

# Spiritual Warfare: Equipment for Engaging the Battle in the Public Square and the Urgency of Telling Others about Jesus Christ

## An Exegesis and Contemporary Application of Ephesians 6:10-22

Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.

### Introduction

While the world wonders why so many painful problems exist; why disharmony is everywhere; why all the beauty is diminished, sometimes minimally and sometimes maximally; and what can be done about it; those who believe in and follow Jesus Christ have been given and can provide the answer. How do we know? We know, because God has told us in his written Word, the Bible, all of which points to and explains God's Word who has come to us in human flesh—his divine and human Word, Jesus Christ—as the Way God has chosen to restore his perfect creation, the Way, and at great cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever!

We read in the Bible that God spoke, and the world was formed, created by God without using any preexistent substances, *ex nihilo*, i.e., out of nothing. In the first verse of the first book of the Bible, Genesis 1:1, the original Hebrew verb translated, create, is אָרַךְ (*bārā*'), and throughout the whole Old Testament, God is the only subject of the verb *bārā*'. No other being can *bārā*'. Furthermore, all that God created was perfect, including the first two human beings, a man and a woman.

God gave the man, Adam, and the woman, Eve, countless blessings, and one was especially unique: God formed both of these human beings in his image. (Genesis 1:26-28) Bearing the image of God, means that God created human beings with limited—but very significant— aspects of some of the attributes of his Being, in which we now share in microcosm some elements of what he has in macrocosm. For example, as God has an unlimited mind and is able to reason, he has given us the ability to think and reason; however, while our ability to reason is unique in all God's creation, as wonderful as it is, God's ability to reason is infinitely superior to ours. (Isaiah 55:9; Job 38-42)

For another example, as God has unlimited freedom to do as he wills, he has built into us a genuine, but limited, freedom. To enhance that freedom, God gave Adam and Eve one law to follow: He commanded them to not eat the fruit from one tree in the Garden of Eden, where they lived; the tree was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told them they could eat from any other plant, but he warned them that if they disobeyed that one law and ate the fruit of that tree, they would die. (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:2-3)

For a brief period—we're not told how long, but likely not very long<sup>1</sup>—Adam and Eve obeyed God and

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<sup>1</sup> In Genesis 5:5, we're told that Adam lived a total of 930 years. In 5:3, we read that Seth was born after Adam had lived 130 years. Prior to Seth, Cain and Abel were born. Genesis 5:4 informs us that Adam and Eve had "other sons and daughters," but we aren't told in what order they came, and we should agree with the outstanding pastor,

enjoyed the beautiful creation God made. The man and the woman were perfect, until a fallen angel, Satan, tempted them to disobey God. Satan—who “is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44)—lied to them, saying they would not die. They disregarded God, believed the lie, misused their knowledge and their freedom, and chose to disobey God and ate the forbidden fruit. As soon as they did, God’s warning took effect; Adam and Eve’s disobedience initiated a four-fold disharmony that corrupted God’s pure and beautiful creation. (Genesis 3:1-14)

The four-fold disharmony consisted of: (1) disharmony between oneself and God (e.g., Genesis 3:8,10,23,24); (2) disharmony within human relationships (Genesis 3:12; 4:8); (3) disharmony within oneself (Genesis 3:10; 1 Samuel 1:15); (4) disharmony throughout all creation (Genesis 3:17-18; Ezra 9:10-11; Romans 8:20-23). Sin is no light matter; it corrupts, pollutes, and destroys. All the problems of yesterday, today, and tomorrow—indeed of history and in the future between now and the time Jesus returns in his second coming for the final judgment and consummation of God’s plan of redemption and restoration of his beautiful and perfect creation—all the problems of all time are the result of the powerful, perverse, and pervasive effects of human disobedience to God: sin.

Yet God—being all love (1 John 4:8) as well as holy, holy, holy (the Old Testament Hebrew way of saying most holy, Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8)—removed the evil from his presence,<sup>2</sup> first judging it and then banishing them from his most holy presence. (Genesis 3:23-24; cf. Luke 10:18) God was unwilling to destroy his perfect creation. Instead, God immediately began to reveal his plan to restore his creation through a Redeemer—the Messiah (Christ)—when the time would be right in his perfect wisdom. In Genesis 3:15—which Biblical scholars call the protoevangelium (the first reference to and proclamation of the Gospel<sup>3</sup> of Jesus Christ)—he said

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theologian, and former lawyer, John Calvin (John Calvin and John King, [Commentary on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis](#), vol. 1 [Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010], p. 227), as well as many other careful scholars, and disapprove of the human tendency to engage in the countless unwarranted conjectures and speculations, where people try to fill in the blanks, thus reading into (eisegesis) the Bible what God has not revealed to us. We must remember this is God’s Word we are handling, and we must do so rightly (2 Timothy 2:15). So, the most we can say, ca. 125 years is the longest Adam and Eve would have lived in the Garden of Eden before the corruption of sin and evil, but Satan, who wants to destroy God’s creation, including us, likely didn’t wait long to tempt Eve and Adam.

<sup>2</sup> The Old Testament Hebrew word (שִׁדְדָה [qādōsh]), translated with the English word holy, and the New Testament Greek word (ἅγιος [hagios]) rendered holy, both mean set apart from sin and evil, uncommon, righteous.

<sup>3</sup> Throughout this paper the word, Gospel, meaning Good News, refers only to the Gospel of the Good News about Jesus Christ which is the subject of the whole Bible and, therefore, will always be spelled with an uppercase G, the only exception being in this footnote. The word, gospel, with a lower case g also appears frequently in literature meaning good news in a broad dimension. Gospel herein only refers to the best form of the meaning of Good News, εὐαγγέλιον (*Euangelion*) in Jesus Christ; cf., e.g., Matthew 4:23. *Euangelion* is especially appropriate pertaining to Ephesians 6:10-22, not only due to the subject but to its etymology. “*Euangelion* has a broad semantic range in the New Testament. Nevertheless, this variety should be examined and understood in light of the basic concept that the gospel is a message of victory. According to its Greek heritage, as well as its acquired Hebrew background via the Septuagint, *euangelion* describes a good report from the battlefield, a message of victory. Moreover, this is its essential meaning in the New Testament. The gospel is the message of Christ’s victory over the enemy; the strong one has been conquered by the One who is stronger (Matthew 12:29). Therefore this gospel is to be preached to the poor and to the captives who will be set at liberty by its power (cf. Luke 4:18).” Thoralf Gilbrant, “[Εὐαγγέλιον](#),” in *The New Testament Greek-English Dictionary*, The Complete Biblical Library (WORDsearch, 1991).

in his judgment of the serpent, Satan, "...I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

In this verse, God briefly presents his initial revelation of the Messiah, about whom he said more incrementally throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. He begins here in 3:15 with the essence of the Gospel in this brief preface to the rest of the Bible: The Redeemer is coming who will suffer in his loving work, but in the process he will destroy the devil and all evil, and he will restore God's perfect creation, including most of all—most wonderfully—making it possible for human beings, who have been credited with Christ's righteousness by faith in Him (Romans 4)—to again be able to live in the very presence of God...forever!

In fact, the whole Bible is about Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of the triune God, and God's plan to work through him his mighty acts of redemption and restoration—at such great cost to himself—in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever! The Old Testament points to Christ Jesus, and the New Testament explains him: who he is, what he has done, what he is doing, and what he will do in the future.

In this phase of life in the present era before Jesus' second coming, the disharmony continues, but Jesus is with us and will help us survive and thrive through the disharmony (e.g., Joshua 1:5 [cf. Hebrews 13:5,6]; Matthew 28:20; John 16:33), and he will end it when he returns for the final judgment. In the meantime, Satan is doing all he can to destroy as much of God's creation, including the human lives who bear God's image.

While Satan and his demon followers are active in the world trying to destroy as much of it as they can, Satan is concentrating heavily on the church. He knows he has the world in general, and the public square in particular, doing what he wants; he also knows *the church, the body of Christ* (1 Corinthians 12:27, *et al.*), *stands in his way* by actively serving the Lord on His mission to be the agents through whom Christ is accomplishing his redemptive and restorative purposes.

So Satan is working hard against—and in—the church. Here is a reality that we, who are believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, have to address: Many of our fellow Christians are not taking their identity, their faith, their relationship with God, and his calling of them, seriously enough to be aware of what Satan is doing, and even many who are aware, to varying degrees, are not at all protecting and equipping themselves for accomplishing the high and holy calling God has given us to do, as his agents through whom the Lord is working to accomplish his purposes. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

Hence, those fellow church members are *vulnerable* to spiritual harm from Satan's darts. (Ephesians 6:16) They are also making themselves *ineffective* at accomplishing the Lord's commission for all his people, which, as we'll see below, is a command. (Matthew 28:18-20)

Hence, we are in a very serious spiritual war. It is occurring on many fronts. In this paper, we will examine carefully one of the great passages in his Word in which God has given us, whom he has called to be holy to him, vital help—the equipping of us—in order to win this war and function well in our high and holy calling. In so doing, we will apply that passage to one of the fronts in which the war is occurring: the public square.

This paper is an exegesis and application of God’s Word for helping Christians effectively engage the public square for Jesus Christ. It is essential that we include Christ in our conversations in the public square, for it is only as the Holy Spirit transforms people’s minds and hearts, and people believe in Christ, that improvement—and improvement which lasts—will occur. (Cf. Romans 12:1-2) Scripture is clear: “...no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:3) Of course, employing communication realities, we need to speak in terms the target audience understands and uses. Yet we do so—**not** accommodating to the world’s values—but by speaking the truth in love about Christ Jesus. For example, compare the Apostle Paul’s address to the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34).<sup>4</sup> We must refer to such resources as science, logic, history, experience, and other information while engaging the square, e.g., addressing specific issues, but unless we include references to Jesus Christ, human hearts and lives will not be changed. We can bring the strongest rational argument to the public square, but the only way lasting, extensive, and effective change will occur is the extent to which we are “speaking the truth in love,” in Christ’s name, which the Holy Spirit will use to change human lives as only he can and will. It is only in this way that we can make any effective—including lasting—change in the public square...or anywhere else, e.g., in our families and in the church.

This paper was originally written for the opening devotion at the beginning of each meeting of the Christians Engaging the Public Square (CEPS) ministry in the Immanuel Lutheran Church and School in Loveland, Colorado. Therefore, the applications herein will be easier for Christians to do in the West and in other countries where there are opportunities to speak with some degree of freedom. In countries where such freedom is limited, God’s people will need to make adaptations accordingly, as the Holy Spirit guides them, but since the Bible was written for the whole world, I offer the following exposition.

Why do we see public schools, communities, and even whole countries that taught, espoused, and were governed by Biblical truth, now turning from the truth of God’s Word, becoming secularized, and even turning against Christianity? Why are many Christians refusing to speak up and carry out the commands of God to “seek the peace and prosperity of the city” to which he has led us (Jeremiah 29:7), to be the “salt and light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-14), and to carry out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)? Two reasons readily come to mind: (1) ignorance of these commands—indeed of most if not all of God’s Word itself—on the part of many, and for those who do have some inkling: (2) fear as to what to do and say.

What we all need to know and remember, is that whenever God gives his people a command, he equips us with the knowledge and ability to do it, together with the all-sufficient help of the Holy Spirit, the Third divine Person of the triune God (together with the Father and his only begotten

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<sup>4</sup> I have some contemporary examples of how I have tried to engage the public square addressing current issues and doing so in a witness for Jesus Christ that will provide opportunities for additional conversations about the Lord and our only Savior. I have included them on my websites, e.g., “[Addressing a Proposed CRT Commission before City Council](#).” Other resources are also offered on my websites. The most important help we have is in God’s Word itself. In addition to Paul’s address to the Areopagus, see what Paul says about “speaking the truth in love [ἀγάπη (*agapē*)]” in Ephesians 4:11ff.; Paul’s definition of love (*agape*) in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; and not to worry because the Holy Spirit will give you the words to say. (Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11-12).

Son, Jesus Christ, three Persons—three distinct divine Beings—who share one essence [Hebrews 1:3]).<sup>5</sup> As we engage the public square on the mission Jesus gave us, we need to go in with our eyes wide open, knowing what we’re getting into, while at the same time constantly conscious of God’s presence and all-sufficient help. Ephesians 6:10-24 provides that perspective and equipment. We see that we are in a spiritual war.

Moreover, we need God’s help: on our own we’re in danger; however, with God’s help—and only with God’s help—which he offers in this passage, we win. But first, we need to understand the text, which is the primary purpose of this paper.

### Exegesis and Application of Ephesians 6:10-22

**6:10 “Finally, be strong in the Lord [κύριος (*kurios*, Lord)] and in his mighty power.”** (NIV) The ESV (English Standard Version, a more word-for-word translation, thus closer to the original Greek wording and yet in a way English readers can understand) renders the verse, “Finally, be strong in the Lord [κύριος (*kurios*, Lord)] and in the strength of his might.”

1. The original Greek for the NIV’s “be strong in the Lord” is better translated, “be empowered [a present tense imperative, **a command**] in the Lord....” As the outstanding Greek scholar, R.C.H. Lenski, comments:<sup>6</sup>
  - a. “The durative present tense [i.e., continuous action] is important: we must constantly appropriate power in this our union with the Lord [e.g., by daily reading God’s Word, prayer to the triune God only, and by being “filled with the Spirit,” especially in regular worship with the church (Ephesians 5:18-21; Hebrews 10:25)], since we need it all the time, lest at any time we be caught by the enemy.”  
...
  - b. “Christians dare never be weaklings. [Calvin adds, “As if he had said, “You have no right to reply, that you have not the ability;”<sup>7</sup> Lenski continues:] They [i.e., Christians] are joined to a Lord who is their inexhaustible source of power, who is himself filled with strength and might, the Stronger One who conquered the strong one (Luke 11:21, 22). By virtue of his new life the Christian has a certain amount of power, but this needs constant augmentation. We secure this increase through

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<sup>5</sup> For more explanation of God’s triune being in Christian theology that is carefully based on the Bible, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(PowerPoint\)](#).

<sup>6</sup> This paper contains many quotes from Lenski, but not all in their entirety. The divisions and subdivisions of what he wrote are my selections from his outstanding exegetical analyses in order to emphasize, explain, and apply what the Holy Spirit is saying through Paul to help us be prepared, witness more effectively in the public square, and accomplish the Lord’s purposes in so doing. Unless otherwise noted, the quotes are from R. C. H. Lenski, [The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians](#) (Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937). The specific quotes can be located easily by turning to the verse text, e.g., 6:10.

<sup>7</sup> John Calvin and William Pringle, [Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), p. 334.

our union with the Lord, our union with the operative strength of his possession of might.”

2. The original Greek in this verse also commands us to keep in mind and reveals that this strength comes to us in our relationship with the Lord.
  - a. The strength available to us is his strength. All the words in the prepositional phrase ἐν (*en*, **in** [preposition]) τῷ (*tō*, **the** [article]) κράτει (*kratei*, **might** [noun]) are in the dative case, the grammar thereby indicating the means—specifically in and by Whom—we access this might.
  - b. The Greek grammar immediately explains more. The next words, another prepositional phrase, τῆς (*tēs*, **of the**) ἰσχύος (*ischuos*, **strength**) αὐτοῦ (*autou*, **his**), are all in the genitive case, here indicating possession: the strength is Jesus’ strength. In order to not only survive—but thrive in and win—this spiritual war in which we are already engaged, we must do so in and with the superior power of Christ Jesus. (Cf. Ephesians 1:19-23)

Not insignificantly, the noun, *ischuos* (strength) is expressed in the feminine gender. This designation suggests that as the Second Person of the triune God, his almighty power—which he used to create the cosmos and anything else and by which he rules (John 1:1-3a; cf. Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2,8; Ephesians 1:22; 1 Corinthians 8:6; 15)—in addition to being thoroughly masculine, has qualities associated with the feminine gender, for example, tenderness, caring, nurture, compassion to name just a few. While such qualities are sometimes expressed by males, some more than others and some on certain occasions rather than regularly, these qualities are more typically characteristic of and practiced by females than by males.

Recall also that “God created man in his own image;...male (אָדָם [zākhār]) and female (אִשָּׁה [n<sup>e</sup>qēvāh]) he created them.” (Genesis 1:27) Then, God said “It is not good for the man [אָדָם (‘ādām, man [generic], humankind; Adam<sup>8</sup>)] to be alone. I will make a helper [עֵזֶר (‘ezer, help, helper)] [כְּנֶגְדּוֹ (kēnegdō, fit, suitable counterpart; literally: like his corresponding opposite)] for him.” (Genesis

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<sup>8</sup> The word, ‘ādām, used frequently throughout the Old Testament, typically refers to man generically: mankind. However, pertaining to the first human, it is also the Bible’s designation for his personal name; he is a real individual human being, not just a symbol or a figurative parabolic representative of humanity as in some unwarranted and unbiblical speculations. Yet, Adam’s name does have significance. It clearly signifies that he is our representative, and when he fell into deliberate disobedience, all human nature became sinful and corrupt. The mnemonic device devised by Benjamin Harris in *The New England Primer* (ca. 1688), “In Adam’s fall, we sinned all,” helps us remember an essential Biblical doctrine based on Romans 5:12. Most importantly, God’s willingness to let another man, who is also God’s only begotten, thus divine, Son—Jesus Christ—represent us in his perfect fulfillment of God’s required law and crediting his righteousness to those who believe (Romans 4), reveals God’s most wonderful, unparalleled, steadfast and sacrificial love. It is of further significance that the Hebrew word, אֲדָמָה (‘ādāmā), means ground, loose soil, dust. Recall Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Psalm 90:3.

2:18) When the man saw what God had done, “The man [אָדָם (‘*ādām*, Adam)], said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called “woman [אִשָּׁה (‘*ishshāh*, woman, wife, female)]” for she was taken out of man [אִישׁ (‘*ish*), a man, husband, and sometimes humankind].” (2:23)

Notice some very important characteristics of the woman ‘*ezer* (helper) *kěnegdô* (suitable) for the man. The denotation and context of the word *kěnegdô*, indicates that she is of the same substance with the man but with significant differences that supply what he lacks, and vice versa. Sound studies in biology provide vital additional findings about this great gift God has given us.

In an interview, OB/GYN physician and president of the American College of Pediatricians, Michelle Cretella, MD, explained more.

Chromosomes: women are XX, those are the sex chromosomes. Women have two Xs and men have an X and a Y. Those are genetic markers, they are genetic markers for female and male respectively — binary....

There are 6,500 genetic differences between men and women....

Women are not small men!<sup>9</sup>

Jesus is 100% divine and 100% human. One especially striking aspect of Jesus’ human *ischuos* (strength), indicated by the noun’s feminine gender, is seen in how he used his human, completely masculine, *ischuos*. His mighty male endurance enabled him to willingly sustain egregious and vicious suffering vicariously in our place. The feminine characteristics of Jesus’ *ischuos* appear in the loving, tender, self-giving, other-serving, caring, and nurturing of his people for our well-being, for equipping us to experience the abundant life in its fullest joy, and for successfully accomplishing our calling, such as honoring and glorifying God and fulfilling his redemptive and restorative purposes. In this passage, we are commanded to constantly (“be empowered” is in the present tense) be drawing upon, grounded in, and empowered by Jesus’ mighty servant *ischuos* in which we exhibit our expression of Jesus’ strength—sometimes suffering in the process—whereby we will serve the Lord well and with his help win the spiritual warfare that is driving the disharmony in families,<sup>10</sup> in the public square, and throughout the world.

