

“Ephesians & You: Your New You”

The Family of God

Ephesians 6:5-23

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Jeff: Gracious Father in heaven, we are thankful—thankful for the day you’ve provided us with life and breath, and for every good and blessed gift. We know that each one comes from above. We are most thankful for life in Christ and for all of the benefits that we receive from this.

Father, we ask now that You’ll continue to bless our time in the book of Ephesians. We know it was likely a circular letter and benefited many churches in the first century as it benefits many churches today. Lord, we’re thankful for its message, for its message of the wonder of the election of grace, for man’s depravity and yet your salvation toward him in spite of it. We’re thankful for the teaching about the church and for all the things that we find therein. We pray that these would continually bless us and uplift our hearts, but also cause us to have a motivation and a zeal to tell others about the gospel of Christ.

Father, we ask now that You’ll bless us as we gather together. We think about Ben. We ask that You would be with him in his recovery. Strengthen him and bless him in so many other ways than just physical. Lord, minister to his heart.

Father, we pray for our brother Bruce. We do long for him to be with us again. And yet we pray that You will give him a content heart. Give him a full spirit with his eyes fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, we’re thankful for the good report from Mike Davis and we pray, Father, for his continued health. Lord, thank You for his vigor and the ability to ride twenty miles. And we pray, Father, that You would continue to sustain him and keep him not only for those kinds of efforts, but also for all the good work that he does. And Lord, we ask that Your blessing would be upon him.

Father, we’re thankful to be here and to be back again in this way. We pray that You’ll continue to bless and magnify Yourself in our midst. We pray, Father, that You will do these things not only for our good, but most of all for Your glory, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: Okay. I want us to read Ephesians chapter 6. And I’ll start in verse 5 and read through the end of the chapter. So let me have you turn there if you haven’t. And this is something that I will remind you of, something that you already know, but we always need this reminder. This is the word of the living God—His infallible, inerrant and authoritative word.

“Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart as you would Christ—not by way of eye-service, as people pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart—rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them and stop your threatening, knowing that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with Him.

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“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.

“Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

“So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

“Peace be to the brothers and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love incorruptible.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. I’m going to talk to you today about something that I think is a bit foreign to us. I think we come to a section like slaves and masters in Ephesians chapter 6. And we obviously look at it and think to ourselves that this is a bit different; this is a bit out of our realm of experience. And I think that up until prior to what happened with George Floyd, and all that has come after that, I think that for many of us before that we thought that slavery would have been a black mark on our past, an ugly piece of history in the United States, but something that we had passed by and gotten over, and something that we were moving forward in. I think we have had a major setback. And I think that it’s important for us to think about a passage like this, and not just because of what’s been happening recently.

But let me ask you a question. How many times have you ever been in a sermon series or walked into a church when they were treating this text, and you noticed that they didn’t treat anything about slavery? You noticed, for instance, that everything that was said about this particular text had to do with employers and employees. And the reason for that is because of what I said. It’s such a foreign text to our own experience that ministers have tried to deal with this in such a way so as to make it applicable. And so what they’ve done is that they’ve basically dealt with it in terms of the slave as the employee and the master as the employer. What principles can we derive from this text that will be applicable to any one of us? And that’s the way we’ve dealt with the text.

Now the question is this. Is slavery a thing of the past? Is it a thing of the past? I would say to you that before this whole thing happened with COVID shut-downs and the George Floyd issue that happened I would say to you that many of us would have said

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that slavery, in terms of what happened in the Civil War for us as a nation, was a thing of the past. It's not that there weren't consequences and implications of that still alive and well, but it was something that we were moving beyond. For instance we had a black president who was twice elected to office. So we were moving past this.

Now the question though is, are we or will we ever get past slavery? And I think that's an important question that we have to struggle with. And I would say to you, obviously not. And let me give you an example of what I mean by this.

Several years ago I was living elsewhere. And I knew of a man. He was a bit more than an acquaintance but not quite a friend, if you can imagine that scenario. But he was going down to South America visiting a woman and courting her; I guess that would be the best possible way to put it. And he ended up bringing her back to the United States with the intent of marrying her.

