him and said, “I don’t like the way you do this,” Moody asked, “How do **you** do it?” The man said, “Well, I don’t.” Moody said, “I like the way I do it better than the way you don’t do it.” He refused to get sidetracked.

Victory Over Rationalism (1 Sam. 17:31–37)

Saul was saying to David, “You can’t do this, you’re just a small boy and Goliath has been a warrior from his youth.” But David was saying, “Wait, you’re leaving God out!”

David knew from experience that God was sufficient because he had a hidden victory in his life, a victory no one else had seen and he had never bragged about. When David won his victory over the

lion and the bear, he did not immediately run into town and put up a poster that said, “David on this date killed a lion and a bear.” No, he won a victory in silence—a private victory that proved to him that God is able.

So when Saul tried to deter him through rationalism, David brought something into the equation that human strategy does not consider: “*The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine*” (v. 37).

David was saying to Saul, “You’re talking about me fighting the Philistine. Forget that. I’m not going to fight the Philistine, God is.” That perspective totally changed the equation and Saul realized it.

Remember that it was David’s victories in private that prepared him for victories in public. Do not think that you are going to win public victories if you are losing in private. If you cannot view things from God’s perspective in your private life, you cannot do it in public, and you will not be prepared for battle when your crises hit.

Victory Over Compromise (1 Sam. 17:38–39)

Saul now tries to send David out in his armor. David allows him to put all this bulky stuff on him, but then he realizes this is not the way to do it. David recognizes the principle that Paul has expressed in 2 Corinthians 10:4, “*the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh.*”

Saul’s armor was the equivalent of human energy and human strength. Had David put on the armor of Saul, the fight with Goliath would have been armor against armor, sword against sword, strength against strength, skill against skill. It would have been no contest. The bigger, stronger man would have won. But David won over compromise because he realized the battle was all or nothing. It was all of the Spirit or all of the flesh—it was the power of God or the weakness of David.

This is exactly why so many believers are frustrated, discouraged, and defeated every day, because they are dealing with their problems and with the people around them—their bosses, their wives, their husbands, their children—from human viewpoint and human energy. That never works. You have to understand spiritual strategy.

Saul and his army looked at Goliath and saw a huge man. David looked at Goliath and saw Satan. He knew only one kind of weapon would work.

Victory Over the Giant (1 Sam. 17:40–50)

David walked out to the brook and chose five little stones. Then he walked up to Goliath in the power of Christ and said to the Philistine, *“You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted. This day the Lord will deliver you up into my hands ... for the battle is the Lord’s and He will give you into our hands”* (vv. 45–47).

In a sense, this was the least of David’s victories. It was much harder for David to face his own brother than it was to face Goliath, because he knew God was in control with the giant. It is very difficult to bring God into the situation when your brother is razzing you, when your husband is bitter against you, when your wife is rebellious, when your children are disobedient, when your boss is unfair. It is very difficult to constantly keep in mind that God is in control of the situation and to not allow your emotional anger to cause you to try to fight in the energy of the flesh.

Until you let spiritual strategy come into play, you will never win. You can know all the doctrine in the world, but without an understanding of strategy, you will always be using the wrong end of your sword; you will never understand how to thrust, how to parry, when to attack, when to stand. When the enemy attacks, you must respond with spiritual strategy or you will be defeated.

It takes practice to use the spiritual weapons. God trains and prepares His people in private. David was prepared in private and he won victories in public. When he developed the momentum from winning day-after-day and week-after-week, then God said, “Now it is time to bring this young man onto the stage because now I have a man who can illustrate what life is all about.” A whole army functioning in human energy could not face Goliath. But one young boy in the power of God was more than a match!

Whatever battle you face, it belongs to God. As a believer, you demean the honor and glory of Jesus Christ by trying to fight the battle yourself. Whatever your inner struggles, your family struggles, your personal struggles, your struggles in the family of God, you must understand that the battle is not yours, but the Lord’s.

When you say, “I can’t handle my problems,” then you are beginning to make headway, provided you take the next step and cast your burdens on the Lord and realize He alone can do it. You have to utilize spiritual strategy.

THE TEST

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

2 Cor. 13:5

In this verse, Paul asks the Corinthians to do something to test themselves to see if they are in the faith. The word translated “test” means “to put to the test for the purpose of approving.” “*In the faith*” refers to faith in the objective sense—to the body of our beliefs (the Word of God). This challenge takes us back to 2 Corinthians 10:6 where Paul tells his readers that when their obedience to the Word is fulfilled, then the power of the Word is unleashed in them. If you test yourselves, you will find out whether or not you are living in the realm of the faith.

When he says that “*Jesus Christ is in you unless*” you fail the test, he is not talking about the indwelling of Christ. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit permanently indwell every believer (Rom. 8:9–11). When you study Scripture, you must always keep the context in mind. Paul is talking to believers about something else, about the dynamic of Christ—the resurrection power of Christ—the vigor, the vitality of Jesus Christ that was displayed following His weakness. Is this power in you? Put yourself to the test and find out if the resurrection power of Jesus Christ is living in you. How will you know if the power is in you?

Remember the army of Israel that faced Goliath. Saul was a believer; Jonathan was a believer; there were many in the army who were believers. Why were none of these believers able to stand against Goliath? Every one of them had the same provisions David had. If they had tested themselves, they would have seen that they failed. Why? Because there was no visible evidence of the working of Christ in their lives. You were tested through the difficult circumstances of your life today. Did you meet the enemy with spiritual weapons? Did you pass?

X. THE ADVANCE SCOUT Philippians 1:12–23

Before an army sets out, scouts are sent ahead. An advance guard moves forward to spy out the enemy's strength and his actions, and to clear a path for the troops to follow.

As the Apostle Paul writes to the Philippian believers from his prison cell in Rome, he describes how he has penetrated the enemy's camp and won the first decisive victory. This opened the way for the rest of the army to advance.

In Philippians 1:12 he uses a military term that his readers would certainly understand: *prokopto*, a word that referred to an army scout. The Apostle Paul was an advance scout for the royal army of God.

CIRCUMSTANCES

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.

Phil. 1:12

When Paul mentions, first of all, his "*circumstances*," we are reminded that the believer is never to live "under the circumstances;" he is to master them. Paul's circumstances at this point were that he was a prisoner of Rome, chained by the wrist, day and night, to Roman military personnel. As those military men changed the guard every shift, as one unshackled his wrist from the apostle and another locked on, they thought they were in control. They could, after all, do anything they wanted to their prisoner, as long as they did not kill him.

But, in reality, it was the little man on the other end of the chains who was in control, who was winning the victory. These great men of battle realized that they were chained to a far greater warrior than they would ever be. They were struck by the fact that here was a man who understood more about real conflict than they ever would. They were amazed by this man's courage, his heroism, and his ability to endure adversity—cheerfully. But most of all, they were impressed by the greater warrior this man told them about—the Man whose courage and grace and love no one would ever

match—this Lord of Hosts, this King of kings who had died for each of them. And one by one, these men came to know Jesus Christ.

Remember that Paul was in prison because of his own sin. He had gone to Jerusalem in direct disobedience to God, who had commanded him to stay away four times. He went, his presence caused a riot, and he was arrested by the Romans. Yet the principle comes through that God causes all things to work together for our good (see Rom. 8:28). He took Paul's rebellion and broke it, turning it into humility. He took Paul's imprisonment and used it for the liberation of many people in the Roman Empire.

When Paul says that his circumstances have resulted in the "progress" of the Gospel, he moves into the military realm with the use of the word *prokopto*. *Kopto* means "cut;" *pro* means "ahead of." The word meant to cut a path before the army, to make it possible for the army to mobilize and, therefore, to advance. It was used for the advance scout who would move out ahead of the ranks and clear the way so that the army could reach its objective.