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<sup>9</sup> John Ritchie, “[Dr. Cretella on Transgenderism: A Mental Illness Is Not a Civil Right](https://tfpstudentaction.org/blog/dr-michelle-cretella-on-transgender-ideology),” Tradition, Family, and Property (TFP) <https://tfpstudentaction.org/blog/dr-michelle-cretella-on-transgender-ideology> (Accessed 7/15/21)

<sup>10</sup> We must always remember and teach first and foremost that Jesus Christ is 100% divine as well as being 100% human and that he is our only Lord and Savior, the Second Person of the triune God, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, three distinct divine Beings who share one substance. (Hebrews 1:3\*) At the same time, in his human nature, Jesus is a perfect male role model for the many young (and older) boys and men who have grown up in a home with no human father—often with no good father figure at all—and are typically confused and unaware of how a male is to develop into manhood and employ his strength in a loving manner in a relationship with other people and, most importantly, with the one true triune God. Many desperate single mothers have pleaded with me to

As I am concluding my writing of this exegesis, the news is providing an example of how Christians implement the feminine dimension of the strength of Christ's might with a powerful witness to Jesus in the public square. Our brothers and sisters in Christ in Iran are doing so superbly, as they care for Muslims seriously injured and rendered homeless in the bombing of the Iranian Regime's missile sites.

American Family News reporter, Steve Jordahl filed this report describing how Christians in Iran are demonstrating such a strong witness for Christ Jesus in extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances, and how the Lord is using their witness to produce truly remarkable results in implementing his Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20)

When the Iranians sensed weakness in the Islamic leadership of the country in January [2026], they flooded the streets to peacefully protest their government. It did not go well for them as it's thought that about 30,000 protesters were slaughtered in the streets of Tehran and other Iranian cities.

Hormoz Shariat of Iran Alive Ministries claims that the massacre of tens of thousands had spiritual roots. An influential Imam used the Quran to justify it...they filled the prisons with the protesters and kept on killing them.

"The government has continued to kill. They arrested 100,000 prisoners. Prisoner means they're going to be tortured and executed," informs Shariat.

But he says the underground church responded in a very New Testament way. They went out in the protests, not to demonstrate, but to save lives.

"Those who are wounded, they told them, 'Hey, bring them home, into your home, take care of them because if they go to the hospital, they will be shot.' Christians did it," states Shariat.

And God used them.

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help them connect their sons with Christlike men who can spend time with their sons and help them learn how to develop into manhood productively and please God. The church can uniquely help, but most of all, these mothers and others will do best to help their sons (and of course daughters) develop a relationship with, love for—and a willingness to obey—Jesus (e.g., John 14:21), which includes daily study of the Bible that shows Jesus lived and loved with strength. \*For more on the Trinity, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(PowerPoint\)](#) and [Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Divine and Human, As Revealed in John 3:16 and Hebrews 1:3](#).

“So many testimonies of Muslims who were helped by Christians, taken into their homes, helped with their wounds, brought a doctor and nurse, helped them and they became Christians,” says Shariat....

...The majority of Iranians do not want to do anything with Islam,” informs Shariat.

...despite the potentially high cost<sup>11</sup> of following Christ in that repressive regime, newfound faith...is sticking.

“They’ve become a Christian by seeing Jesus. Their lives are in danger, but they cannot deny Jesus,” states Shariat.<sup>12</sup>

### **Now for two vital caveats:**

- 1) None of the above pertaining to the Greek feminine gender of Jesus’ *ischuos*, should ever be used to try to make God in any way female, as many feminists, misguided theologians and pastors, and pagan religions are advocating and doing. As much as he greatly loves the female sex he created in his image, as much as he loves males, God never refers to himself as female; the pronouns for God throughout the whole Bible are all masculine, and the nouns, God and Lord are all masculine (Old Testament: אֱלֹהִים [’*ēlōhīm*, God] and יְהוָה [’*yehwāh*, Yahweh, the LORD] and New Testament Greek: θεός [*theos*, God] and κύριος [*kurios*, Lord]). However, that reality does not mean we ignore many characteristics he has given to females as symbolizing and indicating how he relates to people who bear his image and how he wills we function accordingly.
- 2) Constantly be alert (6:18) for the many Muslims who have and are coming into the United States and other countries on a mission to carry out the teaching of the Qur’an, which commands Muslims to subject the whole world to the domination of Islam, which Muhammad organized primarily as a political and governmental system, and he later added the religious component. These Muslims are coming into our country with no desire to assimilate into our culture and its Biblically-based philosophy of government; they have a plan to take over the country from within; and these Muslims are not willing to receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They plan to resist by any means. For some that means terrorism!

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<sup>11</sup> Yes; it is a high cost. The penalty for apostasy in Islam is execution. Furthermore, look at who else is to be killed for not believing in Islam, if Muslims become the majority and able to institute Sharia law; see [“Is Islam Really a Religion of Peace? The Death Penalty in the Qur’an, the Hadith, and the Sira \(Excerpts from Articles by TheReligionofPeace.com\).”](#)

<sup>12</sup> Steve Jordahl, “Christianity grows in Iran despite massacres and danger from Islamic regime,” March 6, 2026, American Family News <https://afn.net/church-faith/2026/03/06/christianity-grows-in-iran-despite-massacres-and-danger-from-islamic-regime/?vcrmeid=zS7nawHaLEWQjBN5j1m1uQ&vcrmiid=q2y47qbbOEuHFQHVqmo0Yw> (Accessed 03/09/2026)

However, that does not mean we should ignore them or mistreat them. Rather, this passage in Ephesians 6:10-22 guides us—believers in and followers of the only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—to do the following:

- a) Recognize who the real enemy is: Satan and the demons (6:11-13).
- b) Always being on guard, alert, prepared for any response needed, and praying for all our fellow believers in Jesus Christ. (6:13-18, *et al.*)
- c) Always remember and pray to the Holy Spirit, to help us discern which of the Muslims we engage in the public square are most likely to be receptive to hearing about and seeing lived out the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need God’s help to distinguish between those who will believe in Christ Jesus and be saved and those who are hardened and here for carrying out the Islamic mandate to take over this country and install Sharia law with all its anti-Christ, including violent, regulations.

At the same time, we need to remember and continue praying to the Holy Spirit, who alone can open the heart and mind and enable anyone to believe. We also recall God’s Word that “no one say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” (6:18; 1 Corinthians 12:3)

- d) Always be “speaking the truth in love.” (4:15; 6:14-15)
- e) We need to be vigilant in all matters. Satan has followers from many other religions (1 Corinthians 10:20, *et al.*) as well as atheists and agnostics. We must keep in mind that Christ has called us to prepare for witnessing to them also.

These realities take the pressure off us. All the Lord is commanding us to do is to be equipping ourselves for the spiritual war all around us, “speaking the truth in love,” and expressing that love obediently in accord with his Word, and leave the rest to him.

- c. The New Testament Greek grammar further emphasizes the meaning of this verse. Another of the ways the Greek indicates emphasis is by putting the word to be emphasized either first or last in the sentence or in a clause. In the Greek, the last words of the sentence are the concluding phrase, “in the strength of his might,” (ESV) the Greek grammatical syntax is written: “of the strength his.” This wording clearly emphasizes the strength is Jesus’ possession. Again, we must be sure we are entering the fray with Jesus and relying on his omnipotent strength, which he provides for his faithful believers and followers, especially as we pray. As we read in the next verses, we are going up against the devil and his demon followers; they can do great harm to humans who are trying to do function on their own, *but they are no match for Jesus!*

Recall what the seven sons of the Jewish high priest, Sceva, experienced when they tried to exorcise demons by simply saying what Paul said, invoking the name of the Lord Jesus, “whom Paul preaches,” over those who were possessed by evil spirits. Not having the believing relationship with Christ as does Paul, Sceva’s sons did not have the Lord’s protection and power. The result was disastrous: “One day the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.” (Acts 19:13-16)

The sons of Sceva had no relationship with Jesus, and simply using his name without believing and obeying—thus having no relationship with the Lord—did not and does not benefit. On the contrary, when we—Jesus’ believers and followers—engage the public square in his name and “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), and doing so with the full armor of God, thus demonstrating we are different from—in but not part of—the world, he protects and empowers us to be effective for him and ultimately to win the battle.

**6:11 “Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”**

1. The Greek shows the emphasis is on the verb, “Put on.” In addition, the verb is in the imperative mood—a **command**—from God. Therefore, we don’t take it lightly; in fact, we take it very seriously. It’s in the aorist (a past) tense, indicating one decisive act, a single action: the full armor is on and it stays on! As Greek scholar Lenski points out in his commentary on this verse: in Paul’s use of the emphatic he’s saying, “Put it on, put it on!”<sup>13</sup>
  - a. This **no** “follow your heart,” if you feel like it, suggestion, or a hope that you can fit it into your busy schedule by next Wednesday if possible, it needs to be already done (aorist—a past—tense). The text is indicating that if you haven’t already put the armor on, get it on: no later than any time yesterday afternoon!
  - b. Put on your armor—all of it: don’t leave anything off—and take all your arsenal; without it all, that vulnerability could be fatal. The Greek word for armor is πανοπλία (*panoplia*, the basis of our word panoply): the whole (παν [*pan* = all]) armor—or in the NIV—the full armor.
2. Thus, equipped with this armor, the Ephesians—and we also—will be powerful, as v. 10 states. Lenski continues, “The imagery is that of a Roman hoplite (‘hăp-līt), a ‘man of arms,’ the heavy-armed legionary, not the light-armed fighter of the auxiliary contingent who was armed only with the bow. This is a picture of a soldier of the line

<sup>13</sup> Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#), p. 657.

[an infantryman]. These were the dependence of Rome and formed her invincible legions by which she had conquered the world and held it.”<sup>14</sup>

3. We need to be equipped with all the armor so we can stand against the schemes of Satan. The Greek word translated “schemes” is instructive: the Holy Spirit led Paul to use the word, μεθοδεΐα (*methodeia*), which denotes methodical schemes that are crafty, cunningly planned, and deceitful procedures. Satan has put a lot of wicked thought into how to battle against and try to defeat us. (Cf. Ephesians 4:14-15)
  - a. Accordingly, we need to keep in mind Jesus revealed that the head of our opposition is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44) We, and all those with us, must be continually watchful for deception, in order to not be taken in, side tracked, or defeated.
  - b. The text is saying that the devil has a very strategic battle plan, and what I’m concerned about is that many, if not most, of those on our side—too many church members and, even more concerning, many who claim to be Christians but are not part of a church—*don’t even know this war is going on, much less that they’re in the middle of it, and that they have little or no armor on!*

*Furthermore, too many of those who do know they are in a war, don’t know who the real enemy is.*

- 1) Some say the enemy is China, others say Russia, Democrats, Republicans, news media, teachers’ unions, LGBTQ+ and a host of others. And, not everyone in some of these groups is the enemy. But those who are, are only the “auxiliary contingent armed only with bows.” The “big guy” behind the visible enemy—as Ephesians 6 reveals—is Satan. But he’s tiny contrasted with God!
  - And here we have another challenge: Too many people don’t even believe Satan is a real being. Talk about being in denial!! And talk about being vulnerable!
- 2) And there’s more we have to teach. This why a group of us began a ministry called Christians Engaging the Public Square (CEPS) in our local church. From Day One we’ve emphasized that CEPS is an educational ministry—to be sure, a complete educational ministry—one that follows through and puts into practice what we read in God’s Word. We have to help people see that they’re not only in a war, but—contrary to our deceptive chief opponent and his lies—they’re in the middle of a war zone without any kind of a plan.
  - a) But we do have a plan—it’s actually God’s plan—and we just need to follow it. Our CEPS team meets regularly, and we began by listing several issues—local, county, state, and some nationally—that have Biblical implications and

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<sup>14</sup> Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#), p. 657.

that we should monitor as a group and address as God leads us, individually and as a group.

- 1- We discussed how we can address them *as individuals*, e.g., writing letters to the editor of the local newspaper; calling in on the newspaper's anonymous phone line and leaving messages that the paper publishes; calling into radio talk shows; posting messages on social media; being sure to vote and to urge others to register and vote from an informed Biblical perspective; and many more. Accordingly, we begin each of our meetings by studying a passage of God's Word that applies to one of the issues on our list and in particular for the agenda for that day's meeting, and discussing applications of the passage to that issue.
  - 2- To address issues *as a group*, we prioritized which ones we could and should engage in corporate ministries. We organized several subgroups—task forces—to plan and produce programs and facilitate other ways to help church people to become aware of the spiritual aspects of issues in the public square and how we can respond most effectively in, with, and for the Lord according to his Word.
  - 3- We understand our purpose as educational. CEPS is an educational ministry, designed to inform in the light of God's Word, and to do so "speaking the truth in love." (Ephesians 4:15) We engage these issues from a Biblical—not a political—perspective. Certain political parties have positions on some of these issues, but we speak from God's Word and in the name of Jesus Christ on these matters (what in historic Christian theology has been called God's Special Revelation), and we draw on sound science (what in Christian theology is a part of God's General Revelation [cf. Romans 1:18-32]). Here we have to help people distinguish between careful scientific research that is consistent with and illustrates the teachings of the Bible, and false science that has manipulated the scientific method to produce bogus "findings" the sponsor of the study is paying to have the "study" produce.<sup>15</sup>
- b) So let's pray that God guides us as we take the next steps in formulating and implementing our plan for accomplishing the task we've chosen as our current priority.

**6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."**

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<sup>15</sup> See, e.g., "[Science: Distinguishing Between Sound and Flawed Science](#)" and "[Homosexuality/LGBTQ+: An Abbreviated Fact Sheet for Speaking the Truth in Love.](#)" For further information see [From Acorn to Oak 12](#) and also our CEPS website: <https://publicsquarechristians.org>.

1. Significantly, when Paul says “our struggle is not against flesh and blood,” he is here using a powerful, a forceful, figure of speech to make and emphasize the essential and most important point. To properly understand this passage, we must recognize the figure: he’s not saying that the humans opposing us are to be viewed as a nonentity or of little or no consequence and to be ignored.
  - a. The figure he is likely using here is a type of understatement, or two aspects of understatement, typically called a litotes or meiosis; both are apparent in this verse. A litotes is “a negative statement...used to declare an affirmative truth. A milder form [meiosis] is...where simple understatement heightens the action which is being described.” The literary device is downplaying the lesser problem to draw attention to the much bigger—and invisible—problem.<sup>16</sup> Litotes is from the Greek *litotēs*, from *litos*, simple. Meiosis is derived from the Greek, *meiosis*, diminution, < *meioun* to diminish, < *meiōn* less.
  - b. Knowing we Christians are well aware of the human enemies confronting us, Paul puts that awareness into this type of understatement to forcefully draw our attention to and emphasize the greater enemy behind the enemy we can see. The Holy Spirit is revealing to Paul—and through him to us—**the real cause of our struggle: Satan and his demons.**
2. *However*, that is not to say that our struggle doesn’t involve the humans doing the evil that Satan and the demonic forces following him are motivating them to do, which we also need to keep in mind. Surely, our struggle includes many—thanks be to God not all—but many school personnel, medical professionals, attorneys, politicians, activists, even pastors, and others who affirm allowing the removal of the healthy sex organs of confused children and allow into female restrooms, lockers, and showers biological males who have 15 times the testosterone-producing sex drive of any biological female, even after she has been taking testosterone for a long time, thereby endangering vulnerable girls and women whom we—especially and most of all God—love and care for and whom he has charged us with the responsibility to protect.
3. But the emphasis here is the Holy Spirit’s revelation of really and exactly who and what we are up against, and He is telling us how to do so successfully. Paul is not saying these people are not part of our struggle—he and we know that: we can see them—but to draw our attention to and emphasize the importance of being equipped to overcome the mightier enemy we cannot see, Paul uses this valuable literary device to alert us to the reality we need to engage.

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<sup>16</sup> A. Berkeley Mickelsen, *Interpreting the Bible*, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1963, p. 193.

4. This also is why we can enter the public square “speaking the truth in love” (4:15) and treating other human beings kindly. Thereby engaging them in Christlike love, disarms any legitimate accusation of being hateful. Far to the contrary, we feel sorry for and want to help those who are doing so much harm to others and who want nothing to do with God and his salt and light bearers. Let’s look at some key statements in this powerful verse.
  - a. Lenski begins his comments on this verse by saying, “This [identification of the real enemy] is reason enough for putting on the panoply [i.e., all the armor] of God and never trusting to “our own unaided strength” or “might of ours.” Paul lets the whole army of the devil parade before our eyes. This is the tremendous power we face, against this we must stand victorious. Equipped with God’s armor, we can.”<sup>17</sup>

After an initial statement as to what we’re not against merely (as the Greek has: wrestling against “blood and flesh”), Paul strongly identifies the major opponent we’re up against. Carefully consider the following selected quotes from Lenski, to which I’ve added a few observations of my own.

After the negative we now have the positive, and *πρός* (meaning against) is repeated four times, thus intensifying the [four] appositional designations.

...and [in which Paul] notes that this is something vastly worse than a wrestling match... [and] fixes the Greek’s mind upon the array of appositional phrases that unroll the power of the devil’s army. That, too, is why Paul sets these four *πρός* [against] over against the one lone *πρός* [against].

As was the case in 1:21 and in 3:10, Paul is not enumerating different classes of demon warriors. These phrases are appositions: each one parades the entire demon army before our eyes. Paul gives us four views of it, four for the sake of completeness. [The number 4 sometimes symbolizes and refers to the earth—north, south, east, west—indicating the whole earth.] We cannot use the abstract plural “rules”; as in 3:10, our best word is “principalities.” Every demon has his “rule” or domain in which he exercises his “authority.” Paul then gives them their *ὄνομα* [name] (1:21), they are “the world tyrants of this darkness,” and then still more significantly he terms them “the spiritual (forces) of the wickedness in the heavenly places,” i. e., of the supermundane wickedness. The two abstract designations are thus defined by concrete personal names or titles.

“World tyrants” is better than “world rulers,” for *κράτος* [ruler] in the compound noun contains the idea of exerting strength and utter hardness and

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<sup>17</sup>Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#), p. 658.

thus acting like the worst tyrant. Not in a corner but in the whole world these have their vast domain. “Of this darkness” (not merely “of darkness”) points to the present spiritual world darkness to which these world tyrants belong. The contrast is “the outer darkness” where there is only wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12) in everlasting doom. Here again “the darkness” is not the mere absence of light; it is the absolute antagonism to light and thus denotes the fearful power that is hostile to God who is “the light” and whose are “the children of light” (5:8). This designation is as horrible as the next. From “this darkness” and the dominion of these “world tyrants” Christ has delivered us; hence their war is waged in order again to subjugate us under their tyranny.