However he basically turned her into a slave. And I won't go into the details, but she was set free; let's put it that way. And so in my own experience I can tell you right now that slavery happens.

And we often think about slavery in terms of the Civil War. But I think that when we think about slavery, one of the things that we ought to think about is human trafficking. The book *Not for Sale: A Return to the Global Slave Trade* is one of those books that reminds us that slavery is alive and well today. In fact it's a \$31-billion business, and 27 million people are involved in it.

So slave trafficking is alive and well, and something that I think we need to remember is in front of us, not just as a nation but as a world. In fact Condolisa Rice once said, “Defeating human trafficking is the great moral calling of our time.” And this sort of puts in front of us the magnitude of the problem.

Now the reason I lay this out to you is because I want to say this to you. What if someone came into your congregation, came into your Bible study, came into your home, and you were having a Bible study and it was on this text? And all of a sudden you started dealing with this whole idea of slaves and masters in terms of employer/employee relationships. And let's say that the person who came into your study or into your church or into your home, or wherever it happened to be, had experienced human trafficking in a first-hand way. Let's say that they had been trafficked themselves. Let's say they were part of the human trafficking. Let's say that they were in some way related to the whole business. And they heard this text expounded in terms of employer/employee relationships.

What would they go away thinking? Would they go away thinking that the Bible was pro-slavery and that we were just ashamed of it and didn't know how to deal with it? Would they go away thinking that they should have remained where they were, because that's what the text says and that the person teaching it just doesn't want to deal with it? Is that what they would think? What would they think about a text like this one? I think that's an enormous question that sort of weighs heavily upon anyone who looks at this text in Ephesians or the text that's parallel in Colossians, or the text we find related to it in 1 Corinthians 7, and so on and so forth, even in 1 Peter. You could just continue to name the list.

So what do we do with a text like this one? And I think that the question that we have to ask ourselves is a basic one. I think we have to ask the question. What did Paul think

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about slavery? Did he think it was a permanent and necessary part of society, because there are people who think that way? And they see themselves at odds with the apostle Paul. They see themselves as having to disagree with the infallible writer of Scripture at this point because they just can't stomach the thought that Paul would condone slavery. And therefore I can't go along with the Bible at this point.

In fact, if you think about it, oftentimes this is one of the texts that people use to undermine somebody's confidence in the authority of Scripture. They'll say, "Well, doesn't the Bible advocate slavery?" And as soon as you say that you're put on the defensive. And depending on where you are there's usually a group gathering of people who smell blood in the water; let's put it that way.

So the question we have to ask ourselves is what does Paul think about slavery? Does he think it's a permanent and necessary part of society? Is that what his view of it is? Well, I think we have to think about what Paul thought in light of Paul's circumstances. In other words, let's think for a minute about what slavery was like. And let's think about the origin at least of Roman slavery at the time. And it really does come out of the Punic Wars.

Now the Punic Wars were really a series of wars that really go, I think, from the dates of 245 B.C. roughly to 145. And they're a little different from that, but that's roughly the 100-year period that the Punic Wars were fought.

And it wasn't just one war; it was a series of wars between Rome and Carthage. And it had to do with land and power and authority. And those Punic Wars are the lead-up to what happens as a Roman society. In other words Rome gains power and land, and there's an ascendancy that happens for Rome as a power in the ancient world that is inherited by the time Paul and others are living in Rome. And I think that's the background that you have to remember when you think about the Punic Wars.

There were three particular issues that came out of the Punic Wars that help us to understand slavery, and why it existed the way it existed at the time. In fact, I want you to think about this. By the time Paul is in Rome 30% of the population is slave population. That's a large population. In fact some fool in the Senate decided that it might be good to segregate slaves from everyone else in society, and so introduced legislation in the Senate to make dress codes mandatory. If you were a slave you had to dress in a certain way; if you weren't you dressed any way you wanted.

And somebody tapped that man on the shoulder and said, "Do you realize how many slaves that we have in Rome?"