The apostle knew that the royal army's objective was to reach as many people as possible with the Gospel. The Lord Jesus Christ, before He was crucified, gave His Church a commission. He had consistently emphasized this commission during His life and had trained the disciples with it in mind. Before His ascension, He stated it again: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19).

There are three fronts in the spiritual warfare: evangelism, personal growth, and ministry. The word *prokopto* is used only three times in the New Testament. Each use is related to one of these fronts:

1. *Evangelism*. It is impossible to disciple unless you evangelize. Therefore, the responsibility to win other people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ falls to the royal army as a whole, and every believer individually. Every believer is "an ambassador of Jesus Christ, a minister of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:17–20). It is in connection with this front that Paul first uses the word *prokopto*, in Philippians 1:12.

2. Personal spiritual growth. In order to be a faithful ambassador, every believer, through confession and cleansing, must grow spiritually and learn to live out his life in the presence and power of God. This is the believer's "priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Paul uses the word *prokopto* in relation to spiritual growth in Philippians 1:25.
3. Ministry. At the moment of a person's salvation, the Holy Spirit gives the new believer one or more spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:7). These gifts are for the building up of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:12), and they define the plan of God for the individual's life. In order for us to accomplish the ministry that God has given us, we need divine enablement (2 Cor. 3:5). The third use of the word *prokopto* in the New Testament is in 1 Timothy 4:14–15 in relation to Timothy's use of his spiritual gift.

When you bring these three things together—evangelism, spiritual growth, and ministry—you have encapsulated the entire purpose of the Church. This applies not just to the local church, but the Church being every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Anywhere you go in the world, anywhere you find a person who is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you can summarize everything God wants to accomplish in that person's life in these three things. Every believer is an ambassador to unbelievers, a priest to God, and a minister to other believers.

Notice that Paul says, "*for the greater progress of the Gospel.*" Paul subjected all personal concerns to the cause of Jesus Christ because the spiritual battle centers on the **message** of Christ. Once he confessed and was restored to fellowship, the apostle refused to turn his eyes from the Lord toward what might have seemed to be negative circumstances that were his own fault.

The circumstances that most people would have used as an excuse for failure became a reason for victory to Paul. He overcame his circumstances by grace. What are your circumstances? Whatever you are using today as an excuse for failing to further the cause of Christ—failing to tell unbelievers about Christ, failing to study and grow, failing to minister to fellow believers—those very things

are what God intends that you use to your advantage, to promote the cause of Christ in a dark world.

PROGRESS

... so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else. Phil. 1:13

Paul explains here what he means by “progress.” Paul had first been arrested when the Roman authorities heard that “*all Jerusalem was in confusion*” because of him (Acts 21:31). The Jews had spread the word that Paul was an enemy of the empire. But the more time these Roman soldiers spent with this prisoner, the clearer it became to them—and through them to all Rome—that Paul was not a criminal or a treasonous man, but that he was imprisoned for the cause of Christ, because he believed and taught this Gospel.

When Paul himself says that this fact has become known “*throughout the whole praetorian guard,*” he does not leave out any. The Praetorian Guard was a force of 10,000 men, so it is not exaggerating to say that 10,000 military men of great influence in the Roman Empire heard the Gospel through Paul and his imprisonment. Many were won to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

But it was not only the Guard who understood the issue of Paul’s imprisonment. “*Everyone else*” includes the many men and women who would have been serving in Nero’s palace at that time. Paul will say in Philippians 4:22, “*all the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.*” We know from this and from Romans 16:10–11, where Caesar’s personal servants are named, that many in the palace became believers through the influence of this one man in chains.

COURAGE

... and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Phil. 1:14

There was a secondary result to Paul's advance in Rome: Most of the believers in the church at Rome were encouraged and began to speak out in a way they had not before. Prior to Paul's visit, these believers were terrified, or indifferent. They were living in practical atheism. When Paul began to have such phenomenal success, most of them began to trust the Lord. The word "*trusting*" here is not the word that means to believe in the Lord for salvation. It is the perfect tense of *peitho*, and it means that they finally "became convinced" that Jesus Christ would do what He said He would.

The word "*courage*" is another military term. *Tolmao* means "to take the enemy in a single blow." When Paul says these people had "*far more*" courage, he uses the word *perisseuo*, which means "to overflow, to have an abundant supply." Paul says that now the Roman believers have an abundant supply of boldness to take on the opponent. That was a wonderful thing. If it took Paul to shake them up, to get them motivated, so what? At least they overcame their lethargy. But the sad thing behind this verse is that not all of them did become motivated, just most of them. There were still some who would never become motivated to speak the Word of God without fear.

There are three kinds of people in this world: those who make things happen; those who see something going on and ask what's happening; and those who never notice anything happening at all. Whenever someone begins to have an impact on history and have an influence that starts to change the course of a generation, immediately other people want get on their bandwagon. There will always be people who wait until something is nearly done and then jump in to help. But these are still infinitely superior to the people who never jump in.

A local church had been established in Rome after Pentecost. Paul had written to these people in his letter to the Romans, giving them all the information they needed for an evangelistic movement. But there wasn't enough motivation, enough zeal to advance. Historians estimate that there were 30,000 to 50,000 believers in Rome in the First Century. Yet in all the years between Pentecost and Paul's imprisonment, all the believers in this local church could not influence their city as radically as this one man who spent two

years there in chains. How many believers did it take to change Rome? One. How many would it take to turn this country around?

MOTIVE

Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. Phil. 1:15–17

Some people in Rome allowed themselves to be encouraged by Paul and began to preach Christ from good will. It was so obvious to them that Paul was the field commander sent by their Commander-in-Chief, the Lord Jesus Christ.

These people, Paul says, proclaim the Gospel out of love—the only proper motivation. They know that he is “*appointed for the defense of the gospel.*” Again, Paul uses a military term. “*Appointed,*” *keimai*, means “to plant your feet and refuse to retreat.” Paul said, “I have planted my feet for the defense of the cause of Christ; I have planted them right here in the Roman military barracks and I will either win or die trying.”

But there was another kind of Christian in Rome. There were those who were preaching Christ “*from envy and strife ... out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives,*” thinking to cause Paul distress.

There were believers in Rome who did not want Paul to rock their boat, people who liked the way they lived, who were prospering in the Roman system by keeping their Christianity quiet. These people were trying to keep everything very calm and in such a state that they could continue their way of life. When you read the words “*envy and strife,*” “*selfish ambition,*” and “*causing distress,*” you understand that these people wanted Paul out of the way.

So they began to make an issue of Paul, bringing up every riot that he had ever been involved in, and pointing to Paul as that man who constantly talks about Christ—disrupting society, disrupting

civilization. They used Christ; they began to proclaim Christ in connection to Paul, not in connection to themselves, but out of their selfish motives. “*Selfish ambition*” means if they can get Paul out of the way so that he stops rocking the boat, they can go on with their success and their comfort.

CELEBRATION

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Phil. 1:18–20

What was Paul’s response to this mixed reception of him and his work? Joy and celebration! “*Rejoice*” was the word used for a “victory celebration.” Paul was going to celebrate victory, while in chains.

He saw that his courage and his refusal to compromise had brought about the desired result. Therefore, he began a victory celebration. You need to keep on rejoicing even while the battle still rages. Paul was still in this life—he would face yet another missionary journey and another imprisonment, and ultimately he would be killed for his faith. But he had a lot to do yet. The battle was still going on. He was still on the battlefield, and so this was where he must rejoice.

The principle is this: You will win victories in the Christian way of life, but when you do, understand that your victory celebration must be held on the battlefield. The battle is still going to rage—you can’t halt it. You have to celebrate right in the midst of your circumstances, whatever they are. This is exactly what Paul is doing.