...But this is true that, like all the other terms, “the spiritual forces,” since they are spiritual, bring into relief their difference from “blood and flesh,” which are only physical (men). That is why here, too, the genitive must be added (as in the preceding designation): “of the wickedness in the heavenly places,” i. e., belonging not to wickedness in general but to this particular wickedness. This wickedness is a power like “this darkness.” It has produced all the wickedness on earth. We war also against the latter, but here Paul describes the worst, that which produced the latter, that which is thus more terrible than the other.

As for the location, the heavenly realms (Greek “the heavenlies”)...the meaning of the phrase is determined by its context, and here the context is not God and the good angels (as in 1:3, 20; 3:10), not Christians (2:6), but demons.... The phrase must here designate “the wickedness” as being located in the supermundane world and thus being distinguished from the wickedness found in men here below on the earth. Paul is describing the demons as they now are; hence we hesitate to accept the idea that he describes this wickedness as it first originated in heaven when Satan and his adherents fell and were cast out.<sup>18</sup>

- b. Why is this so important? This my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ is right where the public square is plunked down. This is why when we enter the square we need to do so with our eyes wide open.
- c. And we do so without any tinge of fear. We must remember ourselves and remind others that God and Satan are **NOT** peers! Satan is less than a peanut contrasted with God, who loves us, is sovereign, and everywhere present.

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<sup>18</sup> Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, pp. 659–662. I will not continue to cite this source after each quote from Lenski. All the quotes are from this source and can be located easily by turning to the verse text, e.g., 6:13.

- d. And we do so—especially in the light of Sunday’s great victory celebration still ringing in our hearts and minds (whether last Sunday was Big Easter or one of the 51 Little Easters [the historic Christian church’s designation of every Sunday worship as Easter, or better: Resurrection Day])—with the awareness that our risen and reigning Lord and Savior Jesus Christ has conquered Satan (the reason we read and recite that “he descended into hell” on Holy Saturday—to announce that victory<sup>19</sup>). Let us also recall the powerful words Jesus told us in John 16:33,
- “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome [νενίκηκα (*nenikēka*). I have conquered.] the world.”

**6:13** “**Therefore** [Greek: because of this (the battle we’re in against the demons)] **put on** [Greek, ESV, NASB, NRSV: take up] **the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand** [Greek, ESV, KJV, NRSV: withstand; Greek, NASB: resist the evil day] **your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.**”

1. Beginning in verse 11 we saw the verb “stand.” Now here are two more: “withstand” and “stand.”
  - a. The number three is significant in Scripture: it is a spiritual number. Three, e.g., reminds us of our—and the only—triune God. Also, the number three in the Hebrew grammar and mentality, which many of Paul’s readers readily understood, indicates and emphasizes the superlative: e.g., most and greatest.
  - b. All three verbs are infinitives (to stand, to withstand) and, *very significantly*, they are all in the aorist (i.e., a Greek past) tense and in the active voice. The past tense powerfully informs us—and emphasizes—that it is God’s will for us that we do this *so fast it’s already done*.
  - c. This reminds me of a TV show many years ago where a drill sergeant is shouting out orders, and he says, “And I want this done immediately...if not sooner!” This is a good illustration of the urgency and ready responsiveness God is commanding us to do.
  - d. Also, the verbs—all three—are in the active voice, indicating we are to do the acting, not be acted upon. *Thus, we hear the intensity of doing it so fast it’s already done. And God is commanding us to engage in these actions, not to sit on the sidelines and “let George do it.”*

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<sup>19</sup> For more information on Jesus descending into hell to announce his victory over Satan and Jesus’ accomplishment of God’s plan of redemption and restoration of his creation, see “[Easter—Biblical Significance of Easter Signs and Symbols \(PowerPoint\)](#)” and “[Easter—Biblical Meaning of Easter Signs and Symbols: Commentary on the PowerPoint Slides.](#)”

- e. Let's remember—and help others know and remember—this command, especially in this time when so few want to accept responsibility or “be bothered.”
  - f. And not only is this a command, it is repeated. The repetition pointedly adds great emphasis, e.g., “This is exceedingly important, and don't forget it!” Also, whenever Paul repeats he adds new information with it.
2. “put on the full armor”
- a. “put on” (Greek: ἀναλάβετε [*analabete*], **take up**)
    - 1) The verb, put on, is in the imperative mood: a command.
    - 2) The verb is in the aorist tense: a Greek past tense and repeated, showing God's emphasis on how vitally important this equipping of ourselves is to him—*do it so fast it can be referred to as already done*—**for it is we, whom he has called and is equipping us to do what he first promised in Genesis 3:15 immediately after Adam and Eve fell so destructively and then throughout the Bible. We must not fail to engage and be the well-equipped agents through whom God will defeat Satan and his demonic principalities and powers and bring the Good News of Christ's redemption to every nation, tribe, people and tongue. (Revelation 7:9)**

**We are God's covenant people—the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:3, et al.)—through whom he is working to accomplish the fulfillment of his redemptive purposes. We must not fail him!**
    - 3) Again, the verb is in the active voice. We engage; we're not here to watch.
  - b. “the full armor” (Greek: πανοπλίαν [*panoplian*])
    - 1) Lenski observes, “In v. 11 there is stated what we are to stand against, ‘the expert methods of the devil.’ Now we are told when and how to stand victorious.”
    - 2) We need the full armor in order to not enter the public square unsuited for the battle when Satan unleashes his forces upon us. This is precisely what occurs when we Christians are attacked by our opponents—God's opponents—and **when the Christians are ill-equipped they cowardly cave. This does not serve God well and accomplish what he has called us to do.**
    - 3) We have to engage the battle (a) having our purpose clearly in mind and (b) being well equipped, including knowing God is with us—Immanuel—and we will be victorious: NO backing down. We speak the truth in love and God takes over, but always with us.

3. “to withstand” (Greek: ἀντιστῆναι [*antistēnai*])

The aorist (a past tense) indicates successfully withstanding. We are assured we will be successful if we follow what the Holy Spirit is commanding us to do in this passage.

4. “in the day of evil” (Greek for evil: πονηρα [*ponēra*], painful, serious, grievous, bad, wicked, evil, depraved. Sound familiar?)
- a. This “day of evil” is not the last battle at the end of the world, or the day we die (which for Christians will be a day of glory), or our whole lives here on earth in this phase of life.
  - b. Again, I like Lenski’s explanation of what day of evil means. After giving reasons why these other thoughts are not what Paul meant, he writes that here “Paul has in mind the critical and decisive day which comes for each one of us, sometimes but once, again repeatedly, in which Satan pounces upon us with all his forces [including at times when we engage the public square]. Then we must ‘be able or powerful (the same verb that was used in vss. 10, 11) to withstand’ without yielding to a single assault.”
  - c. Thereby, obeying the imperatives, and with God’s help, we will stand, obey, and be victorious.

**6:14 “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,”**

1. In verse 11 and—again, for obvious emphasis—verse 13, the Holy Spirit led the apostle Paul to write “put on the full armor of God.” In verse 11 he says “so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” In verse 13, he says “put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” God’s Word here has some important dimensions that require a careful look for us to serve him most effectively in the public square—and everywhere else.
  - a. The repetition is a classic literary (and common communication) device to indicate exceptional importance.
  - b. We see here an application of a literary technique called parallelism, which teaches a concept in two ways right next to each other. Parallelism, of which there are several types, is one of the main features of Hebrew poetry, e.g., in the Psalms and Proverbs but also elsewhere in the Bible. Here in 6:14, even though in a prose passage, Paul uses an application of the form called synonymous parallelism, where a statement is made and shortly after it a similar and sometimes almost identical expression follows that reinforces and sometimes serves as a miniature commentary on the preceding thought. Occasionally, as here, a few additional words in the second statement provide a bit more information. In verse 11 Paul

says “so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes” and in verse 13 he says more about the same subject: “so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand [that is, not fall, not fail, indeed rather to be victorious.”

Similarly, in these same two verses are two identical statements: (1) “put on the full armor of God,” (v. 11) and “put on the full [don’t leave anything off—no part missing—where the enemy’s evil bullets, including ‘bullet points,’ could pierce our hearts and minds] armor of God” (v. 13), and (2) “take your stand” (v. 11), then “to stand,” and “to stand.” (v. 13) Paul uses strong literary tools—especially when used by the Holy Spirit—for emphasizing the importance of the message.

Does this sound familiar? Do you remember when you were a child your mother said to you, “How many times have I told you...!” If you are a parent, you quite likely have said the same or a similar comment to your child(ren). Thus, we see God saying to us, his children, more than once what is very important to him that he expects us to do.

2. Now, in verse 14, Paul begins to list all—the “full”—components that armor. The Holy Spirit guided him to emphasize the importance of having on the full armor in three ways.
  - a. His first word is “stand.” Recall that a way in the Greek—and Hebrew—to indicate emphasis, importance, is to place the word first or last in a sentence or a clause.
  - b. Paul, relating to the Old Testament Hebrew way of communicating the superlative (e.g., most, greatest), employs a three-fold repetition, thus emphasizing importance. This is the third use of “stand” (all with the same root) within two verses, signifying a very important and a victorious stand.
  - c. He also emphasizes the first word, the verb, in verse 14 (στῆτε [*stēte*] < ἵστημι [*histēmi*], stand, stand firm, stand immovable, withstand, endure, persevere, establish, set), by his choice of both the mood and the tense of that verb. The mood of *stēte* (stand) is an imperative (a command) AND, here we go again, it’s in the orist (i.e., a Greek past) tense and in the active voice. The past tense powerfully informs us—and emphasizes—that it is God’s will for us—and his command—that we take this action ***so fast it’s already done. It’s that urgent!***
    - 1) The orist active even means more: **it is not ingressive**, i.e., beginning, entering, thinking about, only mentally committing to, or even just getting a start; **it is constative**—a verb form that expresses past completed and also continuous action—here indicating standing once for all. Here we have another example of the major Biblical motif, or theme, of the unity of word and deed. The great Greek scholar, Lenski, adds, “That is why the relative

clause in v. 16 has the future tense, [δυνήσεσθε (*dunēsesthe*), ‘you will be able....’”

- 2) This is the way we can engage the public square, and all other venues (e.g., in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our workplaces), with authority—authority from God<sup>20</sup>—and thereby with great courage, remembering: who we are (God’s called children); our calling and command from God; and his promise that he will always be with us (Joshua 1:5 [Hebrews 13:5], Matthew 28:18-20 *et al.*; and Luke 12:12 [cf. Mark 13:11]). Therefore, we have **no fear**; we have almighty God with us to enable us to overcome the onslaught of the demonic opposition, and remain standing for the next round, and with much joy! Recall Jesus words in Matthew 5:11-12; Luke 6:22-23; and 1 Peter 4:14, *et al.* Furthermore, our joy will come in various ways until the Lord calls us home in our own personal eschaton (the end of this phase of our lives here on earth) and in the Biblical corporate eschaton, the end of this age, when he returns in his second coming for his final judgment and to establish the new heaven and the new earth, consummating the restoration of God’s original creation with even more in addition.
3. Notice next, as Lenski observes, that Paul lists seven pieces of armor that we need. Seven is the Biblical number that symbolizes and signifies completeness and perfection; it is the unity of the divine (**3**: [three in one]) + the human, earthly (**4**: [North, South, East, and West] = **7**), also calling to mind the many places throughout the Bible in which the Lord says, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Joshua 1:5, Hebrews 13:5) and “surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

The seven necessary pieces of armor are: truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, the faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer. Let us take a brief look here, at the first two.

- a. Notice which piece of armor the Apostle Paul mentions first: “the belt of **truth** buckled around your waist.” Now give careful thought to what the Holy Spirit led Paul to say about the belt of truth.
  - 1) The verb is an aorist (a past tense) participle—better translated “having buckled—meaning being firmly girded with **the** truth (cf. John 14:6) precedes and provides one reason why we can stand.
  - 2) The verb is in the middle voice, indicating that the Christian buckles his or her own belt—with God’s help of course—but we are responsible to do it. God expects us to be actively preparing ourselves for the battle.

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<sup>20</sup> See also 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

- 3) Why? This is our calling, our vocation, our mission. It is our *raison d'être*, our primary reason for being: to serve God as his agents of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)
- a) From eternity, and specifically ever since God first announced his plan of redemption immediately after Adam and Eve's fall (Genesis 3:15), and many times throughout the Bible, notably in the establishment of the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:7-21; 1 Kings 9:1-9; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Romans 4; Galatians 3:26-29; Matthew 28:18-20; *et al.*), God revealed that his plan of redemption and restoration of his beautiful and perfect creation would be accomplished through Abraham's descendants through Isaac (Genesis 17:21), out of whom would come the Messiah (Hebrew), i.e., the Christ (Greek). God's Word in the Old Testament further reveals that the coming Messiah would establish a new<sup>21</sup> covenant (i.e., a renewed covenant [Jeremiah 31:31-34; Luke 22:20 *et al.*]—which the New Testament reveals He Did—containing vital new dimensions) that would include the Messiah/Christ's suffering servanthood (Isaiah 53, *et al.*), which would accomplish God's wonderful purpose.
  - b) Furthermore, the Christ's believers and followers—including us who, through faith in Christ, are Abraham's descendants (Romans 4; Galatians 3:26-29)—would need to firmly equip themselves—beginning with the truth. This essential basis is a prerequisite in order to establish credibility for our explanation of the Gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ, that enables us to be the people God would equip to reach the whole world with the Good News of his gracious offer of redemption in and through Christ Jesus.
  - c) The people all over the world to whom the Lord wants us to proclaim the Gospel, disciple, and baptize (Matthew 28:18-20), need to see us not only using words, but they need to see our words verified by our deeds that are true by virtue of their being Christlike. The world watches us carefully to see if we are genuine believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus and not the false prophets Jesus said would be coming claiming to be him or one of his followers but are really followers of Satan and his demons. (Matthew 7:15ff.; Mark 13:22)

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<sup>21</sup> The Greek word for new in the term, new covenant, in the Septuagint (250 B. C. Greek translation of the Old Testament Hebrew of, e.g., Jeremiah 31:31ff.) and in the New Testament, e.g., Luke 22:20, clearly indicates that the new covenant is not brand new, but renewed, i.e., built on the Abrahamic covenant and renewed in Christ Jesus. For further information on, including an explanation of, the new covenant compared and contrasted with the covenant with Abraham, and the explanation of the Greek terms, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(PowerPoint\)](#). See also [Bible Digest PowerPoint Presentation](#).

- d) We must have clearly in mind—and be able to explain—the truth. What is the truth? That is the question people have been asking ever since Adam and Eve believed Satan, whom Jesus revealed as the “father of lies.” (John 8:44) With the proliferation of lies today, people long to hear the truth, for they are finding it harder and harder to hear in the public square, including in all religions outside Christianity (e.g., 2 Corinthians 10:20; Isaiah 44:6; John 8:44; 14:6), but also, very lamentably, such falsehood is in some Christian churches that replace Biblical correctness with “political correctness.” (Romans 12:1-2) Instead of preaching the truth in order to transform the world, they are loving the world and allowing the world to lead them astray. (2 Timothy 4:2-4)
- e) So what is truth? It is the divine, saving truth, of the Lord Jesus Christ. We begin with and always point to Jesus Christ, who said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)
- f) Contrary to contemporary postmodernism, with its philosophical disavowal of any objective criterion for discerning truth, we know and proclaim Christ Jesus and his Word—spoken and modeled in love—the criterion of truth that people will see in us (1 Peter 2:9-12) with the help of the Holy Spirit.
- g) In the United States, we must thank our heavenly Father for guiding our nation’s Founders and subsequent leaders of our country so that they recognized, formed, and established our government as being under God. We know, and are called to help others know the triune God and our accountability to him, and the important applications—“the apps for that”—in the public square.
- 1- The United States has a vertical criterion as our standard of reference (“under God,” as we reaffirm every time we recite our nation’s *Pledge of Allegiance*), contrary to a horizontal norm for a standard of reference (where the “norm,” the reference point for decision-making, is the aggregate of opinions of a given populace or an entity thereof, all perceived as functioning on the same level, as “equals”). Even looking at the matter from a solely human perspective, one can easily see a fatal flaw in the norm-based standard, viz., that it is an aspect of the logical fallacy called *Argumentum ad Populum*, arguing by appealing to the people and arousing their passions. A key fact is that, contrary to the old saying, “50,000,000 Frenchmen can’t be wrong,” is that they obviously can be wrong, just as 50,000,000 Americans can be wrong: indeed, that many and more have been and are.<sup>22</sup> This is part

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<sup>22</sup> For more on this logical fallacy, see Edward D. Seely, “[Logic: A Primer on Common Logical Fallacies](#).”

of why we need a vertical criterion, and the criterion has to be the triune God.

God, including his Word and Spirit, is our criterion. In our *Pledge of Allegiance*, we forthrightly state that we are “one nation under God,” which means that we recognize we are accountable to him and that life will go better by following his Word and his will which is superior to us and divinely revealed in the Bible, upon which our nation’s Founders formed their/our philosophy of government.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the Bible all points to and explains, Jesus Christ, who is the truth, thus supplying the standard by which we can know the truth and have a standard for discerning right from wrong. Thus, we have a standard that, by definition, isn’t possible in postmodernism. Historically, when our government leaders have been sworn into office, they have placed their left hand on the Bible and raised their right hand to testify they will adhere to the requirements of their office. Many still do take their oath of office with their hand on the Bible and conclude their oath with the words, “So help me, God.”

2- Contrary to those who embrace a postmodern world view, our country is not “up for grabs” philosophically, spiritually, or morally. As those of us who have eyes to see and ears to hear readily observe, when people ignore God and his will, there is no way to adjudicate moral issues. In this postmodern age and its illogical thinking (e.g., committing the logical fallacy of violating the law of non-contradiction [maintaining that someone holding to X and someone else holding to non-X can consider themselves both right at the same time] and the naturalistic fallacy [trying to reason from “is” to “ought”]), the criterion for discerning right and wrong is not considered...to the detriment and danger of society, indeed of the whole nation.<sup>24</sup> [John Adams](#) who, writing to the Massachusetts Militia, said, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”<sup>25</sup> When the Founders used the word, “religion,” they meant Christianity, as their documents indicate clearly.

h) All this information—most of all that from God’s Word—is one reason why CEPS is an educational ministry—and education is always primarily for function—using what we have learned and helping others to also

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<sup>23</sup> Donald S. Lutz, *The Origins of American Constitutionalism* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: State University Press, 1988), as cited in David Barton, *America’s Godly Heritage* (Aledo, Texas: WallBuilder Press, 1993), pp. 23-24.

<sup>24</sup> For more information on logical fallacies, see “[Logic: A Primer on Common Logical Fallacies](#).”

<sup>25</sup> John Adams, “From John Adams to Massachusetts Militia, 11 October 1798,” <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-3102> (Accessed 03/19/26)

benefit: for function, not for status, not for learning something and doing nothing with what we know.