And he said, "Well yes, I do." And then all of a sudden he said, "Oh yes, I do." (*different tone of voice*) (*Laughter*) And he realized that if all the slaves realized how many slaves were in Rome, Rome may not be (*Laughter*) the way Rome was. And so that legislation was dropped pretty quickly.

Now there were three things, three factors that came out of the Punic Wars that are important for us at this point. First of all, there's an increase in land holding. It's not just by the empire but by individuals as well. There's a depletion of native work force due to the military. I mean, think about it. In these early days in the Punic Wars Rome would basically enlist people into its army. But then you could go home and you could work.

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But that gradually changed over time. And as it did there was just a depletion of work force in the country, because everyone was serving in the military. Or at least the able-bodied people were serving in the military.

And so there is this massive number of prisoners of war who are then put to work in Rome. And so that’s really what you have when you think about the Punic Wars. You think about prisoners of war working in Rome. And that is really what undergirds the population.

Now there’s a sense in which this is a slave culture. It’s not just the slaves from the Punic Wars. There are also people who sell themselves into slavery as indentured servants in order to pay off debts, and so forth. There are a number of ways that a person might enter into slavery. And when the culture is a slave culture one sees this as a normal part of society, and a normal way, for instance, to get out of debt with someone with whom you are indebted. That sort of thing is always there, apparent in a slave culture.

Now the question that we have to ask is this. Why not protest against this?, because that is what our question would be for the apostle Paul. Why not protest?

And we have to realize that as soon as we ask that question we are asking it in an entirely different context. In other words, let me put it this way. It is actually anachronistic for us to ask the question of Paul, why not protest?, as if Paul lived post-Civil War. It’s just an entirely different question for Paul than it is for us—an entirely different one.

Now that’s not to say that the issue is absolutely or entirely foreign. There is an issue that I think we’ll see that’s really important. And it’s not just important for us; it’s important for Paul. We’ll see that. But I think that we have to remember that first and foremost.

Now let me say this to you. Having said that, I think that the New Testament does subtly and subversively undermine even the slave culture in Rome. Now how do I argue that? Or what do I mean by that

? Well, I mean this. All you have to do is turn to 1 Peter. And what do you find? Well, you find a household code—a household code similar to the one that we have here in Ephesians. And in Ephesians it tells us. If you look at this it tells us about wives and husbands. And remember what I said to you. In household codes in Rome it talks about husbands and wives and children and slaves. Here Paul is subversive; he deals with wives first, and then he deals with husbands.

Peter is even more subversive. In 1 Peter chapter 2, when he has a household code listed, do you know what he does? He inverts the entire list. He gives slaves and then wives and then husbands.

And so what are they doing? Well, they are subverting the culture. Now you have to understand that they are subverting the culture in a very specific way, because wives and slaves, and even the children to some extent, weren’t viewed as being morally responsible agents. And so husbands were the heads. But they were the responsible moral agents for everyone.

Now I want you to think about that. Paul and Peter and the other New Testament authors in what they’re saying in the way they invert these household codes is that it’s not just the husband who’s a morally responsible agent. It’s the wife who is as well. And

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slaves have an obligation. And by the way, masters have an obligation—a moral obligation to slaves.

And what is he saying? Well, I just want to introduce it right now before we go any further. What is he saying? Think about Onesimus. And think about what Paul is doing in that letter to Philemon. One of the things that he’s doing is that he’s saying, “You guys are not slave and master first and foremost, but father and brother—or better, brother and brother.”

Now what does that do? What does that do to a relationship, a slave/master relationship when the two are brothers? I’ll tell you what.

Sig Tragard: They’re equal.

Jeff: The slave/master relationship begins to deteriorate pretty quickly, at least in terms of the Roman understanding of it. And so in that way Paul is very subtly undermining the slave culture in Rome. And if Christianity is really practiced, what begins to become apparent is that slavery will not be an institution like it was in Rome or like in the Civil War or like any other time anymore, right?

I mean, think about it. This is very simplistic, but think about it this way. If a human trafficker became a believer and saw other women as sisters in Christ, how long would he traffic them? Not very long.

Brave Man: Amen.

Jeff: Do you see what I’m saying? So the gospel has a way of undermining that kind of treatment of human beings one to another. And so Paul is actually undermining these things by what he’s saying.