In verse 19, Paul uses the perfect tense of the word for knowledge to indicate his total and absolute confidence. “*I know*” how this shall turn out. He is saying, “You Philippians keep praying

for me. The Spirit of God will bring about my deliverance from this prison. I will be delivered and set free because of your prayer support and because of the invisible working of the Holy Spirit." Paul understands that God is able to do this and he has total confidence that He will.

In verse 20, Paul talks about his hope. "Hope" in the Bible is not a negative concept. *Elpis* refers to "absolute confidence," but it is a confidence in things you cannot see. This concept goes along with Paul's absolute knowledge. He says that he has total confidence in something that he cannot even see yet. Paul did not live his life in the abstract; he was not an abstract thinker. He wanted something tangible, something he could sink his teeth into. This is why the Christian faith appealed to him, because the Word of God gives confidence in life. If the Bible says something is going to happen, you can be absolutely certain that it **will** happen.

Many Christians do not have the confidence that if they died tonight they would go to Heaven. Of course these people are timid about their faith and timid in witnessing to people because they are not even confident about themselves. Yet the Apostle John says, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may **know** that you have eternal life" (emphasis added) and that you might have the confidence that results from this knowledge (1 John 5:13–15).

There are two types of people in the world: people who have confidence with understanding (believers with doctrine) and people who do not have confidence—who lack understanding—and therefore are very unstable (believers without doctrine, and unbelievers).

Paul's hope and expectation is that he will not be "put to shame in anything." The word for "shame" here is *aischunomai*; it does not mean just shame for having failed in life. It also means the "shame" spoken of in 1 John 2:28 where the Apostle John tells us to "abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming."

This is the shame that will be felt by many who never sensed shame in their earthly lives regarding their Christian responsibilities. These are people who never gave a second thought to why they had

been saved, who were never concerned about their responsibility in Christ. One day they will experience the greatest, the most intense shame because they will stand in the presence of Jesus Christ, and they will see everything they pursued in their lives, everything they thought valuable, go up in smoke. They will see their lives in all their vanity and emptiness, and then they will understand shame in the most terrible form possible, because they will realize—in the presence of Jesus Christ—what they could have had. (See 1 Cor. 3:10–15.)

Paul says he is making a choice: He will *“not be put to shame in anything”* because he is choosing to let Christ be exalted in his body, whether by life or by death. Paul is saying that the Roman authorities can set him free (as he is confident that they will) and Jesus Christ will get the honor and the credit. But they can also put him to death, as they might have at this point and ultimately did, and Jesus Christ will still get the honor and the credit. So, Paul again subjugated all his own motives to the one desire that he would fulfill the plan of God for his life. That is what motivated Paul.

LIFE

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Phil. 1:21

The Greek literally says, *“for to me to live, Christ.”* In other words, for Paul, life is summarized in the presence of Christ. As long as Paul was alive, he knew that Jesus Christ would continue to live His life through him. He knew that how he responded to the pressures of life would be how Jesus Christ responded through him. He knew that what motivated and drove him was what had motivated and driven Christ in His earthly life. He knew that the decisions he made were subject to the plan and the purpose of Jesus Christ. Not until you have proved this with your own life can you take this verse and say it is true of you. Paul paid a price to be able to say this. It summarizes his life.

The word for *“gain”* is from the ancient world of economy and business. It is a word for making an investment and receiving back profit. Paul is saying, *“I have invested my life, my blood, my body.*

I have lived every day in Christ; every day I made an investment in the plan of God; every day I redeemed the time; every day I made a deposit in His plan; every day I became a shareholder of grace."Therefore, for Paul to die would be the loss of suffering, the removal of a physical body that he dragged by sheer force of will across the Roman Empire, a physical body that gave him much difficulty. When he died all this would be gone. He anticipated receiving a glorified body like the body of Jesus Christ, but more important, he anticipated all the returns on his investments in his life.

God will reward with a return on your investment anything you do in the energy of the Spirit. When you go to Bible class filled with the Spirit, motivated by spiritual hunger, having the desire to advance in the plan of God for your life, you earn eternal reward. You will be rewarded in eternity for just studying the Word of God with a humble attitude of hunger.

All the wealth this world has to offer cannot equal the reward God will give in Heaven for even one night of Bible study in the filling of the Spirit.

Then you begin to multiply your reward by taking what has been taught in class and going out and applying it to life. You may think, "I can't say 'for me to live is Christ,' because that is not true of my life yet, but I know that is my goal; therefore when I face that business decision, I will stop and ask, 'What would Jesus Christ do in my place? What priorities would guide His decision?'" As you find yourself in your place of work or at school or in the home, wherever you come in contact with people, wherever your own social sphere of influence is—learn to ask yourself before you make your decisions: What would Jesus Christ do? How does Jesus Christ see this? How can He live through me? How can He manifest His life through me? How would He have worked? How would He have treated people?

You have to put your faith in the Father and realize that you are in the particular circumstances of your life right now for one reason: to manifest Jesus Christ—to let Him live His life through you.

THE TENT

But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.

Phil. 1:22–23

Verse 22 shows Paul's perplexity. Of course he knows that the choice of living or dying is not his to make. He is using this statement as a rhetorical device. When he says in the next verse that he is "*hard-pressed*," he uses a word that means "to be in a tight spot, to be compressed between two things." In this case, between two desires. We would say he is "between a rock and a hard place."

Paul says he is hard-pressed from two directions. He wants to continue his work, to continue to see the fruit of people coming to know Christ. But at the same time he has "*the desire to depart and to be with Christ for that is very much better.*"

The word "*depart*" here is important. It is *analuō*. *Luo* means "to loose." *Ana* means "again." This was a technical designation used in the ancient world for taking down a tent. Soldiers lived in tents. Remember that Paul was a tentmaker by profession. When he needed funds, he may have made tents for soldiers preparing for military campaigns.

Paul says in this verse that he has a desire to take down his tent. He pictures the physical body as a tent that he is living in during this war and he says he wants to take it down. The dying words of General Robert E. Lee, a great believer, were similar: "Strike the tent!" Lee knew that it was time to go home.

Why is this so important? Because there is an entire doctrine wrapped up in this little word "*depart*." It is called the doctrine of the shepherd's tent. (See Job 4:21, 5:24, 18:14, 29:4; Isa. 38:12; John 1:14; 2 Cor. 5:1–8; and 2 Pet. 1:13–14.)

In his Gospel, John uses a word over and over that brings the doctrine of the tent together. That word is "*abide*," *meno*. Jesus uses it ten times in John 15:1–12: "*Abide in Me, and I in you ... If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be*

done for you ... Abide in My love ... If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love."

To "abide" means "to reside in a tent." To abide in Christ means Jesus Christ is the sphere of your life. He is to be the One you live in and through and by. To abide in Christ means to be in fellowship with Him. He is your tent—your dwelling place.

This gives new meaning to such passages as Psalm 15:1, where David says, "*O Lord, who may abide in Thy tent?*" He is talking about the person who lives in fellowship with God. In Psalm 27:5, David says, "*For in the day of trouble, He will conceal me in His tabernacle; in the secret place of His tent He will hide me.*" Do you have trouble where you are? Get into His tent—there is never trouble there. In Psalm 61:4, David says, "*Let me dwell in Thy tent forever.*" David knew where he lived. In Psalm 91:1, he says, "*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.*"

A thousand years before Jesus Christ explained this to His disciples, David knew what it meant to abide in Christ. And 30 years after Jesus talked about abiding to those 11 men in the Upper Room, the Apostle Paul knew what it meant too: "For me to live, Christ; to die, gain" (Phi. 1:21).