- b. Then the apostle Paul mentions “the breastplate of **righteousness**.” This righteousness also points to Jesus Christ and our relationship with him, which gives us the power to stand and to succeed for him. Righteousness is an effect of the truth in Christ.
- 1) Again, the verb is an aorist (a past tense) participle—better translated “having put on the breastplate”—meaning it precedes and provides one more reason why we can stand. The verb is in the **middle voice**, indicating that the Christian buckles his or her own belt—with God’s help of course—but **we are responsible to do it**. God expects us to be actively preparing ourselves for the battle.
  - 2) How do we obtain this righteousness? In his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul explains that our righteousness comes to us through faith in Christ Jesus, whereby God credits Jesus’ righteousness to us by our faith in him. (Romans 4:18-25) This breastplate of righteousness protects vital organs, in particular our heart (which in Biblical thinking includes the mind). As Lenski says, “The heart of the Word makes our heart invulnerable against Satan.”
  - 3) We thus enter the battle against evil with confidence, since it is Christ’s righteousness that makes us impervious to demonic attacks, including—directly or indirectly—through humans who have aligned with Satan and the demons. Only those who try to enter the fray with their own righteousness are vulnerable, for whatever humans think of their own righteousness (or justice or justification—the same Greek word) is deeply flawed with the corruption of sin. Since our righteousness is so imperfect, Satan’s firepower would quickly pierce armor that is made of such fabric—not so with Christ’s righteousness that brings us together with him.

**6:15** “and with your feet fitted [Greek: ὑποδησάμενοι (*hupodēsamenoī*, having shod)] **with the readiness that comes from the gospel** [εὐαγγελίου (*euangelīou*), good news] **of peace.**”

1. As with the two preceding pieces of armor (the belt of truth buckled and the breastplate of righteousness), this third element of armor (shod feet with the readiness or preparation of the Gospel of peace) is in the aorist (a Greek past) tense and in the middle voice, meaning the Christian has belted him or herself, put on his or her breastplate, and put shoes on him or herself (walking in accord with the Word of God). Here again we see **a strong indication of our responsibility—and with that of course, accountability—to participate in the equipping of ourselves for this spiritual warfare**...a warfare that very definitively involves blood and flesh (v. 12) but most importantly Satan and his demonic forces.

- a. Again, Lenski explains more: “The general sense is: ready, eager courage that is due to the gospel which fills us with the peace of God. The feet are [shod, here the Greek word, not Lenski’s] for the wicked day, for the battle with the demon host....The word is ‘preparedness’ and thus ‘readiness,’ here the preparedness which makes us fully ready to plunge into the fight.... ‘a readiness inspired by the gospel.’”
- One of the members of our CEPS ministry noted in an email that “LCMS [Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod] President Matthew Harrison wrote of [the hymn, “O Little Flock, Fear Not the Foe”]: ‘Luther often commented that the devil cannot stand to be ridiculed....This strong little song depicts the church on earth—the Church Militant—confident in the face of growing opposition.’”
- b. Therefore, fear not the foe! God is sovereign and he loves us. Satan is only a fallen and condemned angel, due to his disobedience; he’s not even a peanut contrasted with God; Satan hates us, but he’s impotent under the triune God’s sovereignty. He’s dangerous to those who are unrelated to and who ignore God and are unaware and/or unprepared, but those of us in—and relying on—Christ Jesus and prepared with our full armor are invincible. We have Jesus’ protection, indeed, the protection of our whole triune God—Father, only begotten Son Christ Jesus, and Holy Spirit—three divine Persons who share one substance and are in essence One!<sup>26</sup>
- c. Furthermore, God is also everywhere present. There is not one square inch of the public square—indeed of the whole state of Colorado and everywhere else, the whole cosmos—where God is not already there ahead of us and in his fulness! Contrary to all other religions, the Bible reveals God to be both transcendent and immanent. (Cf., e.g., Psalm 113; Psalm 46:1-2; Matthew 28:20; cf. Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:5 together with Hebrews 13:5; cf. Isaiah 41:10)
- 1) We must remember—and tell our brothers and sisters in Christ—that the question is NEVER “Will God show up?” God is always present; in fact, contrary to all other religions, the Bible teaches that God is constantly both transcendent (above all) and imminent (with us). Rather the question is “Will we show up to engage the battle?!” If we don’t, we’re in danger, and as we’ve seen in many Scripture passages, the gospel calls us and empowers us to do so.
  - 2) Therefore, we need not—indeed we must not—ever be daunted. We sense God’s leading to take on a crucial—actually a vital—as well as a large task. It

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<sup>26</sup> For more on the Trinity, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(PowerPoint\)](#). See also [Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Divine and Human, As Revealed in John 3:16 and Hebrews 1:3](#).

would be hopeless without God; with God the related question is not can we get the job done but when.

2. Consider carefully also Paul's use here of the term "gospel [literally good news] of peace," a term with many inherent blessings.
  - a. Lenski adds in his commentary on this verse, "It is the gospel 'of the peace,' definite, of that peace (objective) which Christ gives us (John 14:27), which then also fills us with the feeling of peace (subjective)...God is with us, we are thus ready, eager for the battle unto victory. We are above defeat. We know that if we resist the devil he will flee from us." [This last sentence refers to James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."]
  - b. Listen carefully, take to heart, and memorize these (and other) related passages from God's Word.
    - 1) Jesus told his disciples, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33, ESV)
      - a) As I have written in *Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology (op cit.)*, noting the meaning of two of the original Greek words in this passage is especially helpful. The word for "world," κόσμος (*kosmos*), means the whole world, including with all its evil; Jesus Christ has overcome it all in a huge history-changing victory!
      - b) The second word, the word Jesus used for "overcome," is νενίκηκα (*nenikēka* < νικάω [*nikaō*, conquer, be victorious, prevail, win]), which means "I have conquered." Jesus has conquered Satan and the demonic forces generating the evil that we are battling daily in the spiritual war in which we're involved. (Ephesians 6:10-18; Revelation 12-20.<sup>27</sup>) How comforting it is to know that our Lord has won the war! The current battles are just the "mopping up phase." Everything is under his control and we know—being fully assured of—the final outcome.
    - 2) Later John added these comforting words, "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4; cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3; 6:19) The Holy Spirit led Jesus' disciple, then Apostle, John, to write these encouraging

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<sup>27</sup> Biblical scholars see a very significant turning point in the book of Revelation at chapter 12. In the first eleven chapters of Revelation, we observe a description of many evils in the world. Then, beginning with chapter 12, the Lord reveals to John the cause of those evils—what is behind and producing them: Satan and his demon followers—and we are told of Jesus' victory over Satan, the demons, and all evil and of the complete and perfect redemption and restoration of God's creation.

words—in order for us to know and also to be assured—that we who are believers in and followers of Christ Jesus have also overcome the world, including the false prophets and other spirits of the antichrist. Very significantly, the word the Holy Spirit inspired John to write in this verse for “overcome,” is the same word Jesus used in John 16:33, which we discussed above: *nikaō*, conquer. Because Jesus conquered, he has given us the ability and assurance that we also can, but we need to keep close to him, to “be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power” (Ephesians 6:10) and to “Put on the full armor of God” (6:11) in order to conquer the evil in the war in which we are engaged.

- c. We’ve been observing that the form of the verbs is powerful. Here in 6:15 we see how the grammar of nouns is also exceedingly significant. The noun, “of peace” is in the genitive case; the genitive in Greek typically expresses possession and here substance. The gospel, the good news, of what the risen and reigning Christ Jesus has done, is doing, and will do for us gives us unique and eternal peace, including now in this phase of life, peace not at all as the world gives. (See John 14:27.)
- d. Furthermore, this Gospel peace we possess in our hearts equips, inspires, motivates, and sustains, our feet with shoes on and ready to go. And, we are not only motivated by—but carry— with these shoes of gospel preparedness the good news of Christ Jesus into the public square, no matter what the terrain contains. Relatedly, we are offering access to schools who will teach that life-giving and life-sustaining gospel of Jesus Christ. Schools without Christ, at best can offer help for only a brief blip of time on the radar screen of life; the schools we are working to help will offer learning that will bless not only for now but all eternity! Most of all we will be serving the Lord who wants the children to come to him. (Matthew 18:6; 19:14)
- e. These words the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write are a huge encouragement! In addition, God has already given us many other glimpses of his presence and involvement with us. You know them; for just a few:
  - 1) The unique gifts, experience, knowledge, and wisdom of each person sitting around this table and any other CEPS type ministry. How do we know these gifts are from God? We start from James 1:17 and the many related passages: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”
  - 2) He has given us the grace to be able to discern truth from falsehood and to know the source of the latter. In Christ he has opened our eyes and removed the veil that Paul revealed to the church in Corinth comes from unrepentant and unforgiven sin that separates humans from God. (2 Corinthians 3:14-18)

- 3) He has also provided us with extensive encouragement from his general revelation, a part of which involves sound science, which reveals realities such as:
- a) human life begins at conception;
  - b) sex is binary;
  - c) psychological and medical interventions attempting to change sex are destructive and permanent;
  - d) anecdotal findings that what is occurring as a result of vast funding of demonic activism and ignorant complicity in all sectors of society, is also taking place in schools throughout Colorado, including our local public schools;
  - e) statistics that all major voting groups (democrats; independents; and republicans) want true school choice for all children.
- f. Let us give careful thought to these concluding insights on this verse 6:15 from Lenski. Let's consider these words in the light of Jeremiah 29:7, one of our CEPS theme passages, where the LORD commanded his people to “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you....Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

The peace [in this spiritual battle] is in the heart but shows itself in the readiness of the feet. Hence, “having your feet shod.” ...*Euanggelion* [gospel] is the proper word, for to bring peace is to carry good news. To be sure, this gospel with its contents of peace is “reality” or “truth.” But see how the words fit! If some “sham” instead of “truth” bound us, we should be lost to begin with. But “truth” must be this peace, made ours by this precious gospel, so that the courage in our *hearts* makes our *feet* march with victorious steadiness and courage into the hostile hosts in order to scatter them in defeat.

The introduction of “the peace” into this picture of battle is highly paradoxical. *Our peace with God* makes us avid for *the battle with Satan!* It is true, indeed. Without this gospel and its peace our feet would not for one moment stand or go forward against Satan. Who save *we men of peace* dares *to fight him*? Occasionally, when these “world tyrants of this darkness” (v. 12) perpetrate exceptional outrages (gangster rule, crimes that cry to high heaven), a protest is voiced by worldly men; but these tyrants are not thereby scattered, the protests soon subside.

We should not overlook the fact that “the righteousness” and “the peace” are correlated as are “truth” and “the gospel.” The terms are

beautifully interlocked. They also show a progression. The figure only serves; the literal actualities unfold. Rom. 5:1 thus joins our having been declared righteous with the resultant peace with God. Paul's writing is incomparable. Sit at the feet of this spiritual master and learn. (668–669)

**6:16** “**In addition to** [ἐπι (*epi*, besides)] **all this, take up** [Greek: ἀναλαμβάνετε (*analabontes*), having taken up] **the shield of** [Greek: τῆς (*tēs*, the)] **faith, with which you can** [δυνήσεσθε (*dunēsethe*, you will be able)] **extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.**”

1. The words in the Greek are informative and very significant. We need to read and heed.
  - a. The first, ἐπι (*epi*, besides) or “in addition to all [πάντων (*pasin*, all)]” (NIV), link this piece of armor with the three preceding pieces. To those previous three actions—having buckled the belt of truth; having put on the breastplate of righteousness; having shod feet with the readiness or preparation of the Gospel of peace;
  - b. Paul now adds this fourth: having taken up (*analabontes*) the shield of faith. Consider the significance of the parts of this verb.
    - 1) Active voice: We are to do the taking up of the shield of faith. Here the “having taken up” is in the active voice, meaning we’re focused on the outward task of getting the job done for others: first for God and for his objectives for his kingdom.

The active voice is reinforced with accompanying participles in the Greek aorist (a past) tense and in the middle voice: e.g., “having done everything” (v. 13); “having buckled the belt” (v. 14); “having put on the breastplate” (v. 14); “having shod” (v. 15); and now “you will be able” (v. 16). We can’t pass the job on to someone else; we are responsible for doing it.

Very importantly, the middle voice denotes that we’re accepting responsibility. We’re engaged in a matter that concerns and belongs to us (the meaning of the Greek middle voice—not the active voice which would mean we’re doing it to or for another, and not the passive voice which would mean we’re being acted upon, but the middle voice indicating we’re doing it to and for ourselves to prepare well for God’s service; the focus is on our responsibility—in this case preparing to serve God effectively in this spiritual war in which we are engaged).

- 2) Aorist (past) tense: It’s been done already.
- 3) Participle: It’s an ongoing process.

- c. The main English translations omit the definite article, τῆς (*tēs*, the), preceding the word, faith, the subject of the sentence. English readers thus miss an important part of the Holy Spirit’s message through the Apostle Paul: the definite article is there, because the Holy Spirit led Paul to put it there; it cannot be omitted. As we teach this text, we must explain this vital matter.
- 1) The essence of our Biblically-based and cognitively understood faith is in our only Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—to whom the whole Bible points and who is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6)—and on the whole triune God. Thus, we have a strong cognitive basis for the faith we hold.
  - 2) This faith that uniquely saves, consists of and is based on objective, factual, and one-of-a-kind content. God said through the Prophet Isaiah, “‘Come now, let us reason together,’ says the LORD.” (1:18) The faith is a definite, objective, Christ-based revelation that provides certainty—due to his resurrection being witnessed and testified to by over 500 people (many more than needed to sustain a testimony in a court of law), most of whom were still alive when Paul cited that fact about 55 A. D. in what is recorded in 1 Corinthians 15:6 [meaning: Corinthians, you can go to them and ask them to tell you what they saw]—that is such a powerful part of the panoply of armor to protect us and provide us victory in this spiritual war.
  - 3) The objective facts provide the intellectually satisfying and credible basis for the faith and are sustained by cognitive reflection of empirical evidence (e.g., the over 500 people who saw, heard, spoke with, and touched the risen Lord Jesus Christ), including logical analysis of the Biblical data, e.g., how only Jesus of Nazareth fulfills the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the Messiah/Christ.<sup>28</sup>
    - a) In spite of all this—and much more—evidence, many will not believe. Sin clouds the mind, as a veil covering the face, and only by believing in Christ is the veil taken away. (2 Corinthians 3:15-18) Yet, as we have the opportunities, we continue “speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), and do our best to model Christlikeness, all of which the Holy Spirit will use to give people all they need in order to believe, but he will not force them to do so, and neither should we try; that’s not how God wants people to come to him.
    - b) Relatedly, and part of our rational faith, the Biblical reveals that we who believe do so not because we’re smarter than other human beings, but because the Holy Spirit has enabled us to believe. As Paul wrote to the

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<sup>28</sup> For more information on the unique fulfillment of Biblical prophecy by Jesus Christ and on his resurrection, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(PowerPoint\)](#).

church in Corinth, “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” Our faith is a gift of God’s grace—his all-sufficient and steadfast love—for us that we neither earn nor deserve. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

- c) From the time we believe, the Holy Spirit, dwelling within us, continues to work in our hearts and minds, and this strong spiritual and cognitive basis of our faith enables us to be victorious in the spiritual warfare we’re engaging. This rational basis that God has provided, enables us to withstand challenges and to initiate strong witnessing for Christ. (Compare the analogy in sports, such as football: to do well we need both a good defense and a good offense, the latter here meaning initiation.) We are thereby “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you [and to do so] with gentleness and respect.” (1 Peter 3:15. For initiation, see such texts as Matthew 28:18-20.)
- 4) Of course, the faith also has a subjective dimension. It is a valuable—and important—but not the most important, dimension. It is not formative or substantive; it is not the content of what we believe.
  - a) The subjective dimension provides unending joy and other emotive blessings as part of our holistic cognitive-affective-behavioral nature that bears God’s image. We are not just “walking minds.”
  - b) Yet, these wonderful feelings of well-being in the faith that saves and transcends the evils of this age must be experienced and perceived in their proper position as supportive and an enjoyable accompaniment to the objective and factual dimension of the faith. The emotive part of the faith follows—neither preceding nor causing—the substantial strength of the faith in Christ Jesus. Truly, the objective content of the Gospel of Christ has a significant impact on our affect, our emotional investment in this greatest of all realities, for we are holistic beings: the Lord loves us, and we respond with our love to him.
  - c) Furthermore, and very significantly, when people see our joy—not just a transitory and fleeting “happiness”—especially in times that are challenging, they recognize the uniqueness of that joy; they are attracted to it; and they want to find out how they also can have such joy.
  - d) Very importantly, the faith is not an amorphous subjective feeling. We believe not because of a warm—“Isn’t this so wonderful!”—feeling; that’s a result of our believing the faith—not the cause of it.
- 5) But the Lord expects that we also demonstrate the genuineness of our love with our behavior: specifically obedience. Jesus said, “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, that one is the one who loves me. And whoever

loves me will be loved by my Father, and I, too, will love him and show myself to him.” (Luke 14:21, Greek, EDS translation)

a) Pertaining to Jesus’ commands, see these for example.

1- Notice the preceding verses in John 13:34-35. <sup>34</sup>“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

2- See also 14:1, where Jesus commands “Do not let your hearts be troubled.” The verb in the Greek, “let not be troubled” is in the imperative mood, i.e., a command. Significantly, it indicates that the mind not only can—but must—control the heart. This is an important corrective to the popular—but deceptive and dangerously misleading urging to—“follow your heart.” NO! (See Jeremiah 17:9.)

b) Scripture, such as 1 Peter 3:15, commands us to be Christ’s witnesses and disciple all nations. (Matthew 28:19) An attempt to witness based on emotions is easily disregarded by those to whom we are called to proclaim Christ’s Gospel.

c) Rather, we believe—as do all who come to the faith—because of the Holy Spirit’s eye-opening removal of the sin-saturated veil of unbelief (cf., e.g., 2 Corinthians 3:14-18), enabling us to recognize and accept objective fact that is based on cognitive reflection of empirical evidence (over 500 people who saw, heard, spoke with, and touched the risen Lord Jesus) and logical analysis of the Biblical data, e.g., how only Jesus of Nazareth fulfills the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to the Messiah/Christ and how God’s plan to redeem and restore his perfect creation in and through Jesus Christ makes the most sense over all other attempts to explain the evils of this age and what we can know of God and the future.

6) Furthermore, and clearly, this faith is **not** “faith on the fly,” making it up as we go. To use a common contemporary analogy, it is **not** building the plane as we fly. Nor is it the faith of any one person, who has constructed his or her belief by forming an amalgam of bits and pieces of Scripture, other readings, and his or her own experiences that “make me feel good.” Furthermore, “the faith” the Holy Spirit led the apostle Paul to write, is not at all the even more amorphous conglomeration of belief systems that come under the current common designation: people of faith, which runs the gamut of Biblically-based doctrine to “faith in whatever.”

7) “The faith,” which is the criterion standard for evaluating all competing belief systems and statements, is based on—and consistent with—God’s Word. Therefore, “the faith” is not only not amorphous; it also does not change,

though its fallible adherents occasionally need to modify certain understandings, but only to bring those understandings more into conformity with the standard of God's inerrant and infallible Word. Since one's belief in "the faith" is a gift of the Holy Spirit (recall, e.g., 1 Corinthians 12:3), is based on—and an expression of—God's Word, and since God does not change (James 1:17; Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6), "the faith" is solid and impenetrable, able to sustain the believer through spiritual battles and throughout the rest of his or her life.

- 8) Thus, the faith is a corpus, an account—unlike any other religion—of how God has created and then worked, and continues to work, through history to accomplish his redemptive, restorative, and recreative purposes.
  - a) This faith is unlike any other religion, because all other religions are opposed to the one true triune God. This is why God reveals that they are from Satan and the demons, who have opposed God from the beginning. (1 Corinthians 10:20)
  - b) This account is revealed and recorded in the Bible and articulated in a logical, systematic, theological explanation of reality. We believe it, and we use it to strengthen us for the spiritual warfare we are engaging and equipping others to do as well.
  - c) At the same time, "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), the faith we believe exudes from us and envelopes all we say and do, revealing and providing an attractive joy and hope for which the world longs and can find nowhere else, unless and until they consistently see it in us and become open to the Holy Spirit's operation in their minds and hearts.
- 9) The past tense active participle of *analabontes* (having taken up) indicates we've been engaged in regularly strengthening this corpus of belief in at least four main ways:
  - a) by daily reading the Gospel of Christ Jesus, with which we are shod and on which we firmly stand (as we saw in our examination of the previous verse),
  - b) by daily prayer to our triune God in the name of his only begotten Son, the Second Person of the Trinity, who revealed to us that he is the Way, the truth, and the life, (John 14:6)
  - c) by at least weekly corporate worship—in a church congregation that proclaims God's Word truthfully and faithfully—with other fellow soldiers whom the Holy Spirit is also equipping and through whom the Spirit works. As corporate attendance declines, is it any wonder the

church is silent in the public square? They are ill-equipped; there is a severe cleavage in their armor; or it's lacking altogether,

- 1- One key caveat: We should thank God for the 21<sup>st</sup> century capability of live streaming worship. *However*, due to the powerful dynamics of human verbal and nonverbal communication in physical presence, that internet option should be reserved for those who are temporarily ill, weakened, or permanently disabled, and any others for whom attendance in person could be harmful to themselves or others. God works with us both individually—directly in our minds and hearts—and also corporately through other believers in and followers of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ.
- 2- Crucially, we must always remember that the greatest and only lasting victory in this spiritual battle and any continuing impact we can have in the public square is by doing all we do as a conscious witness for Jesus Christ. Only as the Holy Spirit changes human minds and hearts can lasting change pleasing to God occur. This is why it is imperative, as we have opportunity, to invite people to attend church with us—*but not just any church*—the church must faithfully proclaim the true Word of God focusing on the Gospel of Jesus Christ and live accordingly.

d) and by interaction and fellowship with one another face to face.

- 1- This very unique, rich, and special fellowship with other believers in Christ, the Bible refers to as *κοινωνία (koinonia)*. Koinonia means fellowship, communion, partnership, sharing, participation, contribution, close relationship, generosity, fellow-feeling, altruism.
- 2- Contemplate what God can and does do to strengthen us in this way. Just for starters, according to sound social science research, the need for belonging is one of the top needs human beings have. Think about how this special koinonia relationship with the church, the body of Christ, superbly meets that key human need!

10) So, can you see how vulnerable people are when they enter the fray—the spiritual warfare in the public square—without a strong commitment to “**the faith**” and only have a not-very-well-and-not-often thought about, and a very weak, subjective, and feeling-based faith?

d. A look at the shield is informative and helpful. The *θυρεός (thureos)* is a long and large shield, about four feet in length and was designed to cover the most vulnerable parts of the body below the eyes, extending from the eyes to the top of the shins. Our shield, as long as it is “**the faith**,” is sufficient to protect us where we are most vulnerable and to stop whatever Satan and his demon and human

followers hurl at us. Without that shield, people are in great danger in many ways that could include eternity.

e. Consider also the enemy's missiles against which we need to defend. The βέλη ([*belē*] < βέλος [*belos*]) are literally darts, missiles, arrows, javelins). In the spiritual warfare for which we are preparing, any of those is possible, and sometimes being used, but more frequently, especially in the United States, the figurative forms of these flaming arrows is common, more likely to be encountered, and also more what Paul is addressing in this text. Remember, this is spiritual warfare, not physical warfare, as he is clearly stating in this verse and in verse 12.

1) These *belē* are flaming. Using a metaphor from wartimes with which the Ephesians and other readers were well familiar, these projectiles are tipped with cotton and pitch that is on fire.

a) Flaming arrows include illogical and annoying *ad hominems*, insulting, persecuting, mocking, ridiculing, and, as Jesus said, "falsely say[ing] all manner of evil against you because of me." (Matthew 5:11)

1- Those without the shield of "the faith" crumble quickly when someone says to them, "That's stupid!" "You're homophobic," "Islamophobic," "xenophobic," and a hundred other-phobic *ad hominems*. They crumble and fear, because they don't have a strong shield constructed with a solid understanding and articulation of "the faith," and it is not held up in position, protecting them, and "with which [they] can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

2- We need to remember—and explain to others—the rest of what Jesus said as recorded in Matthew 5:11 and 12: "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven...." Luke adds that Jesus also said, "leap for joy...." (6:23) One of the reasons we are so blessed is because such persecutions are empirical evidence from the world itself that we are not part of them; we belong to God, whom we are most trying to please!

b) These flaming missiles are also metaphors for the temptations to doubt and disobey, with which the demonic forces with whom we are at war are attacking us to try to pierce our armor. We see examples of weak and strong shields in two familiar passages of Scripture.

1- Satan threw his flaming dart at Eve and Adam in the form of a deceptive question and a propositional lie, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" And then other

propositional lies, including this one: “You will not surely die.”  
(Genesis 3:1,4)

2- Satan also threw flaming darts at Jesus. (Matthew 4:1-11)

c) Notice the differences: Both Eve and Jesus quoted God’s Word in their response to Satan’s flaming arrows of temptation. But...

1- Eve and Adam’s weak and flimsy shield was pierced by Satan’s flaming arrow and they disobeyed God’s Word. Eve, and also Adam, should have said, “Most certainly God did indeed say we must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil!”

2- Jesus’ strong shield of the faith and commitment to his heavenly Father enabled him to extinguish Satan’s flaming darts and obey the Father.

d) Lenski quotes Luther’s explanation:

Here is the answer as to what “the faith” means when it is used as the shield against the blazing arrows. Luther: “One little *word* overthrows him.” Hold up to the devil, not merely your believing or subjective faith, but the Word, the doctrine, the pertinent Scripture passage, the objective content of faith, of course, also with your whole heart believing, relying on its truth and power. You may believe with all your might, but that will not be a quenching shield; Satan will easily pierce that, and you will be set on fire. Everything depends on *what* you believe. Hold up “the faith” (objective); this extinguishes every tempting lie of the wicked one. The participle contains the subjective factor. You do not take up this shield unless you believe that it will do what it did for Jesus, what Paul says it will ever do.<sup>29</sup>

2) Add obedience to that and you have the meaning of Paul’s message. As we saw in John 14:21, Jesus expects obedience. James explains why: “<sup>14</sup>What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?...<sup>19</sup>You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.” (James 2:14,19)

f. The term πονηροῦ (*ponērou*), “the evil one,” refers of course to the devil. Yet it is very significant. Listen to Lenski:

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<sup>29</sup> Lenski, [The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians](#), pp. 670–671.

This word always means actively, viciously wicked in hostility to God. The singular does not restrict the arrows to Satan as though he alone shot them; they are all his no matter who shoots them...The perfect participle “having been set on fire” has its present implication: thus blazing now. This word is significant. The mind is to be set on fire with lies. On entering, the fire sets up a conflagration which turns everything to ruin and ashes. What a graphic picture of the devil’s temptation! What a fire was started by Eve’s temptation! It still burns on and on, a world-wide conflagration, and see the ashes it has left!<sup>30</sup>

2. Consider applications of this verse for engaging the public square.
  - a. For a few indirect applications in the public square, we need to prepare for and address the following: the lies in the media and by activists, government (politicians and unelected bureaucracy), and much more. We know where those lies are coming from and what to do about them.
  - b. More overt applications are now emerging in the public square. Satan himself is “coming out of the closet” for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear: Satanism in so-called “‘gay’ rights”<sup>31</sup> parades; after school Satan clubs; and Satanic displays—even alongside Nativity scenes—in key government locations.<sup>32</sup>
  - c. We not only need to make sure our shield of faith is firmly in place, but CEPS being a full-service educational ministry (i.e., not only providing information but acting on it and helping others to act), we need to help many even know what we’re talking about, get their gear in place, and know how to use it with God’s help!

**6:17 “Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”**

1. We must notice and remember a significant message that the Holy Spirit guided Paul to include in the wording of this passage, a message that is vital to our protection and production, i.e., our conquest in the spiritual warfare we are engaging, or will engage, in the public square.

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<sup>30</sup> Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, p. 671.

<sup>31</sup> This term is in quotes, because they are not truly “gay.” For the Biblical and scientific reasons, see my e-book, [What Is God’s Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to speak the Truth in Love](#). This book has a second edition that is in progress; it is also located at the hyperlinked URL and can be accessed by clicking on the title.

<sup>32</sup> Governments can legally prohibit Satanic displays on government property. See the American Center for Law and Justice, in particular <https://aclj.org/religious-liberty/defend-christmas-from-satanist-attacks>. (Accessed 04/03/2026)

- a. In verses 14-16 we have a group of four essential parts of our armor, and these four are distinguished by participles in the middle voice, meaning that we are putting on these elements of our armor and taking responsibility for positioning and using them rightly. Very importantly again, the middle voice denotes that we're accepting responsibility. We're engaged in a matter that concerns and belongs to us (the meaning of the Greek middle voice—not the active voice which would mean we're doing it to or for another, and not the passive voice which would mean we're being acted upon, but the middle voice indicating we're doing it to and for ourselves to prepare well for God's service; the focus is on our responsibility—in this case preparing to serve God effectively in this spiritual war).
- b. These four essential parts of our armor in verses 14-16 are:
  - 1) The belt of **truth**—secured by Christ Jesus, who is the way and **the** truth and the life (14)
  - 2) The breastplate of **righteousness**—being credited with Christ's righteousness (14)
  - 3) Feet fitted [shod] with **readiness**—that comes from the gospel of peace, ready to go on a moment's notice! (15)
  - 4) The shield of **faith**—not just any faith, **the** belief in **the** historic Gospel of Christ Jesus (16)
2. Now, in verse 17, the first word (indicating emphasis) is *καί* (*kai*, “and” or “also”), which further indicates, introduces, and connects a group of three more crucial parts of our armor, and these three are further distinguished, highlighted, and emphasized by an imperative: *δέξασθε* (*dexasthe* < *δέχομαι* [*dechomai*, meaning “take” or “receive”]). An imperative, the Spirit is giving us a command; this is not something to ignore, put off, think about, wish for, dream about, or maybe work into our busy schedule next Tuesday if we can...no, no, no: God is telling us to do it!

What is it he is commanding us to do? Put on three more crucial parts of our armor:

- a. The helmet of salvation (17)
- b. The sword of the Spirit (17)
- c. And prayer in the Spirit (18)
3. “Take the helmet of salvation.” Alas, again the English loses a strong point that is clear in the original Greek. In the Greek, the object (helmet of salvation) comes before the verb (Take). The verb being placed first indicates emphasis.

- a. The Holy Spirit is emphasizing the command to take the salvation we already have. There is no indication in this text of a future salvation that is hoped for, which would not yet be in existence and therefore not be a strong and sufficient piece of armor to protect the soldier's head, to protect and keep safe such a crucial part of his or her body from disabling or fatal strikes.
- b. Our salvation means that we have the Holy Spirit—who has enabled us to have salvation (1 Corinthians 12:3) and who enables us to mature in Christ—living in us, guiding us, protecting us. Only with the Spirit's help can we survive and thrive. The helmet thus symbolizes the Spirit's protection of our head from a fatal or disabling force.
  - 1) Alone, apart from God—including not taking him seriously, ignoring him, and not listening to him—one is very vulnerable to being led astray, e.g., “by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming” (4:14), who whisper into their “itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:3). Being so led astray brings defeat and destruction, individually and—if enough others follow—for that part of the army (the church) as well.
  - 2) We see many evidences all around us of church congregations—and denominations—losing the battle with such departure from God and his Word as they align with the worldly culture instead of courageously opposing the world in this warfare.
    - a) For example, see the excerpts from the article in the text box below, “When The Church Starts Echoing The Very World It's Called To Transform.”
    - b) For just one more example out of many, capitulation to culture destroys people spiritually as they affirm values and practices opposed to God's Word, and it destroys physically, such as when giving into worldly practices along with deceitful scheming to affirm the misleading of temporarily confused children who want to take medications and have healthy body parts removed—contrary to the Bible and to sound science—in the destructive and irreversible attempt to change their sex (not “gender” which is a literary term that didn't appear in scientific literature until the 1950's).<sup>33</sup>
4. And we are to take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Notice a very important quality of this piece of armor: It is the only offensive weapon in our entire panoply of equipment.

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<sup>33</sup> For much more information that is highly documented on how the LGBTQ+ lifestyle is contrary to God's Word and to sound science, thus destroying human lives spiritually and physically, see my e-book, *What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love* and the accompanying fact sheet at <https://fromacorntoak12.com/current-issues/>.

- a. The (genitive) case of the verb and its being between the two objects—the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit—both distinguishes between and connects them. As Lenski points out, the Spirit’s sword is invincible.
  - 1) The Spirit, who has given us the grace of new birth (regeneration) as well as our justification (righteousness) and sanctification—all parts of our salvation helmet—also gives us the sword with which to not only defend against but to conquer the enemy: Satan and his demon and human followers.
  - 2) The word for sword, μάχαιρα (*machaira*), refers to the Roman soldier’s short sword. Thus, we’re protected and empowered for close up—in your face—confrontation.
- b. In this context, we need to carefully consider one more word pertaining to this object of our armament: The Greek word in this verse that is translated, “word of God,” is ῥῆμα (*rhema*, meaning the spoken word of God, not λόγος (*logos*), meaning the written word of God).
  - 1) Lenski explains the significance superbly.

“God’s utterance [*rhema*]” as an “utterance,” as “going forth out of God’s mouth” (Matt. 4:4 [Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”]), makes it “the sword of the Spirit” that is so deadly in striking down the foe of God and of man. When we use it in our battle we are to use it only as “God’s utterance.” We must also use it unaltered, just as God uttered it. Any alteration takes the power and the edge off this sword.

To be sure, this is “God’s utterance” and thus “the sword of the Spirit.” In that utterance lies God’s power; Rom. 1:16 uses “God’s power” to define the gospel. That utterance, we may say, is the expression of God’s will. In Rom. 10:17 we have “Christ’s utterance” (which is the same) in its beneficent power producing faith and salvation. In Heb. 6:5, “God’s good utterance” which one tastes. That “utterance” should be the sword before which the demon host flees is one of the surprising facts of Scripture revelation. Since they are intangible because they are “spirit forces,” the opposite of “blood and flesh” (v. 12), we must have a weapon that is able to crush these hosts, and this is it.

This does not imply that the Word can be used by Paul only in one way in this picture of the panoply of God, namely as a sword. That is only its offensive power. As truth the Word belts us; as the gospel of the peace it puts the readiness of courage into our hearts; as the faith, the doctrines which we believe, teach, and confess, it shields us against any and all of the wicked one’s lies. In addition to all this (ἐπι πᾶσιν [*epi pasin*]) the Word and utterance

smites and defeats our foe himself. What a true description this is of the Word of God! What a call, then, to every one of us to arm himself with it!<sup>34</sup>

- 2) Related Scripture passages help us understand how we speak the *rhema*, the spoken word of God.
  - a) In 1 Corinthians 12:3, we read that “...no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”
  - b) And Jesus, himself, told us, “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, <sup>12</sup>for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” (Luke 12:11-12)
  - c) Jesus added, “Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what you are to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 13:11)
- c. Another way quoting from God’s Word helps us greatly, as we witness to and for Christ Jesus in the world, is by supporting what we say with irrefutable documentation from God himself. Thereby, we speak with authority.
  - 1) Doing so also defuses demonic and deceptive attempts to discredit us by accusations of “being hateful,” a common tactic used widely in the world, especially by people who are ill-informed, unwise, and who don’t think carefully. When we are falsely accused of hate—a bullet-point default of the opposition when they have no other way to respond to what we are saying—by quoting the Bible, we can remind our accuser(s) that we did not write the Bible; it is the very word of God and our highest authority. Also, he requires our compliance with and obedience to his Word, albeit with steadfast love and grace offered us in Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup>
  - 2) At this point we should be prepared to explain why we believe the Bible is the Word of God. (1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 3:16-17) In order to do so, it is helpful to learn several reasons why the church has historically believed that the books of the Bible are God’s inspired Word to the prophets and apostles

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<sup>34</sup> Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#) (Columbus, O.: Lutheran Book Concern, 1937), pp. 673–674.

<sup>35</sup> If they won’t accept our explanation of why the Bible is the historic revelation of God’s Word and his will, we can also point out that their accusation is a logical fallacy. As I explain in [Logic: A Primer on Common Logical Fallacies](#), they have just committed the fallacy of *argumentum ad hominem* (literally, “argument [directed] to the man”). The flaw in their argument which makes it illogical, is that their comment is an abusive statement that is attacking my personality or character, thereby leaving my argument untouched; they do not address my rationale, thereby rendering their response as logically fallacious.

whom he called to write what he was revealing to them and through them to us and to all other people. These reasons are the subject of a branch of theology called apologetics, a Greek word (found in 1 Peter 3:15) meaning defense. I list and explain several of these reasons in an introduction to apologetics in a section in [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(Powerpoint\)](#) and also in [Bible Digest: An Overview of the Bible, A Commentary on the Bible Digest PowerPoint Presentation](#) in a section titled, “How Do We Know the Bible Is the True and Authoritative Word of God?”

- d. The Ephesians 6:17 text is thus a call for us to read God’s written word each day—and even memorize passages—so we can speak them in our conversations with others in the spiritual war we are engaging in the public square and elsewhere. When we do, Satan and the demons flee; their foolish human followers will too, but for those who linger, we can speak the truth in love. Either way, God’s people—believers in and followers of Christ—win!