XI. PRESSING THE ADVANCE Philippians 3:4–14

It is a basic principle of military strategy that on the battlefield your objective is to seize the high ground. You do not want to sit in the valley and have the enemy lob live shells on top of you. You want to be on the high ground, because whoever has the high ground has the advantage.

This principle also holds true for the spiritual life. In the spiritual advance, every believer has the opportunity to move from infancy, through adolescence, to spiritual maturity, which is the place of maximum service. Not many reach that point. Even fewer move beyond it.

In order to go from maturity to the higher ground of hero-of-faith status, the believer must pass through the minefield of the Valley of Bacah, mentioned in Psalm 84:5–7. This is a very painful journey that the believer must make with God—alone. If he makes it through, he will be wounded and scarred, but he will have learned the healing power of faith and he will be a hero. The believer who continues his climb will reach the highest status possible to a member of the human race—he will become a friend of God.

In Philippians 3, the Apostle Paul, who is clearly by this point a hero in the strife, encourages the Philippian believers to stay focused, as he has, on the grace of God in Christ. He gives an account of his own advance—the obstacles which could have hindered him and the objective toward which he continued to strive. From 2 Timothy 4:6–8, we know that before he died, Paul reached his goal.

LOSS

Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the Church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

Phil. 3:4–7

From Philippians 3:1–3, we know that Paul is warning these believers of the dangers of falling for legalism, falling from grace. For the apostle, the issue was black and white. Law versus grace. The legalists looked only at themselves and their human accomplishments; those of the “true circumcision” looked only at God and His divine power. Paul understood the legalists’ mindset because he had been one of them.

In verse 4, “*might have*” is the present active participle of the Greek *echo*, which means “to have and to hold.” It should not be translated “I might have,” but “I do have.” The tense tells us that this was habitual; it was something that was a part of his life. The word for “*confidence*” is *peitho*, which means “to be persuaded.” In this case, it means to be thoroughly convinced by yourself. Paul had been a Pharisee, and the Pharisees were the most religious people who ever lived; they were absolutely convinced of their own ability to please God.

“To have a mind” means “to be presumptuous in one’s thinking.” Paul is saying, “If anyone else is presumptuous enough to think that he is going to please God, I will compare myself to him any day. If anyone in the world ever had a reason to believe that he could earn salvation, I’m the one. You want to look at human achievements? Okay, look at mine.”

What did Paul have to be confident in? He lists seven things:

1. “Circumcised on the eighth day.” Given to Abraham in Genesis 17:10–12, circumcision was a sign of regeneration by faith (Rom. 4; Gal. 3, 6:12–15). “Righteous” people had come along and perverted the rite by saying that the external act of circumcision was a prerequisite for eternal life. They made the ritual more important than the reality. It became **ritual** arrogance.
2. “Of the nation of Israel.” The Jews considered themselves superior to all other races. This was **racial** arrogance.
3. “Of the tribe of Benjamin.” This was a high mark to a Jew because Israel’s first king came from the tribe of Benjamin, one of only two tribes (the Benjamites and the Judeans)

not carried away in the Assyrian captivity. Therefore, they were absolutely sure of their lineage. This was **genetic** arrogance.

4. "*A Hebrew of Hebrews.*" By Paul's time, the Romans had conquered the world militarily, and the Greeks had conquered it linguistically and culturally. Many of the Jews who had been scattered during the time of Pompeii had taken on Greek language and customs. But not Paul's family; they had clung to the Hebrew traditions. This was **cultural** arrogance.
5. "*A Pharisee.*" Not many Jewish men made it to this stage. A Pharisee was a doctor of the Law. He had degrees and achievements. Before he could even think about becoming a Pharisee, a young man had to memorize the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. This was **educational** arrogance.
6. "*A persecutor of the Church.*" Paul says he was so devout in his religion that he killed Christians.
7. "*Blameless.*" Any of Paul's contemporaries could look at him and see that he had met a self-righteous standard they could never reach.

In the flesh, Paul had a great deal to boast about, but he says the things that were gain to him in the flesh were actually worthless. This Greek word for "*gain*" was used in the business world to mean "attainment, achievement, profit." Paul says that in his world as an unbelieving Jew, these things were his profit; but the treasure he had amassed, he now counts as loss for the sake of Christ. The Greek *hegeomai* means "to add everything up and come to a conclusion." Paul took these seven things and added them all up and the total was a big zero.

Paul's illustration is this: If you are a merchant with something on the shelf that won't sell, what do you do? You sell it cheap even though you lose money. Why? You are taking a loss now to recoup later. You will invest your money again and get something of greater value. Paul realized that putting all your capital in the flesh

was a bad investment. He had found a real treasure worth investing in—Jesus!

GAIN

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Phil. 3:8–11

The Lord said in Matthew 10:39 that whoever has found his life will lose it and whoever has lost his life for His sake will find it. In Philippians 3:4–7, Paul talked about the things he was willing to count as loss. There came a point at which Paul realized that his achievements could never give him eternal life; they could never give him security. But once he saw Jesus Christ, he was willing to let go of everything he had so that he could get something infinitely better.

In verse 8, he turns to the attitude that it takes to get anywhere in the spiritual realm. In verse 7, Paul says he “counted,” past tense. In verse 8, he “counts,” present tense. He is saying, “I did this once, when I first believed in Jesus Christ, but I am still on this earth and I am still moving on with the same attitude. Every day of my life I am finding that there are things I have to let go of if I am ever going to seize the high ground and be conformed to the character of Christ. I will be letting go all my life.”

Paul adds up the facts and comes to the conclusion that all the things of the world that attract him are nothing compared to the “surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ.” “*Surpassing value*” means a value far above and beyond anything that he would ever let go. Paul says that every day of his life he keeps on evaluating the

details, the distractions, the riches of this life—all the things that might hinder him from his goal. He compares them to the value of knowing Jesus Christ, and they all equal nothing.

When Paul says that he has suffered the loss of all things for Christ, he is speaking of no small achievement, because when he marched down the road to Damascus that day described in Acts 9, he was a very wealthy, very famous, very influential person with a promising future.

But Paul says that when he looked at the whole stack of his human achievements and compared it to Jesus Christ, he saw the biggest pile of dung that he had ever seen in his life. The word so nicely and primly translated “*rubbish*” in our English Bible is *skubala*, from *skor*, the Greek four-letter word for “dung.” Paul spoke Koine Greek, the street language of the ancient world. He was known as a rather rude individual. I doubt if many of our churches today would like Paul very much. But one thing about it, when Paul spoke, people listened—he was real. He spoke a language they understood.

So, why would Paul turn his back on his tremendous pile of human achievements? Four purpose clauses in verses 8–10 tell us:

1. “That I may gain Christ.” This means salvation—the entrance into eternal life. If you have Christ, you have eternal life.
2. “That I may be found in Him.” To be found in Him means “to possess the righteousness of Jesus Christ.” Paul says that anything he could do by the Mosaic Law with all of his works, effort, and self-denial could never give him the righteousness that God gave him as a free gift.
3. “That I may know Him.” For Paul it was not enough to have eternal life; it was not enough to have the righteousness of Christ; he wanted to **know** Jesus Christ. He wanted to live every day of his life sharing it with the person of Christ.
4. “That I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Paul is not in doubt about his eternal security. The word translated “*resurrection*” here is used nowhere else in the

Bible. Paul is not talking of resurrection in the sense of rising from the grave; he is talking about experiencing the resurrection power of Christ in his life—the power of the new life referred to in Romans 6:4—the resurrection life. He is saying that he wants to live his life with the kind of power that brought Jesus Christ out of the grave into a new life that was above all earthly, human limitations.

The Apostle Paul knew what he wanted. He wanted to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

PRESS ON

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. 3:12–14

These three little verses tell us how the Apostle Paul got where he wanted to go, how he was gradually transformed into the image of the Person he most wanted to be like.

First, he had to be honest with himself. He tells the Philippians that he knows he has not already obtained the goal; he has not become perfect. The word “*obtained*” is *lambano*, which means “to receive.” In the aorist tense it refers to a point of time in the past. But the real indication of what Paul is talking about here is in the word *teleo*. *Teleo* can mean “to be complete, to be mature, or to achieve perfection.” In the perfect tense it means “to have achieved a place in the past and to be standing in that place in the present.” This would mean that Paul had come to a past point of perfection and now was sitting on the mountaintop looking down at everyone else and saying, “Here I am folks, I’m perfect and you can follow me.” Paul is saying that nothing could be further from the truth.

"No," he is saying, "I am not perfect, but I press on." He was determined to "*lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.*" From Acts 9:15–16, we know what that was. God's plan for Paul was that he would spread the message of eternal life by faith in Christ throughout the world. He ultimately achieved that, but he had not yet when he wrote this, so he says he keeps pressing on.

The word "*press on,*" *dioko,* means "to pursue." In the military sense it meant to attack the enemy. But it was also used for the ancient runner in the athletic games who had come to the point where he could see the finish line. *Dioko* meant "to start the final sprint, to drive for the tape." Paul's goal was coming into view.

The plan for Paul's life—the service which was designed for him—was the means by which he would achieve the ultimate goal: conformity to the person of Christ. Paul wanted to live as Christ had lived.

Hebrews 12:1 reminds us that each of us must "*lay aside the encumbrances that weigh us down and the sins that entangle us so we might run our race with endurance.*" Verse 2 tells us the only way to accomplish that: "*fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.*" The Greek word for "*fixing our eyes*" means "to look away from distractions." You do not win by looking up in the stands; you do not win by looking at your teammates; you only win by focusing on the objective.

Paul now talks about focus when he says, "*one thing I do.*" Paul tells us his secret to life. It is not enough to just have a goal; you must be able to set everything aside except the goal. You can never really achieve at one thing unless you set other things aside. You cannot be an expert in all areas. Most of us are held back in life because, instead of saying, "This one thing I do," we say, "These ten things I attempt." Because we are so scattered, we are never very good at anything. You have to decide what the priority of life is and then zero in on **that** one thing and focus on it to the exclusion of other things. You enjoy things that are not a hindrance to achieving your goal along the way. But, those things that stand in your way have to be let go.

The "*one thing*" Paul did involved two actions: forgetting what was behind and reaching forward for what was ahead. What did

Paul have to forget? For one thing, we know he had great failures. How are you ever going to get past the failures you have had in your life? You just have to forget them. You confess your sins, accept God's forgiveness and cleansing, and simply move on. You will never be able to advance as long as you are chained to the failures of the past. Paul had more than failures to forget; he also had some pretty great successes in both the physical and spiritual realms. But he realized that he had to take his eyes off even the successes of the past and focus on the goal.

Not only does he forget what is behind, but he reaches forward for what is ahead. In that reaching forward, Paul recognizes that his job is not done and so he pushes on. The word for "*reaching forward*" is *epekteinomai*, a present participle that shows a manner of life, a habit that has become a daily activity. The picture here is, again, of the runner going into the last lap, the final stretch. Paul is saying, "I am now stretching out; I am setting everything else aside; I have one thing to occupy my thinking and that is where I am going and what I have to do."

Paul knows that if we are ever going to fulfill the plan of God for our lives, we will have to become much less self-centered. We will have to set self aside so we can achieve greater goals.

"*Press on,*" again *dioko*, meant that Paul was pursuing a goal. The present tense refers to the fact that this was his lifestyle. He did this every day. If someone had asked him as he wrote this letter, "Paul, what are you doing right now?" he would have said, "I am pressing on. I'm chained. I'm in prison. But those are details. They can't stop me from reaching the goal." Paul had learned to live one day at a time; he had learned that "today" is the day to press on.

What did he press on for? "*The prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" "*The upward call*" is the call of resurrection, when God the Father said to His Son on the day of resurrection, "Come, sit at My right hand."

How did the world know that Christ was the Son of God? He lived in their midst and they never truly realized who He was. But when He came up out of the grave, they knew! That is what God wants to do in **your** life. He wants to bring you up out of the "grave" of being buried with human achievements, human trust, human merit, human works. He wants to bring you out of that

grave with a power that nothing on earth can equal. That is what Paul wanted, and he is saying, "I'm going to chase it for the rest of my life."

In order for Paul to live the life that God planned for him, he had to learn one of the most basic lessons of life: You have to live in the present; you have to live one day at a time. If you want to achieve victory over yesterday's failure, leave it in the past and win the victory today. If you want to be victorious in the future, win the victory today and tomorrow will take care of itself.

Paul realized that he had to keep his days in order. It has been said that yesterday is a canceled check, tomorrow is a promissory note, and the only cash you have is today. Many people live their lives in misery because they waste the cash on hand today by worrying about yesterday or dreaming about tomorrow.

It is impossible for us to achieve hero-of-faith status, to fulfill the plan of God for our lives, much less to achieve inner peace and tranquility, until we learn the technique of living one day at a time. We have to come to understand that every day is a priceless gift of God that we have the power to waste, to destroy (John 11:9–10). Moses, in Psalm 90:12, understood how valuable time was when he asked God to teach His people *"to number our days that we might present to Thee a heart of wisdom."* There is only one thing man can take into eternity: a soul filled with the Word of God. Jesus said that Heaven and earth would pass away but His words would abide forever (Mark 13:31).

We are commanded to redeem time (Eph. 5:15–18). The only capital we have for doing this is the Word of God. Today, if you have lived for one hour in fellowship, one hour in obedience to the Word, then you have bought one hour that can never be taken from you. It is yours for eternity. If you go through the day constantly discerning the need for confession and restoration in fellowship, you are redeeming hours and hours for eternity. God has provided the means by which you can redeem time. (See Matt. 4:4; John 14:26, 16:12–14; 1 Cor. 2:9–16; James 1:21, 4:6; and 1 John 2:27. Not all of these passages mention the redeeming of time, but all of them talk about how it is accomplished.)

There is only one secure investment in this life. You can put your resources in land, in gold or silver, in the stock market, in a savings account, in a cookie jar and bury them under the house; but you are still going to lose them. The only investment that guarantees a permanent return is the investment of your time in the plan of God.

There is only one *bona fide* fear for the Christian: letting time slip through your hands and failing to lay hold of God's grace for you (Heb. 4:1).

In Philippians 3:15, Paul challenges those who have reached maturity ("*perfect*" is from *teleios*, which means "mature") to have this attitude he has just described. Paul knows that attitude is the key to endurance!

XII. HEROES

Philippians 2:25–30

What does it take to be a hero? In the citations for Congressional Medal of Honor winners, certain words and phrases come up over and over to describe the character and actions of men who have earned the highest honor this country offers its heroes. Phrases like “intrepidity in the face of the enemy,” “indomitable fighting spirit,” “alert and aggressive under heavy enemy fire,” “boldly took initiative,” “moved relentlessly forward,” “undaunted by the savage opposition,” and “decisive valor in the face of almost certain death.”

Men earn the title “hero” by displaying character in the face of the enemy. It is no different in the spiritual realm. Intrepidity, aggressiveness, fortitude, endurance, alertness, the ability to think under pressure, the willingness to die for the cause—these are the qualities that make heroes of faith.

In Philippians 2, Paul records for us the citation of such a man.