**6:18** We’ve been using, for the most part, the NIV translation, but of the main English translations, the KJV comes the closest to the original Greek in this verse: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;” (KJV; cf. also ESV) However, here, with all due respect, I prefer my translation, which retains a bit more of the literal original Greek: “**by means of all prayer and petition praying on every occasion in spirit and thereunto being vigilant in all perseverance and petition for all the saints,...**”

1. Let’s first recall the context: We must remember the significant message that the Holy Spirit guided Paul to include in the wording of this passage. Think about the meaning of the 4 + 3 types of armor.
  - a. In verses 14-16 we have a group of four essential parts of our armor:
    - 1) the **belt of truth**—secured by Christ Jesus, who is the way and **the** truth and the life (14)
    - 2) the **breastplate of righteousness**—being credited with Christ’s righteousness (14; cf., Romans 4)
    - 3) **feet fitted [shod] with readiness**—that comes from the gospel of peace, ready to go on a moment’s notice! (15)
    - 4) the **shield of faith**—not just any faith, **the** belief in the historic Gospel of Christ Jesus (16)

- b. In Verses 17-18 we read that then the Holy Spirit commands us to put on three more crucial parts of our armor:
- a) the **helmet of salvation**. (17)
  - b) the **sword of the Spirit**. (17)
  - c) **praying on every occasion in spirit**. (18)
    - 1- Once again verse 18: “by means of all prayer and petition praying on every occasion in spirit and thereunto being vigilant in all perseverance and petition for all the saints,…”
    - 2- For the sake of God and his kingdom, including us, our families, other loved ones, and the city to which God has led us (remember Jeremiah 29:7), let us take a few moments to look more carefully at this verse.
2. Praying on every occasion in spirit is the third of the three additional parts of our armor that we are commanded to put on for the battle.
- a. The Greek word for prayer, προσευχῆς (*proseuchēs*), including its participle form, praying, is always used only in communicating with God, never to human or other beings.
    - 1) It is never used to address a human being. Our prayers are not to other humans who have gone on before us, or to spiritual entities. We are to pray only to the one true, triune God, the sole access to Whom has been provided by Christ Jesus. This is what Jesus meant when he said just before he died on the cross, “It is finished.” (John 19:30) His death in the place of those of us who believe in him opens the way into the presence of the Father, indeed the whole triune God, as was powerfully symbolized by the shredding from top to bottom of the temple curtain that separated sinful people from the presence of God who is holy, holy, holy as well as being all love. (Matthew 27:51) Christ Jesus’ righteousness is credited to us by our faith in him (Romans 4), which cleanses us and enables us to enter the presence of God in Jesus’ righteousness.
    - 2) And, prayer is dialogical: it is a dialogue with God in which we not only speak to—but listen to—him. How do we listen to God? Two ways immediately come to mind:
      - a) At least once per day, preferably more, our prayer time should be accompanied with time reading his Word. It is also helpful to recite key verses we’ve memorized, which leads to thanking God and other communication with him.

- b) When we pray—no matter where we are or what we’re doing—we often receive immediate answers to our questions, e.g., an idea will arise in our mind pertaining to what we’ve just asked that wasn’t there previously. If it’s good; it’s from God (James 1:17, *et al.*); and we’re grateful. (Philippians 4:4-7)
- 3) In the public square, and elsewhere, we should be prepared to respond to two objections.
- a) Ignorance: Some say, “Ah, I’ve tried prayer and it doesn’t work. Ignore it. Forget it.” Speaking the truth in love, we can begin a corrective response with some soft but penetrating questions, such as the following:
- 1- “Do you know that we have to pray in accord with God’s will in order for him to answer our prayers?”
  - 2- “Do you know that he says, as recorded in the Bible, that “the prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective?” (James 5:16)
  - 3- “Do you know how to be seen as righteous in God’s sight?” When a person believes that Jesus is Lord and that God raised him from the dead, that person is saved by God, saved from eternal separation from God. (Romans 10:9) Then, he or she is credited with Christ Jesus’ righteousness, can approach God, and receives from Him all he or she needs and much more. (Romans 4)
- b) Opposition: Others know that prayer works for God’s people, and they want to prohibit us from praying, e.g., as often occurs outside abortion clinics. Being adherents of the “cancel culture” mentality, they will do anything they can think of to silence us.
- 1- Again a question: “Do you recall the First Amendment?” As long as I’m praying on public property, or on private property with permission, I have a right in this free country to do so. Even if our government prohibits us from praying to the triune God, we must still do so. (Cf., e.g., Daniel 6)
  - 2- Furthermore, God owns the whole world. He commands that I obey the law—his law and the just laws of the government—and having established that I can—with God’s approval and government approval—pray in a given location, I will do so. In fact, I can pray anywhere silently. You also can pray anywhere; would you like to know what God says about how to pray so he’ll hear and respond?

- b. Also, in the statement “by means of all prayer and petition” the word translated “petition,” δέησις (*deēsis*), means request, petition, or supplication. This type of prayer, *deēsis*, is only used in the New Testament for requests made to God.
- c. The Greek word for “occasion”—here “praying on every occasion”—is the very significant word, καιρῶ (*kairō*), which means a special time, a fitting situation, “a limited period of time marked by a suitability of circumstances.”<sup>36</sup>
- 1) The prevailing understanding of *kairō* in the New Testament is a distinct point in time.
  - 2) In this text, Paul certainly has in mind “the day of evil” he mentioned in verse 13, but, though we pray without ceasing daily, also “every *kairō* occasion” includes, as Lenski, speaking now in his pastor’s role, tenderly and compassionately explains that “every one of us has experienced those special occasions when in dire need we cry to God for help and strength with intensity.”<sup>37</sup>
3. After “praying on every occasion,” we read “in spirit and thereunto being vigilant....” What does “*in spirit*” mean?
- a. The English versions typically read, “in the Spirit,” with the upper case “S,” referring to the Holy Spirit, but the original Greek just has “praying on every occasion in spirit.” The Greek term “in spirit” typically means “in union with the [Holy] Spirit,” especially in contexts such as this one since the subject involves prayer and the actual reference to the Holy Spirit with the definite article in the preceding verse. Also, the definite article is often not needed and thus not present in such references to God.
  - b. However, here in verse 18 the reference to “in spirit” is to our human spirit. After an exhaustive explanation, Lenski succinctly concludes,

We are to pray “in spirit.” To say that this would be self-evident is to overlook our experience. This is the very point to be stressed because the spirit, the new man in us ([Ephesians] 4:23, 24), is often languid even in critical days and needs stimulation. Nor does “in spirit” ignore the Holy Spirit; for none of us prays in spirit save by the Spirit’s help.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *The Analytical Greek Lexicon: Consisting of an Alphabetical Arrangement of Every Occurring Inflection of Every Word Contained in the Greek New Testament Scriptures, with a Grammatical Analysis of Each Word, and a Lexicographical Illustration of the Meanings* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons Limited, 1794), p. 208.

<sup>37</sup> Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, p. 675.

<sup>38</sup> Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, p. 676. For more on prayer, type “prayer” in the Search bar on the [home page](#) of my general Website.

4. We must remember that what we're doing here is all for the purpose of obeying the commands that establish the context of this passage (6:10-22). Recall the observations above regarding the imperatives in verse 10 “be empowered in the Lord and in the strength of his might” (Greek text) and 11, “Put on the complete armor of God” (Greek text).

All the participles that follow specify how to obey these commands. Thus, most succinctly: in Ephesians 6:10-22 we are told what to do and how to do it in order to participate victoriously in the spiritual war in which we are engaged.

5. Observe and remember that linked with praying comes one other crucial component of this part of our armor. Regarding this part, we observe two present tense participles: praying and watching (being vigilant). They differ decidedly from the four aorist (past tense) participles in verses 14-16, the aorist denoting a single act that is already done and in place. We must begin by looking further at the first present tense participle mentioned: praying.
  - a. The present tense denotes durative, continuous action—not one and done—i.e., we are to be constantly praying (cf. Paul’s command to the Thessalonians to “pray without ceasing” [1 Thessalonians 5:17] and Nehemiah’s persistent prayers [Nehemiah 1:4; 2:4; 4:4,9; *et al.*]) through every circumstance and watching.
    - 1) Further, these participles are nominative plurals, meaning they modify us—the “you” in verses 13-17—not previous verbs.

(Again, it’s very helpful to remember these grammatical technicalities, but it’s most important that we do what God is telling us through the Apostle Paul to do. I’m only mentioning the grammatical details, because many people are interested in the significant grammatical meanings and also to assure everyone that I didn’t just haul this all out of the air; you can be certain that this is not just my opinion. These details—important because they’ve been revealed by the Holy Spirit in guiding Paul to write them—are included in this exegesis to help you understand, to remember to do them, and in case you need these facts if you are ever challenged.)

- a) Specifically, these participles further describe our armament and our conduct.
- b) Lenski explains it well: “In one word, this is prayer, but prayer in the Biblical sense, answered prayer which brings to our aid the mighty help of God himself. Since prayer is always an activity, the terms used are of that kind. We wield the power of prayer. Prayer must be listed here because it brings our divine ally to our side in the battle on the wicked day (v. 13).”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#), p. 675. Copyright © 2024, 2026 by Edward D. Seely. Permission is granted to reproduce this paper, without any change or charge, for the use of governmental and/or both formal and informal educational purposes. 47

- 2) Consider the meaning, implications, and applications of this part of our armor.
- a) One exceedingly significant meaning and implication is that we can enter the fray with peace and no fear at all. (John 16:33; Philippians 4:4-9; *et al.*) How can we be afraid when we are flying into battle like little David against the giant Goliath? He didn't cower before, creep cautiously toward, capitulate to, or run away from Goliath; **he ran to him!** (1 Samuel 17:48)
  - b) So can we, when we enter into a seemingly—but not really—formidable battle, because we enter it with the almighty God who created the universe! What little human, even a nine-foot tall little—contrasted with God—human, can long oppose him?! (Psalm 113; Isaiah 55:8-11; Job 38-42)
    - 1- “David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.’” (1 Samuel 17:45)
    - 2- Remember with Whom you are entering the council chambers, the school board room, the legislature, your boss's office, or any other venue. Remember also what Jesus said: “...do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, <sup>12</sup>for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” (Luke 12:11-12) Of whom, and how, can we be afraid?! Of anything?!
    - 3- No matter what our background is, even if we aren't viewed by the world as very significant or powerful, that is not a factor in our ability to serve God in accord with his will for us.<sup>40</sup> He will provide all we need. In fact, throughout both the Old and New Testaments, we see God often choosing and working through those who have little and whom the world rejects. Always remember whom God empowered to bring down the giant Goliath: Diminutive David defeated and destroyed Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:33) Observe carefully also that David rightly gave all the credit to God. (17:45)
    - 4- Indeed, this is what the fully suited-up warrior of God does before the battle, during the battle, while mopping up after the battle, and on all other occasions throughout life. Furthermore, he and she does so

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<sup>40</sup> God's principle of employing that which is small in number and disregarded by society (e.g., Israel itself, women, children, certain males) is another of what scholars in the field of Biblical literature refer to as a major motif—a subject, theme, or doctrine—that reoccurs throughout the entire Bible. (Cf., e.g., Zechariah 4:6; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

thanking the Father, who gives every good and perfect gift! (James 1:17)

- b. Following “in spirit,” Paul adds “and thereunto being vigilant...” Here we see the second of the two participles. (The first was praying.) Notice in particular that this other present tense participle, which the KJV translates, “watching,” during prayer is the Greek word, ἀγρυπνοῦντες (*agrupnountes*).
- 1) The Greek participle, *agrupnountes*, means keeping oneself awake, remaining without too much sleep, being and continuing on the alert (as in the NRSV, ESV, NIV, and NASB), and being vigilant.
    - a) The participle is in the durative, ongoing, present tense and in the active voice, strongly urging and warning the well-armed soldiers (plural number)—all of us believers in and followers of the Lord, and our only Savior, Jesus Christ—warning us to keep on watching, remaining alert, and constantly being vigilant. We cannot “tune in” and then “turn off.”
    - b) We need to continually keep on thinking about what words mean, how people are using them, watch for redefinitions (another logical fallacy by the way, and one that is very common),<sup>41</sup> and oppose and correct them, especially when they are contrary to God’s Word and will.
    - c) Therefore, in this context I prefer to translate the participle “being vigilant.” Watching is a major motif—a key subject—occurring throughout the Bible,<sup>42</sup> and to highlight the significance denoted by the verb in God’s Word, and in this passage in particular, understanding watching in the sense of continual vigilance—never a passive observance—draws out the pressing need and importance Paul is urging as part of the Holy Spirit’s command to be well equipped for this spiritual war. This matter is serious!
  - 2) Being continuously vigilant and in prayer are two parts of a whole; the grammar, wording, and context all show these two parts are bound together and describe the practice of one matter: Biblical prayer that is readily answered by God. We need to be constantly vigilant in all aspects of the spiritual warfare we are engaging in order to include all we need to ask of and discuss with God in order to accomplish his purposes, in particular the

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<sup>41</sup> See “[Logic: A Primer on Common Logical Fallacies](#).”

<sup>42</sup> The concept, watch, is a recurring motif throughout the Bible. See, e.g., Exodus 34:12; Deuteronomy 4:15,23; 6:12; Judges 7:19; 1 Kings 2:4; Nehemiah 4:9; 11:19; Psalm 59:9; Psalm 121:8; 37:32; Micah 7:7; Nahum 2:1; Matthew 16:6; 24:43; 25:13; 26:41; Mark 8:15; 13:33-35,37; 14:34,37,38; Luke 12:15,38; 17:3; 21:8,36; John 18:16; Acts 20:28; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 6:1; Philippians 3:2; Colossians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 5:6; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 13:17; 2 John 1:8; Revelation 3:2-3.

mission to which he has called us. Lenski leads us into careful consideration of this vigilance, as he continues his explanation saying,

Because “in spirit” is Paul’s meaning, he adds: “and thereunto (ever) being vigilant in all steadfastness,” etc. It is our spirit that must keep vigilant unto prayer, yea, vigilant “in all steadfastness.”...the two participles describe one and not two acts. Satan loves to lull the new man to sleep, at least not to be wide awake, so that he may catch us unawares.... The verb Paul uses here conveys the idea of never being off guard with respect to these enemies who would like to find us heedless and [self-]secure.<sup>43</sup>

6. This verse urges us to open our eyes, pay close attention to what is going on, recognize reality, see the present in the historic and Biblical perspective. Too many just want to have fun and only hear nice things, “wanting to have their ears tickled.” (2 Timothy 4:3) Of course, it’s not wrong to seek enjoyment; but it is when its all-encompassing. As we’ve observed, they are unaware they’re even in a spiritual war, much less prepared to engage it and know how to win, or even what constitutes winning.
7. To be well-armed is not enough. We also have to engage the public square consciously and continually watching alertly and vigilantly, while at the same time going into the battle guided by God asking him to talk us—and walk us—through it.
  - a. *Constantly praying* and *keeping vigilant* overlap each other. While we are not letting down our guard and keeping alert, we also ask God for discernment and to keep on being vigilant and perceptive. Satan—whom Jesus revealed as the father of lies—is constantly feeding his followers, and all others, fake ideas and countless other deceptions in the public square and elsewhere. How do we distinguish between what is true and what is false? We ask God for help, and he helps us directly and through others. God is all-knowing; he sees what we can’t and knows what we don’t. When we ask him for guidance in these and all matters, he will give us what we need. In prayer in spirit he reminds us of his Word, Biblical passages and principles that enable us to discern wheat from chaff.
    - 1) He provides others in the church, who can help with either explanations or by referring us to trustworthy resources. In 6:18 Paul indicates the church with his reference to the saints (the ἁγίων [*hagiōn*, < ἅγιος *hagios*, holy, set apart to God]), for whom we are also to pray. Placing the saints as the last word in this section, this verse, places emphasis on the importance of the church.
    - 2) Again at the end of the verse—as at the beginning—Paul uses the noun, δέησις (*deēsis*), which means request, petition, or supplication for the saints,

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<sup>43</sup> Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#), p. 676.

our fellow believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, who also are in the thick of it in this spiritual warfare; they need us, as we need them, and—most of all—we all need God.

- b. Reinforcing the present active participle’s denotation of being vigilant that is durational, non-stopping, ongoing, and continuous is the companion noun, perseverance (προσκατερήσει [*proskarterēsei*], also steadfastness): We do not give up. Lenski adds another insight:

“Steadfastness” and “petition” are diverse, the one is a virtue and quality of the “spirit,” the other a begging prayer. The latter so plainly repeats this word as to weld into one idea the two participial clauses. Prayer is the power we wield, vigilance is...the alertness in using the prayer power.

Yet the repetition is not a mere reiteration.... “Petition” ushers in all that follows: “petition regarding all the saints.... “All the “saints” = the *Una Sancta* [i.e., the *One Holy* church, referring specifically to the true believers in the congregation, those who are sanctified, and set apart to God] include all the Ephesians.... This is *one* army standing against *one* other army. All the saints stand as a unit, none stands alone. See the full force of that. The thought, so often met today, is far from Paul’s mind: If only I myself stand, or only my congregation, I am satisfied. The *Una Sancta* is one. Petition for self is to be intercession for all.<sup>44</sup>

**6:19-20** “And for me, that utterance [λόγος (*logos*), word, message, declaration, statement, speech, proclamation] may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth with boldness, to make known the mystery of the gospel, [KJV] <sup>20</sup>for which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I may be bold, as it is necessary for me to speak.” (Greek, EDS translation)

1. “And for me,” i.e., Paul is asking the church to constantly be praying and keeping vigilant for him also as a member of the one holy church, so that he can boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel. He asks for no obstacles, internal or external.
2. As the KJV renders *logos*, “utterance,” even though this Greek word is typically translated word, message, declaration, statement, speech, proclamation, the context—e.g., his reference in v. 20 as being “an ambassador in a chain”—indicates that the Apostle Paul has in mind a particular application of this message that has special significance to our calling to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the public

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<sup>44</sup> Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#), p. 677. For more on prayer and on the Biblical doctrine of the church, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(PowerPoint\)](#), especially the section on Ecclesiology.

square: specifically, his impending appearance before an imperial court or even the Roman emperor himself. Careful scholarship cites the likelihood that Paul wrote Ephesians about A. D. 60, when he was imprisoned in Rome.

- a. In this “cancel culture” age in which we live and serve the Lord, such a situation is facing many Christians. Two of the most notable are close by us here in Colorado: Jack Phillips, the baker who owns Masterpiece Cakeshop just down the road in Lakewood and Lorie Smith, the graphic artist Website designer who makes custom Websites and owns 303 Creative. Both are strong Christians, who have been in multiyear court cases that have gone all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court, where they’ve finally won, though in Jack’s battle, he’s being sued again by other LGBTQ+ activists who don’t like his refusal to bake cakes with a message that is contrary to the Bible. Many other Christians throughout this country and in other countries are experiencing the same unjust harassment. The enemy would like very much to do this to us as well. So, no matter where in the public square we have the opportunity to speak up, we can do so boldly with no worry about what to say.<sup>45</sup> We take a closer look at Ephesians 6:19-20.
- b. For this context and other reasons, Lenski insightfully and applicably argues that the expression, *logos*, “utterance,” is here “parliamentary, forensic, and a court term.” He further explains:

Paul is thinking of the day he was so anxiously awaiting when he would stand before the imperial court or before the emperor to whom he had appealed his case. **[Talk about engaging the public square!]** But see the vividness of Paul’s mind. He sees himself in the most paradoxical light: a prisoner before a judge, and yet this role fades out into an ambassador sent by Christ, the King of kings, standing in the throne room of Nero, delivering the message of his King to the pagan imperial court. Wonderful double picture, indeed! To be given *logos* is to be given the floor, the right to speak. The ambassadorial figure adds the note of great dignity to that of order and also the idea of vast import to the message thus to be transmitted.