SERVICE

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need. Phil. 2:25

The name Epaphroditus means “charming or delightful.” It refers to someone who is grace-oriented. This young man’s name reminds us of a principle of spiritual heroism: No one was ever made a hero without facing hardship and overcoming it by grace. Heroes are forged in the furnace of difficulty. You will face adversity. You may be facing it today. What are you going to do with it? Either you will use the grace of God, which is greater than any problem, and become a hero in the strife; or, you will reject the grace of God and be overwhelmed by your difficulties. Epaphroditus learned how to rely on grace.

There are five citations for Epaphroditus in verse 25:

1. “*Brother.*” If you are a believer in Jesus Christ you have at least one citation that will be yours throughout all eternity: You are a member of the royal family of God.

Forever you will stand on a higher plane, with a higher status, than any Old Testament saint. Jesus Christ made this very clear when He said that *“among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist, yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”* (Matt. 11:11). This is not because of anything you have done, but because of your position in Christ.

2. *“Fellow worker.”* Not every brother is willing to be a worker. There are lazy people in every family, even in the family of God. But Paul says that Epaphroditus is a fellow worker; he is involved in a common effort. The word *sunergon* comes from *sun*, which means “together,” and *ergon*, which means “energy or work.” It refers to the fact that he was a servant with the Apostle Paul in the cause of Christ; he was active in his faith.
3. *“Fellow soldier.”* *Sustratiotes* is from *sun*, a preposition denoting unity, and *stratiotes*, meaning “soldier or warrior.” Just as there are brothers who do not work, there are workers who do not fight. Sometimes your fellow worker is the guy who lifts the plank up on his shoulder, turns around, and knocks you in the head with it. He may be all right to work with, but you want to keep your eye on him. You would not particularly want to go to war with this guy. If he is that dangerous with a plank, you don’t want him with an M-16 in his hand guarding your backside. It is a totally different thing to be a fellow worker versus a fellow soldier. A fellow worker can be tolerated for a common cause. You have to trust a fellow soldier with your life. Paul says, “I could trust this man with my life. As workers we have a common cause, but as fellow soldiers we share a common danger, we have gone through the danger, and he has proven himself reliable.”
4. *“Messenger.”* The word for “messenger” is *apostolos*, “apostle.” Epaphroditus was not an apostle in the technical sense of the twelve apostles. The word is used in a general sense here, as in 2 Corinthians 8:23, for a man with a mission. He was a courier of truth. He went from

Philippi to Rome to carry a message and to minister to Paul, and he was faithful in his mission. He could have stayed in Philippi and been a fellow soldier, but he could not have stayed in Philippi and been a messenger.

5. "Minister." The word translated "*minister*" indicates this man's high service. A *leitourgos* was a priestly minister, one whose life was a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1–2).

So here we have a man by the name of Epaphroditus, a man about whom very little else is known except that he was highly acclaimed by the great Apostle Paul. Why did Epaphroditus serve Paul as he served him? Because of his love for the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot say much more about a man from terms used in the Bible than what is said of Epaphroditus.

SORROW

... because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Phil. 2:26–27

In verse 26, we see in Epaphroditus the true concern of a servant. "*He was longing,*" Paul says. The Greek word *epipotheo* (imperfect periphrastic) shows a continued state of desire. The present active participle with the imperfect of the verb *eimi*, which means "to be," indicates his desire for the Philippian believers in the strongest possible terms.

Paul says that Epaphroditus "*was distressed*" and that his distress was based on the fact that he heard of their concern for him. *Ademoneo*, another periphrastic, means "to be out of place, not at home, to have unrest of soul." The word that describes the heaviness he felt is used to describe the state of only two people in Scripture: Epaphroditus and the Lord Jesus Christ. This word is used in Matthew 26:37 and Mark 14:33. You do not get any closer to

the Lord than this—to enter so much into your ministry that you share His suffering.

The apostle’s reaction to his friend’s illness proves that Paul was subject to the normal human concerns and pains. He tells the Philippians that he would have grieved over the loss of this man. The passage shows us something else that is significant. This was written about A.D. 61 or 62; Paul’s power to heal had departed. The miracle gifts were designed to pass from the scene. Most of them were gone by A.D. 70. Paul, at one time, had the power to raise people from the dead. On one occasion, people were healed by touching a scarf that had touched Paul. The apostle had phenomenal healing gifts and powers, but they were taken away as the Word of God was recorded.

RECKLESS COURAGE

Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly in order that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Phil. 2:28–30

Why does Paul “eagerly” dispatch Epaphroditus to Philippi? So that the Philippians could celebrate. The word translated “rejoice” means “to have a victory celebration.” Both Paul and Epaphroditus were concerned that the sickness of this young man would distract a faithful congregation from the Word of God.

They should not have had to worry. Every one of us needs to understand that it does not matter who God reaches down and takes home. We have to accept that He does what He does, in His perfect time, and according to His perfect plan. When He takes someone, it is because He chose to do it. He has the power to keep us alive, He has the power to call us home, and no one will ever leave until it is God’s time for him to leave.

When Paul tells the Philippians to “receive” Epaphroditus, he uses a word that means “to welcome with an embrace.” This is a present imperative; it commands them to receive him with joy and to “hold men like him in high regard.” The phrase Paul uses here means to look on something as a valuable, prized possession.

Why should Epaphroditus be held in such high regard? “Because he came close to death.” The phrase used here says that this man was a neighbor of death. But the important thing is not the fact that he came close to death, but the reason why: “for the work of Christ.” It was in his service, his self-denial, his sacrifice that Epaphroditus came close to death.

The phrase “risking his life” is from the word *paraboulani*. As an aorist middle participle, it tells us that Epaphroditus came close to death because he risked his life. Epaphroditus was death’s next-door neighbor because he chose to spend his life in service. *Paraboulani* was a gambling term that meant “to stake everything on the turn of the dice.” It was used for men of reckless courage who, like our Medal of Honor winners, put their lives on the line in order to accomplish their goal.

Only a few years after this letter was written, the name *paraboulani* was taken by a group of believers in North Africa. The city of Carthage had been hit by a terrible plague. People were so afraid of this sickness and death that they would take the dead and dying—their husbands and children, brothers and sisters—and throw them out into the streets. Then everyone began to flee the city; Carthage was nothing but stinking, rotting corpses and people dying with the plague.

But there was one tough pastor in Carthage, a man named Cyprian. He organized the handful of people left in his church, and they began to drag corpses outside the town to bury them. Some of them died in the process of saving Carthage. There would have been no one left if Cyprian and his people had not risked their lives. They took a name for themselves: *paraboulani*—the gamblers.

That is the history of the word Paul uses to describe Epaphroditus. This young man risked his life, showing reckless courage in his service. He understood what it took to become a hero of faith.

What does it take?

1. Time. It takes time to become a hero of faith. God gives every one of us a measure of time, but each of us must redeem it. (See Eccl. 3:1–8; Rom. 13:11–14; and Eph. 5:15–18.)
2. Service. No one ever becomes a hero by preoccupation with self. Every believer is assigned three areas of service: priesthood, ambassadorship, and ministry. These three areas outline for us what is called in Mark 13:34 “our own unique work.” God gives to each his own work “*according to his own ability*” (Matt. 25:15). It takes service to become a hero of faith.
3. Power. As long as we have time, there is potential for service, but the only way we can make use of it is in the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:7, 11; Eph. 1:19, 3:20). God has given us provision by which we may “*become partakers of the divine nature,*” empowered for the work to which He calls us (2 Pet. 1:3, 4).

Hebrews 11 chronicles men and women who took time, service, and power and utilized them in a lifestyle of faith. Habakkuk 2:4 and Romans 1:17 remind us that “*the just shall live by faith.*” This is what it takes to be a hero!

XIII. VICTORY

I Corinthians 15:57–58
2 Corinthians 2:14

When a victorious nation's armies return home from battlefields abroad, among the men who disembark at the airports and sea docks are soldiers who ran from battle, who cowered while their "brothers in arms" fought on, who turned their backs in panic when they could have been heroic. Are these men winners? In the strategic sense they are. They are citizens of the victorious nation. Regardless of their conduct on the battlefield, these men share in the overall victory; they are victors "by association."

But, also among the disembarking troops are the men who stood firm though they wanted to run, who laid their lives on the line for their fellow soldiers though they did not want to die—who pressed on and on though they were weary and wanted to quit. These are the men who won the tactical victories. These are the heroes.

The strategic victory of the angelic conflict was won by the power of Jesus Christ on the cross. Tactical victory in the day-to-day conflict that will continue until His return is won by the power of Jesus Christ in individual believers.

God gave to every one of us the invitation to partake of His victory, to become heroes in the spiritual conflict. The day will come when you will stand face-to-face with the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have said no to his offer, you will have no one to blame but yourself.

THE SOURCE

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord. I Cor. 15:57–58

A thousand years before Paul penned this victory cry, another champion of faith had understood the same truth. "The battle is the Lord's," young David had cried out to the enemy, "and He will give you into our hands" (1 Sam. 17:47). God's victory is always a **gift**.

Paul is giving a shout of exaltation in spiritual victory and is acknowledging that his victory is not because of anything he has done, but because of the grace of God. In most translations, this verse begins, “Thanks be to God;” but the Greek says, “To God the grace.” This is a dative of source that attributes to God the authorship of all grace.

The word translated “gives” is *didomi*, meaning “to give in grace.” What God offers cannot be earned or deserved; it is a gift and can only be received. The present participle refers to a constant supply—a supply that never runs dry. God has given us (and continues to give us) grace every moment, every second, every breath, every heartbeat of our lives.

What God gives in grace here is *nikao*, a military term for victory won on the battlefield. Three principles come out of this verse:

1. God alone gives us grace. There is only one place you will ever find grace and that is from God.
2. Grace alone gives us victory. No matter how much we try, how great our personal talents, skills, or capabilities, we will never win a victory in life without grace.
3. Victory alone gives Christ honor.

When Paul says that God gives us the victory “through our Lord Jesus Christ,” he uses the preposition *dia*, the instrumental of agency, which means “by means of.” In other words, all our victories are by means of the Person who brings us that grace, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He alone is the One who makes victory possible.

If God is the only One who can give us grace, and if grace is the only thing that can give us victory, and if victory is the only thing that honors Jesus Christ, then we must start every day with the question, “Am I in fellowship with God?” If we are out of fellowship and the Spirit of God is not in control of our lives, then we cannot utilize grace. That is why confession is as important as a daily discipline; without it, victory will always be beyond our grasp.

Paul is challenging his readers to press on. Notice he calls them “beloved brethren.” Remember that he is writing to the Corinthians, the most contentious, selfish, self-centered, unproductive cluster

the arena where they died under the claws of the lions. He led many to scourgings, mockings, and death. He led the Lord Jesus Christ to the cross. But He led all of them—always—to victory.

Thriambeuo is a military term. In the ancient Roman Empire, upon returning victorious from war, the conquering general was paraded through the streets of Rome in a grand victory celebration. It is to this triumphant procession that the word *thriambeuo* refers. The conqueror rode in the emperor's chariot while a slave held a victor's crown above his head. Behind him came his legions wearing battlefield decorations and leading captives in chains.

Children and young maidens from the city would accompany the victorious procession, throwing flowers in the path of the victorious soldiers and onto the welcoming crowds. Incense was burned and mingled with the fragrance of the flowers. The aroma that encircled the procession meant different things to different people. To the conquerors, it signified victory; to the captives, it signified impending death.

The Spirit of God inspired the Apostle Paul to use this particular term in this passage on victory. We do know that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day make His triumphal entry to this earth. In the first coming of Jesus Christ, He rode a donkey into the streets of Jerusalem and men called it the "triumphal entry." It wasn't.

In ancient times, if a king approached a city riding on a mule or a burro, it meant he came in peace. But when a king came on a white charger, it meant that he came to make war. The book of Revelation records how the Lord Jesus Christ will come to earth again, this time mounted on a white charger and accompanied by His royal family (Rev. 19:11–16). He will come to depose Satan and to set up His kingdom on earth. That is the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ!

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you will be in that processional. What kind of a victor will you be?

In 1 John 5:4–5, the Apostle John says, "*whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*"

John is describing two types of winners in these verses. The first are those who share the strategic victory. This includes everyone who believes in Jesus Christ for salvation—whoever is “*born of God.*” Then there are those who have won the tactical victories—the heroes—the Medal of Honor winners.

When you read verse 5 in English, it sounds as though John is just repeating himself. In the Greek, it is clear he is not. When he asks, “*Who is the one who overcomes the world?*” he uses the present active participle, referring to a lifestyle of circumstantial conditions of this person who is the overcomer. This is a real winner. We know this because of what and how he believes. “*Believes*” here is another present active participle, indicating that there are two parts to this person’s life: victory and faith. He keeps on winning the victory. Why? Because he keeps on believing; he keeps on living by faith. This is the man or woman who lives one day at a time—by faith.

Where are you today? Wherever and whoever you are, you have problems. How are you going to have victory over your problems? You will have to believe that the Son of God is really the Son of God. Is Jesus Christ the Son of God? If He is, how big is your problem? If Jesus is the Son of God, He has said He has a plan for your life, He has told you He will never forsake you, and that He constantly and consistently loves you—just how big **is** your problem?

You can overcome **any** problem by simply believing that He has the power He said He has. But remember, the victory He gives you is not victory **out** of the suffering, the adversity, or the affliction, but victory **through** it.

You have to remember that not all success is victory. And not all victory looks like success. We live in a success-oriented generation, a time when churches and pastors are teaching that God wants you to be successful. But consider the life of God’s own Son as described in this anonymous essay:

One Solitary Life

*He was born in an obscure village.
The child of a peasant woman.
He grew up in still another village,
Where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was 30.*

*Then for three years
He was an itinerate preacher.
He never wrote a book.
He never held an office.
He never had a family or owned a house.
He didn't go to college.
He never visited a big city.
He never traveled 200 miles from the place where He was born.
He did none of the things one usually associates with greatness.
He had no credentials but Himself.*

*He was only 33 when the tide of public opinion turned against Him.
His friends ran away.
He was turned over to His enemies,
And went through the mockery of a trial.*

*He was nailed to a cross between two thieves.
While He was dying, His executioners gambled for His clothing,
The only property He had on earth.
When He was dead,
He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.*

*Twenty centuries have come and gone
And today He is the central figure of the human race.*

*All the armies that ever marched,
All the navies that ever sailed,
All the parliaments that ever sat,
All the kings that ever reigned,
Put together have not affected the life of man on earth
As much as that*

One Solitary Life

To the world, Jesus Christ appeared to be a failure. But He was victorious. The Word of God tells us that many who appear unsuccessful in life will be highly honored by God (Matt. 5:11–12) and many who are successful will be rejected by God (Matt. 7:21–23). In God's plan, the things that are visible, the successes that we can see in time, are temporary. The things that are invisible, the spiritual victories, are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).

You will find that 90% of all the victories you win in life will be hidden; no one will know anything about them because other people see the visible. People do not see the invisible, but God does. And one day He will visibly award battlefield decorations to those who are today, invisible heroes.

XIV. THE WAR'S END
I Corinthians 15:23–24
1 Corinthians 9:24–27

After the troops have returned from war, in a military battalion review, the commander-in-chief parades past his troops, surveying company by company the men who brought home the victory.