3. At the same time, Paul asks the church to pray that his utterance, his message, is “*with boldness*.” The Greek term is “ἐν” (*en*, in, with, by means of) “παρρησία” (*parrhēsia*, boldness; courageously, confidence; outspokenness; freedom, unreservedness in speaking; speaking plainly, unambiguously, with assurance, fearlessness). Lenski continues:

The A. V. punctuates more correctly than the R. V., for we should construe: “by opening of my mouth in boldness to make known the

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<sup>45</sup> Let us all remember and be encouraged and empowered by what Jesus said, as recorded in Luke 12:11-12. No matter where this opportunity arises, “...do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, <sup>12</sup>for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” (ESV)

mystery of the gospel.” The point is this bold making known. Some combine λόγος with at least the first phrase: “utterance in opening of my mouth.” Opening the mouth is a common expression for making a public address or a long explanation. But the emphasis is on the παρρησία [boldness], which is, therefore, also repeated in the verb used in v. 20: liberty to say anything with nothing compelling restraint such as fear. The aorist infinitive [γνωρίσαι (*gnōrisai*, to make known)] is effective: actually to make known; call it an infinitive of purpose. “The mystery of the gospel” has been elucidated by Paul....

The commonly held view is that Paul is thinking of his preaching in general, that the Ephesians are to pray that he may have adequate boldness for that. But Paul is thinking of far more, namely of the climax that would be reached when his case would finally come before the imperial court, where perhaps the emperor himself or at least his representative would preside. Then Paul would be told to give an account of his teaching and doctrine. Then the hour would come when he was to lay before the highest tribunal in the world the gospel of the King who had sent him to bear his name before kings (Acts 9:15). Then he must speak not as an intimidated prisoner but as a true ambassador. Paul had the promise of Christ for that high moment (Matt. 10:19, 20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11, 12; 21:12–15). Paul was not worried; but he knows that the fulfillment is obtained by prayer. He is not thinking of his own safety but of rising to the great occasion, of doing full justice to the gospel as a true ambassador should. That is why he asks for the intercession of the Ephesians.<sup>46</sup>

- a. And it’s why we should pray for one another as we prepare to enter, and then indeed enter, the public square. Don’t think twice about asking to be added to your church’s email Prayer Line. If you don’t have one, ask the pastor to start one.
- b. Consider one other very important psychosocial reality that the Holy Spirit will use to accomplish his purposes through us. Have you ever observed the common phenomenon that when just one person speaks up, others are likewise encouraged to do so as well?
  - 1) When people see someone else proclaim the truth about a matter, others of like mind are also motivated to do so. This is true especially of God’s people in and with whom the Holy Spirit dwells. We are comforted and encouraged when we know others, who believe as we do, are with us and support us.

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<sup>46</sup> Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#), pp. 679–680.

- 2) The Apostle Paul was a leader—called by God—and didn’t wait for someone else to initiate an action that should be undertaken, but the Lord used the encouragement of the church, the body of Christ, to strengthen even him. Recall, for example, what Jesus told Paul in the city of Corinth: “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, <sup>10</sup>for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” (Acts 18:9-10)
- 3) Over many years, I have observed that when someone sees a need to speak up about something—and does so—others join in and help. But many do not do so until they see another person take the initiative; they are looking for a leader. We, who are called by Christ to be his witnesses, should look for opportunities to speak up for the Lord in the public square and wherever else we are, with boldness, for the Lord is with us (Immanuel, Matthew 28:20); he has brought together many of his people also; and his message is urgent and vitally—indeed, eternally—important.
4. What is the “*mystery of the gospel*”? Looking at the full context, we see that Paul is referring to what he said previously 1:9-10 and 3:3.
- a. In 1:9 he indicates it is “the mystery of [God’s] will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,” i.e., of his grace, redemption, salvation, in Christ. Lenski explains, “Once hidden from the world in general and known by preparatory revelation only in Israel, it is now thrown open to the whole world.” The revelation is necessary; God’s telling us is the only way human beings can know this good news about Christ Jesus according to God’s will. This mystery of God’s will, the Gospel, is made available to the whole world by distributing the Bible and by Christ’s church witnessing in words and deeds.
- b. Again in 3:3, Paul refers to “the mystery,” which he defines in 3:6, “that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” The ESV translates 3:6, “This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.”

Lenski explains that this means the “Gentiles were to be received into the church on identical terms with the Jews, to an identical standing in fellowship with the Jews [no Marxist-type social divisions at all]. In what sense this was a mystery and all about its revelation Paul...describes. The word ‘mystery’ is...not something to remain hidden but something that requires revelation to become known.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians\*](#), p. 467.

- c. This is the Biblical reality that the Gentile believers together with the Jewish believers in Christ are one holy (*Una Sancta*) body of Christ, which is the fulfilling of God's plan from the beginning.
- 1) Recall that when God established his covenant of grace with Abraham in which he would be “the father of many nations;” (Genesis 17:4-7) indeed, “all peoples on earth will be blessed through [Abraham].” (Genesis 12:3)
  - 2) As God incrementally revealed his plan of redemption—begun immediately after Adam's and Eve's fall (Genesis 3:15)—developed throughout the Old Testament, i.e., the old covenant, and fulfilled in Christ Jesus, he spoke through the Prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34) that, when the time was right in his sight, he would make a new (*kainos*, i.e., renewed) covenant, which in the New Testament we see was in Christ, thus bringing Gentiles—including us—into the covenant.
    - a) As Paul explained in Galatians 3:29, “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”
    - b) However, we are heirs *not for status but for function*: Our Lord has given us a mission. (Genesis 3:15; 12:1-3; 17:7; Jeremiah 31:31; Matthew 28:18-20; Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 Peter 2:9-12; 3:15-16) We can't make the same error Abraham's original Israelite descendants did and disobey God and hoard God's blessings instead of obeying God and bringing His Gospel in Christ in word and in deed to the whole world, as they were—and we are—called to do. Now, the faithful remnant of the Israelites, together with us Gentiles who have been grafted into the covenant by our relationship with Christ Jesus (Romans 10:12-13; 11:13-24), are to complete the mission God's covenant people were to undertake through whom God was, and still is, working to redeem and restore his creation, in which will be “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language.” (Revelation 7:9)
      - Thus, we engage the spiritual warfare in the public square positively. We strive to defeat the enemy's evil—but not only just to defeat it and leave a void (which the enemy would quickly refill with even more evil [Matthew 12:43-45])—but to replace it with the bold proclamation of the Gospel of Christ Jesus.
- d. Paul also has another aspect of the mystery of the gospel in mind, as he indicated in Ephesians 3:16-19, where he wrote:

I pray [to the Father (v. 14)] that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,  
<sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray

that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- 1) Surely, the astonishment of the extent of Jesus' love—indeed, of God's love—is a mystery: Jesus died not only for people who love him but also for his enemies. Paul refers to this wonderment in Romans 5:6-8.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- 2) This is the great mystery of the gospel—for Jews and for Gentiles—that God wills both be together, those “from every nation, tribe, people and language,” in his eternal kingdom. The result is, using the famous term penned by John Milton, the great English poet: Paradise Regained!
5. Now what does this mean for us in our ministry engaging the public square? I'm glad you asked!
    - a. Talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion?!
    - b. We have here clear and powerful proof that the church, we Christians, definitely desire diversity, equity, and inclusion *in their true form*. The Bible is crystal clear that God's will is for his kingdom to include Jews and Gentiles “from every nation, tribe, people and language.” (Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 14:6; Matthew 28:19-20) BUT, according to Whose standard?
      - 1) Notice the texts we've been studying, our main text in Ephesians 6:10-22 and the related texts are from God's Word—we have a criterion (vertical) standard of reference, not a norm (horizontal) standard of reference.
      - 2) Thus, our diverse, equitable, and inclusive covenant people come into God's kingdom on his terms, not ours. God reconciles us to himself; we don't reconcile God to us.
      - 3) The texts refer to Christians as *holy*, the root word, ἅγιος (*hagios*), meaning set apart from the world and all its evil values and deeds and conformed to Christ Jesus. The word, *hagios*, holy, also means “saints” (i.e., all who believe in and follow Christ Jesus. The church is referred to as “the saints” (cf. above, 5:18), who are called to be Christ's agents of reconciliation, his ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

- a) This is the way we most effectively engage the public square, as we obey our high and holy calling to bring those “from every nation, tribe, people and language” into God’s kingdom by *speaking the truth* [John 14:6] *in love* (4:15; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7) to them about Jesus’—indeed the whole triune God’s—great love for them at such a huge cost to himself. It is only as the Holy Spirit uses these words in human hearts and minds that those people are changed, that they have—and grow in—love for God and are oriented to his Word and doing his will, that lasting change in the public square will occur.
- 1- We explain that God is both all love (1 John 4:8) and that he is also holy, holy, holy (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8), and we have to be changed by him in order to enter his presence, which is precisely what Jesus did for us on the cross (John 19:30; Matthew 27:51; John 3:16) and also in his resurrection from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15; 12:3)
  - 2- We not only speak the truth, but we demonstrate the truth by our love for all others, remembering the Biblical definition of love as being “patient... kind ...does not envy...boast...is not proud...not rude...not self-seeking...not easily angered...keeps no record of wrongs....” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)
  - 3- **HOWEVER**, they whom we reach for Christ in the public square—as all of us—come into God’s kingdom not as they are, **BUT** as a new (*kainos*, i.e., renewed) creation in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17) Then begins the life-long process of maturing in Christ (called sanctification < Latin, *Sanctus* < Greek, *hagios*, holy) and further distancing themselves from the demonic values of the world.
- b) Contrary to the Biblical view, the worldly view of diversity, equity, and inclusion requires no change on the part of the ungodly. The church commits a grievous error when it does not require members to be holy. This is the purpose of the Biblical doctrine and practice of church discipline, which is one of the ways the church has historically taught and helped its members to grow in sanctification, holiness, maturing in their faith in Jesus Christ, and thus preserving the faithfulness of the church to the Lord and the accomplishment of the mission he has called us to engage in the public square and wherever else we have the opportunity to speak up for Jesus.
- 1- In trying to reach into the world to attract people to Christ and the church, some segments of the church choose to accommodate to the world instead of to transform the world. (Romans 12:2) These churches have failed to buckle the belt of truth around themselves to

proclaim the Gospel of Christ, thus trying to ignore or bypass the required regenerative work of the Holy Spirit that is necessary to change people's hearts and minds. They think they can reach the world and bring the world to church by marketing that makes it look like the church shares the world's values.

Moreover, this approach fails to emphasize the Lord's command for his people to "be holy," a major motif, or doctrine, throughout all of God's Word. Recall, e.g., "You shall be holy to me, for I the LORD am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine." (Leviticus 20:26) In Ephesians we read that God the Father "chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love." (1:4, NRSV) Peter adds, "...prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>14</sup>As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. <sup>15</sup>But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; <sup>16</sup>for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:13-16)

- a- In so doing, that part of the church errs greatly in the attempt to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive, and they allow people who will not change to become members (not just attendees) of their congregations and even of their denominations and thus corrupt their values and the Biblical message.
  - b- Some already in the church, claiming to be Christians, espouse, allow, and even practice worldly values; they thereby grievously dishonor God and corrupt the body of Christ. They should be subject to church discipline, for their own good, for the good of the church, and for the good of society. (1 Corinthians 5:1-5,9,11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14; Jeremiah 29:7; Matthew 5:13-16)
- 2- This is one more example of how Satan corrupts that which is good in God's creation. Satan blinds them to that Biblical reality—**until** we, Christ's ambassadors, speak up, explain the Gospel truth in love, and the Holy Spirit uses those words, the proclaiming of God's Word, and makes its message effective. Thereby, the one hearing listens to the voice of God and is born again, experiences the new birth, and begins the sanctification process.
- 3- In addition to all these and many other Biblical reasons for strongly opposing the intrusion of the world's values—that dishonor God, corrupt Christ's church, retard its sanctification, and hinder its mission—failing to renounce worldly values simply doesn't work. Just ask Brittni De La Mora and countless others with similar stories.

## When the Church Starts Echoing The Very World It's Called to Transform

...At what point did reaching the lost become indistinguishable from imitating them?...

What are they supposed to think?

That the Church is just another voice echoing the same temptations they're trying to escape?

Few people are more qualified to speak into this moment than Brittni De La Mora. Once one of the most recognized figures in the adult film industry, her transformation is not theoretical—it is lived. And her response to this controversy was both simple and devastatingly clear.

“When I left the adult film industry, it wasn't because a church tried to be culturally relevant,” she said. “It was because I encountered the truth of God's Word.”

That statement alone should stop every pastor, every marketing team, and every church leader in their tracks.

Because it exposes a fundamental misunderstanding taking root in many churches today: the belief that truth needs to be softened, rebranded, or disguised to be effective.

De La Mora's story proves the opposite.

She didn't need the Church to mirror the world she was already in. She needed something different. Something holy. Something true. When she read Revelation 2:20-23, she wasn't entertained—she was convicted. And that conviction didn't push her away from God.

It drew her to Him.

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). That promise is not outdated. It is not ineffective. It is not in need of reinvention.

It is sufficient.... But here's the paradox no marketing strategy can solve: the more the Church looks like the world, the less it has to offer it.

Brittni De La Mora didn't hold back in her warning. Citing Ephesians 5:4, she reminded believers that there should be no “obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse joking.” Not because God is trying to restrict joy—but because He is trying to protect what is sacred.

Churches don't need to look like the world to reach the world,” she said. “People who are lost aren't looking for more of the world...they're looking for hope. They're looking for truth.”

That is the heart of this issue.... It's about recognizing that the Gospel does not need to be dressed up in the language of temptation to be powerful.

It already is. Easter is the declaration that death has been defeated. That sin has been conquered. That redemption is real. There is nothing dull, nothing weak, nothing irrelevant about that message....

When holiness is replaced with hype, when conviction is replaced with comfort, and when truth is replaced with tactics, the Church doesn't become more effective—it becomes unrecognizable.

And a Church that cannot be distinguished from the world cannot lead anyone out of it.

The lost are not searching for better marketing.

They are searching for a way out.\*

\* [\*When The Church Starts Echoing The Very World It's Called To Transform\*](#), Prophecy News Watch Staff (Accessed 04/18/2026.) Jesus said, “You shall know the truth [John 14:6], and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

- 4- Herein, Christ in our new nature pierces and destroys the “dividing wall of hostility.” (Ephesians 2:13-22) The breaking down of that wall brings together in Christ those who were former enemies—reconciling them first together with God and then with us—*only in Christ through the regenerating and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit: Never from demonic capitulation to cultural casuistry.* The world can’t—and won’t even try—to bring anyone to Christ.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup>by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup>and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

<sup>17</sup>He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup>For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

<sup>19</sup>Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. <sup>21</sup>In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

<sup>22</sup>And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

- 5- Here we see the Biblical basis for why it is essential to proclaim in a loving manner the true Gospel of Jesus Christ in the public square. To do so, we necessarily begin in the church! We cannot successfully or sustainably engage the public square without the only Way (John 14:6) to break down the dividing wall of hostility. Furthermore, witnessing to Christ in the public square is our part in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), and in doing so, we not only show we do not hate anybody. We—as does God who has sent us—want all people to come into Christ’s kingdom, the kingdom of God.
- c. We absolutely must speak up for Christ when Satan’s demon and human forces try to cast the church as racist, divisive, and exclusionary. How do we do this most effectively?
- 1) Let us pray for one another, and for ourselves, whenever we enter the public square. Always remember what the Holy Spirit said to us through James: “The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.” (5:16 NRSV) In particular ask:

- a) that the Holy Spirit helps us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15),
  - b) that the Spirit helps us not to worry and guides us, so we effectively use the words he teaches us to say (Luke 12:12), and
  - c) as Paul requested the church to pray for him, that we also are able to speak with boldness.
- 2) Remembering how powerful questions are, ask opponents who accuse Christianity of being systemically racist—or exclusive in any other unjust way—these and other similar questions:
- a) “Since the highest authority in our Christian faith is God’s Word, the Bible, which clearly states that God wants us to reach out to those ‘from every nation, tribe, people and language,’ (Revelation 7:9, where we also read will be a “great multitude,” not just a few ‘tokens’) tell me where do you see any racism—or the desire to exclude anybody because of his or her race—in that mission statement? Or anywhere else in the Bible?
  - b) For another example, “Have you seen any of the many times in the Bible where and how God’s people are commanded to treat the sojourner (KJV, also: stranger; NASB, also: stranger, alien, foreign resident; ESV; Hebrew: גֵר [gēr, resident-alien]; NIV: alien; NRSV: alien resident, resident alien, alien, hired laborer) in our midst in the same way we treat ourselves?” Observe that no characteristics pertaining to the sojourner (e.g., race, sex, color) are specified; none of those differences matter. Notice also Exodus 20:10; 22:21; 23:9; Leviticus 23:22; 24:16,22; 25:6 (תּוֹשָׁב תּוֹשָׁב tōshāv, sojourner); NRSV: bound laborer; NIV, ESV: hired worker; KJV: hired servant; NASB: hired man.
  - c) Then, when they’ve not been able to do so, say: “You’ve been misled into what the Bible teaches and what Jesus Christ is all about.”
- 3) Pray that we as a church, and in particular ourselves individually, are bold when we have the opportunity to speak. If we are at all concerned as we enter the public square, remember these matters:
- a) Whose opinion counts most to us? Are we more concerned about what God thinks—or about what human beings think—of what we’re doing?
  - b) We don’t have to know everything—no one does. The Holy Spirit will give us the words we need to say when the time comes (Luke 12:11-12). When you’re asked a question, tell them what you know. If there is something you can’t answer, ask a pastor who faithfully preaches and teaches God’s Word, and then get back to the person with the answer.