Tagmati is a Greek word that pictures this kind of review of the troops. The word means “to stand in ranks.” It is very similar to a word we saw earlier, *stoicheo*, which means “to march in ranks.” In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul uses *tagmati* to describe a time when every person will stand in his proper place for what will be one of the most awesome sights of the closing days of world history: The great battalion review, when believers—wearing the battlefield decorations they have won for their faithfulness—will fall into ranks behind the Lord Jesus Christ and be presented to God the Father.

BATTALION REVIEW

But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

1 Cor. 15:23–24

The subject in this passage is resurrection. To understand what Paul describes here, you have to know something about future events prophesied in the Bible. This, according to the Word of God, is the order of events that will close out history:

1. the Rapture of the Church (1 Cor. 15:51–53)
2. the Judgment of Church Age believers for rewards at the *Bema* Seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:9–11)
3. the Tribulation (Rev. 6:18)
4. the Second Advent, when Christ returns with His Church (Rev. 19:11–16)
5. the binding and confinement of Satan (Rev. 20:1–3)

6. the Millennium, Christ's 1,000-year reign on earth (Rev. 20)
7. the loosing of Satan and the last revolt (Rev. 20:7–9)
8. the judgment of unbelievers at the Great White Throne and their condemnation to the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11–15)
9. the New Heaven and New Earth—eternity with God for all believers (Rev. 21–22)

Paul introduces his description of the battalion review with the important word *hekastos*, which means “every single one,” followed by the preposition *en*, which means “in,” along with the locative of sphere, “*his own*.” This is followed by the military word, *tagmati*, which means “to stand in ranks.” This is a very specific phrase, which says “*each [single one] in his own [specific] order.*”

There are four companies in the resurrection review:

1. **Company A** consists of one person—Jesus Christ. When Paul says “*each [man] in his own order,*” Christ fits the description. He was a man. He had to go through the grave; He had to come up in resurrection. He is the only company to have been resurrected to date; He is the “*first fruits*” of the resurrection.

“Companies B and C” below are identified by the phrase “*those who are Christ's at His coming.*” Christ's return will be in two stages: He will appear at the Rapture to call Church Age believers to Himself and will come again at the Second Advent:

2. **Company B** consists of Church Age believers, resurrected at the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51–52; 1 Thess. 4:13–18).
3. **Company C** is made up of believers of the Age of Israel—Old Testament and Tribulation saints resurrected at the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. (The Age of Israel has not ended yet. The Church Age, which runs from Pentecost to the Rapture, is a parenthesis in time—an intercalation inserted because the Jews rejected Christ as Messiah. We know from Daniel 9 and other passages that the last seven

years of the Age of Israel will be the Tribulation, which begins at the Rapture of the Church.)

4. **Company D** consists of those who become believers during the Millennium, the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. These are identified by the phrase “*then comes the end.*” The word for end is *teleios*, sometimes used for “perfection,” sometimes for “maturity,” sometimes—as here—for “completion.”

BATTLEFIELD DECORATIONS

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his death in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

2 Cor. 5:10

When Church Age believers are assembled for the battalion review, we will be wearing the battlefield decorations we have earned by faith during our lifetimes. Those decorations are given at the *Bema*, the Judgment Seat of Christ. What is judged and for what are believers recompensed at the *Bema*?

One thing that is not judged is sin. Jesus Christ paid the price for all sins on the cross; therefore, sins have been removed forever as an issue and they have no effect on eternal reward (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 10:10, 12, 14, 17). (Neither are sins the issue at the Last Judgment—the Great White Throne judgment that occurs at the end of human history. There, unbelievers will be condemned for one reason only: rejection of Jesus Christ.)

What will be judged at the *Bema* is human good. God cannot accept human good. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that “*all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.*” God is going to burn all the filthy rags of human history. First Corinthians 3:10–15 describes what will happen at this judgment: Fire will test what each man has built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Two types of building materials are described—flammable and inflammable, temporary and permanent. The temporary refers to human good, everything you have done in the energy of the flesh; the permanent is divine good, everything

you have done in the energy of the Spirit. God is going to prove whether the production in your life was your good or His good.

God is not interested in your ability, in how great you are, how wonderful you are; He is interested in one thing: Are you available to His plan? If you are, He will do the production, and then He will reward you for it. The Christian's recompense at the Judgment Seat of Christ is based on how much you let God do in your life, how much you are willing to accept grace.

The person who has little divine production in life will still be in Heaven, blessed forever; he will still be blissfully happy, but he will go into eternity carrying a very light pack because he will not be carrying rewards.

The Bible talks about four categories of reward:

1. Praise. Every Christian will receive at least a reward of praise from God. Paul tells us to not pass judgment on each other, but to wait *"until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts and then each man's praise will come to him from God"* (1 Cor. 4:5).
2. Crowns. In 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 Paul tells us to run in such a way that we may win an imperishable crown. Every reference to crowns in the New Testament refers to heroes of faith, to those who have entered spiritual knighthood—those identified as *"the great"* and *"the strong,"* who will share the spoils of Christ's victory (Isa. 53:12). Five crowns are mentioned in the New Testament:
 - ♦ The **Crown of Righteousness** is given to those who live in anticipation of the return of Christ (2 Tim. 4:7–8). How often do you think of the return of Christ? How often do you make decisions based on your anticipation that He is coming again?
 - ♦ The **Crown of Joy** is given for faithful witnessing (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19). Someone said to me, "I've been witnessing to my friends, but I haven't had any success." My response was, "Wonderful, you're probably

victorious.” Only God can evaluate your success in witnessing, and He evaluates it on your faithfulness to make Christ the issue. You simply witness; you make Christ the issue, and let God give the increase.

- ♦ The **Crown of Glory** (I Pet. 5:4) is given to all those faithful in their own ministry.
 - ♦ The **Crown of Life** is given for being faithful in testing (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10). When your car doesn’t start, when you don’t have enough money to pay your bills, remember that faithfulness in testing will bring the Crown of Life.
 - ♦ The **Incorruptible Crown** is given for self-discipline in the spiritual life (1 Cor. 9:24–27).
3. *Rank and Authority*. Rulership will be the reward of some in Heaven. Matthew 25:14–23 and Revelation 2:26 indicate that there will be some Church Age believers ruling over towns, cities, and nations in the Millennium and throughout all eternity.

Wealth and possessions will be the lot of some. Isaiah 53:12 calls this “sharing in the spoils of victory;” Matthew 24:45–47 calls it “being put in charge of your master’s possessions;” 2 Peter 1:11 calls it “entering the kingdom of God with wealth.”

4. *Glory*. Paul, in Romans 8:17–18, tells us that if we suffer with Christ, we will be glorified with Him. The highest form of eternal reward is in terms beyond our comprehension. Daniel 12:3 says, *“Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*

Go outside on a clear night, look up at the stars, and see how some are radiant while others are barely visible, some are easily seen but are not bright, while others shine brilliantly. You are looking at an illustration of believers in eternity.

Your resurrection body will be in some sense a body of light. You may be a 25-watt believer or you may be a searchlight. That is

exactly what Daniel means. You might think everyone is going to be the same in Heaven, but are all stars the same? When you look up in the sky, do they all look alike?

In Revelation 2:28, the Lord Jesus Christ picks up on this illustration of glory from Daniel 12 and says something about those who overcome. In the context, He is talking about men and women who have reached friend-of-God status. He says, "*I will give him the morning star.*" In Revelation 22:16, we find that "*the bright morning star*" refers to the Lord Jesus Christ. The "Order of the Morning Star" is a decoration for those few who have become so conformed to Christ in this earthly life that they will reflect the glory of Christ in Heaven.

**There could be no more tremendous honor
for the Christian warrior!**

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