- c) Pray for ourselves as Paul writes, “that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,..” (6:19) Then proceed with certainty, with complete assurance, that God will do so as we serve him faithfully in accord with his Word and his will. God’s will—in principle and in action—is always in sync with his Word. (Numbers 23:19; 1 Samuel 15:29; Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17)

**6:20 “for which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I may be bold, as it is necessary for me to speak.” (Greek, EDS translation)**

1. Paul describes himself as an *ambassador* in a chain, singular in the original Greek, not plural as in contemporary English translations.
  - a. The Holy Spirit’s guidance of the Apostle Paul to choose the word “*ambassador*,”—a reference to 2 Corinthians 5:20 (“We are...Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.”)—is highly significant. Let’s think about these aspects of this word choice carefully.
    - 1) The word ambassador informs us that our ministry in the public square is of great dignity and importance.
    - 2) Indeed, the One we ambassadors represent—and who has sent us—is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, under whose feet are all things. (1 Corinthians 15:27)
  - b. Consider the implications of our representing the King of the Universe! For starters: How do we present ourselves, by what we do: e.g., how we speak, how we treat people who bear God’s image (even opponents who stand for, promote, and work to force on us—and even make us pay for [by taxation]—unbiblical, barbaric, and abominable beliefs), and how we act in other ways toward people who are nasty to us? And by what we don’t do! (See, e.g., Ephesians 5 and 1 Corinthians 5-7.)
    - 1) As ambassadors of Christ, therefore, the message we bear into the public square is vastly important. Here is where remembering Ephesians 4:15, “speaking the truth in love”—the love of Christ Jesus—is so helpful as our guiding principle.
      - a) The message is important to God,
      - b) and it should be of increasing importance to us, even—and especially when—our opponents not only don’t see it as being important but just the

opposite: objectionable—and to use one of their favorite expressions—offensive.

- 2) Just because our opponents are offended by what we said, that further energizes us to engage more fully—not to destroy them—but to rescue them, motivated by love enabled by the Holy Spirit within us for those who bear God’s image, for whom Christ suffered and died, to whom He has sent us. I firmly believe that such an approach will be disarming and daunting: they aren’t used to this form of battle, this type of engagement, and if we can do all we do pointing to Christ, with the Holy Spirit’s help, at least some—if not many—will “get it.”
  - 3) To do so we have to go into the public square prepared to dialogue with them there. That’s where they are. Most of them will not be coming to church. Here in Loveland, Colorado, 80% of the population in the greater Loveland metropolitan area are not part of a church. Of that number, 67% have never been in a church. The other 13% have only been in a church once or only a few times, e.g., for baptism, for a wedding, or for a funeral.<sup>48</sup>
2. Paul also describes himself as being in *a chain*. Some clarification is here needed. As noted above, in the original Greek, the noun, “chain,” is singular—not plural—as in contemporary English translations.
    - a. As Lenski argues in his commentary on such passages as Acts 22:29; 25:23; 26:29; 28:20, Roman law forbade the use of chains on a prisoner who is a Roman citizen and one who was not yet convicted of a crime. In Acts 26:29, the Greek word is δεσμῶν (*desmōn*, bonds [not chains, for which there is another word: ἄλυσις (*halusis*), used e.g., in 28:20 and also here in Ephesians 6:20]) < δεσμός (*desmos*). Lenski, in his commentary on that verse observes that the cognate, “Δέσμιος [*Desmios*], too, means only ‘prisoner.’ ‘Bonds’ (neuter plural) = bondage, imprisonment, all that confines a man as a δέσμιος [*desmios*]. Even in 28:16 we feel certain that no chains were used; 28:20 is different.”<sup>49</sup>

By the time of the event in 28:20, Paul was connected with a light chain, just one chain as seen in the Greek, that fastened him to the Roman guard assigned to him, “as a simple precaution” (Lenski, p. 1118), the chain removing the need for a second guard, since Paul was recognized and treated as someone who was not a danger. The chain is described as περίκειμαι (*perikeimai*) < περί (*peri*, around) + κείμαι (*keimai*, to lie) = literally “I have ‘lying around’ [in this case, my wrist] this chain” that does bind him to the guard and significantly restrict his freedom.

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<sup>48</sup> The Church Doctor report for Immanuel Lutheran Church (Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod), Loveland, Colorado, 2010.

<sup>49</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, [\*The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles\*](#) (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), p. 1058.

This is not at all to minimize Paul's imprisonment, but to clarify how he was being treated in this Roman incarceration in his own rented home;<sup>50</sup> his next experience in a Roman prison, the Mamertine Prison, an atrocious dungeon, ca. seven years later, would be much different and would end with his death for Christ Jesus and His Gospel.

- b. Here we see that our present day “lawfare” and “cancel culture” are not new. In fact cancel culture is one of the first sins: the first human being to practice cancel culture was Cain (when he killed Abel, cf. Genesis 4:1 ff.). Here is another example of how God's Word enables us to construct the most realistic worldview to help us make sense of what we see occurring throughout the world and to help others do so as well in Christ Jesus.
  - 1) The inclusion of the Gentiles into the new covenant in Jesus Christ was—and still is—good news to the Gentiles and to former Jews who have been led by the Holy Spirit to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah.
  - 2) But that was not good news to many Jews who did not see themselves as called—set apart to be holy—to God to serve as his agents of his plan of redemption and restoration of his creation. In fact, as the Book of Acts documents—and Paul states in his suffering—many Jews tried to cancel that teaching by trying to kill Paul and Jesus' other apostles.
- c. Here we see the monumental importance of who we are and what we are called to do. We are Christ's ambassadors bringing the good news of the Gospel wherever we are and in all of our relationships—and relationships to be—with the Holy Spirit working through us in the process of extending and nurturing God's kingdom. In so doing, we, his agents, are participating in the overtaking and overcoming of Satan's “kingdom,” and—each of us individually and our local congregations corporately—are playing a small but vitally important role in God's plan of redeeming and restoring his creation!

Think about that reality! The King of all creation, the Owner of his cosmos, loves you and has called you to serve him in restoring his creation! For anyone who wonders whether his or her life has any meaning or significance, here is a vital place to start serving!

- 1) As with all military operations, in this spiritual war also, we need to obey the regulations of our Commander-in-Chief. In this matter we must obey our only Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, follow His lead, and support our fellow soldiers, locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. We especially need to support our fellow soldiers who are being heavily persecuted.<sup>51</sup> We're in this

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<sup>50</sup> It was about this time, ca. A. D. 60, that Paul wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus.

<sup>51</sup> See for example The Voice of the Martyrs at <https://www.persecution.com/>.

together, as we profess each week in either the Apostles' and especially the Nicene Creed: we are one holy catholic (the original word in the creed—which is used by most congregations everywhere in the world—and means global, worldwide) and apostolic church.

In some church congregations, the word, “Christian,” has replaced the original word, “catholic,” due to an unwarranted concern that most people will think it means “Roman Catholic.” That concern is easily addressed. Since the Roman Catholic Church is a true branch of the Biblical vine (Jesus Christ, John 15:5; cf., e.g., Romans 10:9, which every Roman Catholic in good standing in the church can confess), the universal Christian church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:12; 5:29-30; Colossians 1:24)—certain doctrinal distinctives (cf., e.g., the “disputable matters” in Romans 14) to the contrary notwithstanding—the Roman Catholic Church is clearly part of the generic word, catholic, but not exclusively so. Keep in mind, the words “catholic” and “Christian” are not synonyms; we must remember and work toward accomplishing God’s calling of us to be catholic—in the sense of global, universal, worldwide—Christians, i.e., to maintain our focus on bringing the good news of Jesus Christ’s redemptive work to the whole world. (Revelation 5:9; 7:9; 14:6; Matthew 28:18-20; Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-21; Jeremiah 31:31-34; Galatians 3:26-29)

Every Christian must give careful thought to—and very consciously consider—Jesus’ fervent prayer for the unity of the church, as recorded in John 17. We must not take that lightly! Church divisions that become public are one serious source of disharmony and varying degrees of pain that keep non-Christians (and many believers in Christ) away from the church.

The Lord has called us who believe in Christ Jesus to be his church and to accomplish a vital mission. We must look positively at—even gratefully to God for—the several different traditions that have arisen within the church catholic throughout the world over the millennia. We look at all Christian communions—who faithfully proclaim as their authority and practice (obey) the Bible—as true brothers and sisters in Christ who contribute much to enrich the lives of all of us fellow believers, as they share with us in a saving relationship with Jesus.

For those doctrinal differences—that are not salvific in essence, i.e., do not wrongly affect one’s salvation or his or her relationship with the triune God—we do not discount those differences but consider them under the subject of “disputable matters,” about which the Holy Spirit led Paul to write, as we read in Romans 14:1ff., *et al.*<sup>52</sup> Disputable matters are the result of true Christians

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<sup>52</sup> For more on disputable matters and church unity and catholicity, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, Including Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity \(Powerpoint\)](#)

who are sincerely trying to interpret the Bible correctly—“rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15)—but who interpret the same text differently. Since they are true Christians, the verses they interpret differently do not pertain to salvation.

God’s first covenant people, the Old Covenant/Testament Israelites—later narrowed down to the faithful Jewish remnant from whom came the Messiah/Christ Jesus<sup>53</sup>—were to bring God’s redemptive plan to the whole world, but they failed to do so, turning inward and keeping to themselves the blessings God wanted the whole world to have. (Genesis 12:1-3) We must not do the same. We are not to hoard—but to share—God’s Good News of Jesus Christ!

- 2) In order to be successful, as we engage the public square, we must be well equipped, e.g., with the Word of God and the Spirit firmly established and dwelling in our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus—indeed through him in the whole triune God (John 14:6,11,15-23)—and guided by prayer for ourselves and for all the others of God’s saints—his holy children—our brothers and sisters in Christ. And we rejoice as we engage, for we know the outcome: Jesus not only will win, he has already won! (John 19:30; 16:33; 20; Matthew 12:17-21; 1 Corinthians 15) The war is over; we’re just in the mopping up battles—serious battles—but the awareness of Jesus’—and thus our—victory is a huge encouragement!
  - a) When I say, “in order to be ‘successful,’ as we engage the public square,” of course I mean being sure to include a reference to being a believer in and follower of Jesus Christ and trying to obey his calling and commandments. (John 14:15,21, 23,26-27; 15:1-17)<sup>54</sup>
  - b) In that context we relate the point we are trying to make to Christ’s commands. For example, if we are addressing an aspect of LGBTQ+, we can ask, “Since Christ commanded his followers, of whom I am one, to love God and to love all human beings, how is it loving—and therefore how can I—affirm, much less advocate for and promote a lifestyle that is exceedingly unhealthy, contains a lot of violence, and destroys human beings physically, emotionally, psychologically, socially, and spiritually forever? How is that love? How is it loving to affirm one who is engaging a lifestyle that will destroy him or her?”

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<sup>53</sup> For more complete explanation of this subject, see my [Bible Digest Notebook](#).

<sup>54</sup> An example of engaging an official city council meeting boldly in love as a believer in and follower of the Lord Jesus Christ is what I said in a presentation, “[Addressing a Proposed CRT Commission before City Council—A Model](#).”

- d. So, our Gospel message also has to be recognized as important to our opponents, and it will—again, at least by some, necessarily with the Holy Spirit’s help—if we focus on Christ who has called us, whom we represent, and with *boldness* utter the message he has sent us to proclaim, and do so “speaking the truth in love,” the subject of Paul’s whole letter to the church in Ephesus.
- Again, Lenski brilliantly brings the message to summation in this insightful paragraph, as he interprets Paul’s statement, “**for which I am an ambassador in a chain, that in it I may be bold, as it is necessary for me to speak.**”

The freedom of speech, usually translated “boldness,” is defined by Paul himself: “as it is necessary that I utter.” It is the freedom befitting an ambassador of Christ, that he be unhampered in stating his message (gospel) which he is to deliver also to kings (Acts 9:15). No fear about his own person is to act as a restraint. Δεῖ [*dei*, it is necessary for] is used to express all kinds of necessity or obligation according to the context; λαλῆσαι [*lalēsai*, to speak] is the proper word in the proper tense. [As explained above, the aorist tense, active voice, denotes that Paul’s—and our—speaking is not ingressive, i.e., **not** beginning, entering, simply thinking about, only mentally committing to, or even just getting a start; it is constative—a verb form that expresses past completed and also continuous action [also indicated by *dei* (indicative mood, present tense, active voice)]—here indicating standing once for all.] The substance has already been stated: “the mystery of the gospel”; this must be adequately “uttered.”<sup>55</sup> The indicative mood is an assertion expressed as an objective fact.

3. Notice the implications pertaining to the power of prayer, in this case intercessory prayer.
- a. Paul is asking the church to intercede for him with prayer, in particular *deēsis* (supplication, petition [cf. above, 6:18]), asking Almighty God to help him overcome the demonic opposition so that he can speak what he has been called to and needs to say, and to say it with boldness.
- b. We must do the same. We believers in and followers of our only Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, are the church.
- 1) The faithful church, the obedient (and repentant) believers and doers of Jesus’ commands—not anyone else in the world—has the ear of the Lord. (Psalm 34:15-16; Isaiah 59:2; John 15:16; 1 Peter 3:12; James 5:16)

<sup>55</sup> Lenski, [The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians](#), p. 681.

- a) As we see in these passages, and many others, God’s Word clearly says that he hears the prayers of the righteous. But, since all have sinned (Romans 3:23, *et al.*), who is righteous? Relatedly, how is anyone able to become righteous, so God will hear his or her prayers?
  - b) There is only one human who was totally righteous, Jesus Christ (who while being 100% human is also 100% divine), and by the triune God’s great grace, he credits Jesus’ righteousness to all of us who believe in him. (Romans 4)
  - c) Then God hears our prayers.
- 2) When we must speak for the Lord, we must first seek his help—of course directly in prayer ourselves—but also turning to the church for the intercession of many other believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. God will then give us what we need. Satan and his demons won’t have any ability to overcome or thwart us!
- c. How do we learn of these great needs of prayer? Here are just a few:
- 1) If your church has an email prayer line, sign up for it. If you don’t yet have an email prayer line, consider starting one. The congregation that is my home church has such a prayer line, and email prayer requests are received at least once—and often several times—every day. They typically are all very important requests. Later reports often contain amazing miraculous results, outcomes that far exceed the likelihood of statistical probability. Truly, since the results are good, they are from God (James 1:17, *et al.*), and we’re grateful.
  - 2) Several excellent international Christian mission organizations serve as part of God’s answer to prayer for churches suffering throughout the world. Here are only a few examples:
    - a) The outstanding Christian international disaster relief agency, [Samaritan’s Purse](#), provides periodic news of huge needs they are addressing, including great needs for prayer.
    - b) The extraordinary mission organization, [Voice of the Martyrs](#) (VOM), regularly reports on the multitudes of believers in and followers of Christ Jesus, who, with their loved ones and fellow church members, are being persecuted and martyred for their faith in the Lord, as well as those who remain who are remaining strong in their faith in Christ. VOM works with the local church in these places to meet the people’s needs and periodically publishes prayer requests; what a privilege it is to pray for

these beloved fellow servants of the Lord who are serving Him so marvelously and to support this ministry and the others financially!

- c) Not only here in America, but all over the world, church members suffer egregious injustices. Several international Christian legal organizations that are based and serve widely in the United States represent Christians who are experiencing such injustices also in many other places throughout the world. Included among these law firms serving the Lord in this capacity that are based in the U. S. are the Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), and the Thomas More Society. Other Christian legal firms focus mostly on helping Christians who are being victimized in the U. S. The Christian Legal Centre, based in London does similar work providing legal support for Christians who are speaking out in the public square.

**6:21-22** “So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus [Τυχικός (*Tuchikos*)] the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. <sup>22</sup>I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.” (ESV)

1. Continuing in the subject of the importance of Paul’s—and our—working as part of and with the church, Paul states that we not only need to turn to the church for their intercession but to keep them informed. Therefore, he is sending Tychicus to update his brothers and sisters in Christ for their encouragement and so they know how to pray and for what to ask God that Paul needs.
2. We’re in this together. This is one reason why Jesus prayed so fervently for the unity of the church, as recorded in John 17.
  - a. Satan and the demons want to divide us to lessen our ability to effectively fight against them in this spiritual war in which we’re engaged in the public square and everywhere else. An applicable example in the secular sphere is the divisiveness of Marxism and its derivatives, such as Critical Race Theory. Marxism, by definition, is atheistic, and therefore it is Satanic, demonic, and anti-Christ.
  - b. With every division in the church, Satan and his demons have less opposition. One of the most egregious of these divisions today is the LGBTQ+ movement’s manifestation in the church.<sup>56</sup> It shows the church is in the thick of the war; we must be vigilant and courageously and boldly speak out, but doing so “speaking the truth in love.”

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<sup>56</sup> As of this writing, for just one of the latest news reports on one of the former major but declining denominations officially espousing LGBTQ+, part of the denomination started by Martin Luther, see this article: “[Would Luther Recognize This Church? ELCA’s Bishop Race Is Sign Of The Times.](#)” (Accessed 04/20/2026) For more, [What Is God’s Will Concerning Homosexuality: Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love.](#)

- 1) We need to do so with others in the church, beginning with soliciting their joining us and supporting us in prayer. This is not for the purpose of lobbying God. He calls us to pray as a church—**not at all** with the idea that he'll only be persuaded if we can recruit a sizeable number of people to come to him with a request—but for our sake to bless, equip, and empower more of us to bear fruit in the important matters he has called us to do for him, including helping the entire church catholic.
- 2) Then, ask as many as possible to help us in a given pursuit. It draws the attention of our human opposition also.
  - a) For example, one of the times I spoke at a meeting of the Loveland City Council, I needed four people to give me their time, so I could make my presentation. I remember the eyes and verbal expression of the council and others when **six** people stood up to give me their time.
  - b) Furthermore, I didn't know I needed four people to give me their time until I arrived at the meeting to speak. But God knew, and he had already led them to attend that night and gave them the willingness to provide that time for me to say what I had to say. That is clearly Providential; it was all God's doing. How do we know? Was it good? Obviously yes, and the Holy Spirit, speaking through James, tells us from where every good and perfect gift comes. (James 1:17) Thanks be to God!

In her commentary, "Remember: Satan Is the Enemy. Sinners Are the Mission Field," Sarah Holliday superbly summed up the matter when she wrote:

As 1 John 4:10 reminds us, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." To love the unlovable, to speak truth with grace, is to reflect the very heart of Christ, who died for us "while we were still sinners" (Romans 5:8).

Therefore, let us fix our eyes on the true enemy, Satan, who seeks to "steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10). The people around us — whether they wound us, oppose us, or wander in darkness — are not the foe; they are the mission field, ripe for the gospel's harvest. Let us approach them with humility, praying for their redemption, and sharing the hope of Christ. For we were all once "dead in [our] trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), yet God, in His mercy, made us alive. May we long for others to know that same grace, remembering who the real enemy is, and reflecting the heart of our Savior who came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Sarah Holliday, "[Remember: Satan Is the Enemy. Sinners Are the Mission Field.](#)" *The Washington Stand*, June 1, 2025. (Accessed June 2, 2025)

The enemy is not other human beings who bear God's image, whom God loves (John 3:16), and whom Christ has called us to disciple. (Matthew 28:19-20) Keeping those passages from God's Word in mind, makes it easier to proclaim and explain the Truth in love. (John 14:6; 1 Corinth. 13:4-7)

We can win this war, but we need to first recognize that we are in a war—indeed that we are in the most serious of wars—one that is spiritual with eternity at stake. Then, we need to have and use the full armor of God, relying on him to help us accomplish the high and holy calling he has given us to be his witnesses. We cannot—indeed, we are called by God to not, therefore we must not—remain silent. We win the war—and each battle in it—by constantly using the full armor of God and doing so “speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15)