Now I want to say this to you. The gospel is subversive. But Paul is opposed to certain things. He’s very opposed, not just in a subversive way. He’s very opposed to certain forms of slavery even in a slave culture. Let me give you a for instance.

If you go to 1 Timothy chapter 1, verses 8-10, listen to these words. *“Now we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, understanding this: that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and the sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers and the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers,”* and so on.

Now I want you to take a look at that word *“enslavers”* in verse 10. If you have a note it says this at the bottom: *“that is, those who take someone captive in order to sell him into slavery.”*

Don Maurer: Yes; my translation says *“kidnappers.”*

Jeff: Kidnappers. For instance in my denomination, in the history of the RP Church, this was one of the first churches involved in the Underground Railroad and the undermining of slavery in our country. And one of the main texts that they would use to argue this is Exodus 21-24 wherein man-stealing is condemned. And this is the idea of man-stealing—kidnapping, enslavers; that’s the idea.

And so Paul is saying, “This is not what I’m talking about when I talk about a slave culture involving, say, the Punic Wars background, or indentured servants,” and so on. As much as we would like to sort of undermine that culture, there is a form of slavery, of enslavement that is man-stealing. And it should never be condoned such that we try to undermine it in a subtle way. We should eradicate it immediately.

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Now my own denomination—and I think rightly so—would have said that what happened with the slave trade before the Civil War in our country had more to do with this kind of slavery than it did with the Punic Wars and indentured servants and that sort of thing. And so it needed to be done away with immediately.

Something else that I’d just say to you. If you look in 1 Corinthians 7:21, what does Paul say? He says that if you have the opportunity to be free, avail yourself of the opportunity. He says that to slaves. So he’s not preserving a culture. He doesn’t see it as permanent; he doesn’t see it as necessary. Even in this slave culture where he’s undermining it with the gospel he says, “Avail yourselves of the opportunity to be free.”

I’ve already said a word about 1 Peter 2 and household codes. But then I want you to notice this. Maybe I should stop though before I go on. Is there anything you want to think about and discuss? Gary?

Gary Dunbar: The whole gospel speaks in these terms, and we should comment on it. The whole gospel speaks in terms of “*bought with a price.*”

Jeff: Yeah.

Gary: And over the years many have translated it as “*servant.*” It’s translated that way because of sensitivity to the word *slave*.

Jeff: Yeah.

Gary: So I wanted to comment on just how Paul ties that in at the same time.

Jeff: Yes. I mean, think about this—

Gary: It’s problematic if you always translate the word *servant* into *slave*. You’ve got to make this case.

Jeff: So *doulos* is the word for slavery, right? And I think, for instance, that one of the things that you see that’s part of it—and we’ll talk about this when we get to romans—but one of the things that you see in Romans is in Romans 1:16 where he says that “*I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God.*” And we often wonder. Why in the world does he say “I’m not ashamed of the gospel?” Is it that Paul is just kind of a negative guy who uses the litotes case and he says, “You’ve got to communicate?” In other words, when you say “How are you doing today?” And they say, “Oh, not bad.” That’s a litotes case. They’re expressing the positive using the negative, right? And so is that what Paul is doing here?

Maybe so. But I think what is happening here is that in this early part of Romans Paul has three references to slavery, and he says he’s a slave.

And you have to understand the slave culture. Even though I say to you that there’s something that’s different, and even the gospel subverts it in the way that Rome conducted itself in the slave culture, it still wasn’t good. I mean, slaves were mistreated people.

I can’t remember his name. He was a doctor in the ancient world. But he gave this advice. You should never, ever hit a slave with your hand.

And you think to yourself that this is wonderful, right? And then he goes on. The rest of the quote is that you should use something like an instrument so you don’t hurt your hand. (*Laughter*) A stick, or something like that. He was a physician, and he said that you’ll hurt the anatomy of your hand if you do that.

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Slave culture was really profoundly ugly, even in this form. It wasn't like Punic slaves were okay. No, they were not okay; they were mistreated. And so Paul is saying that he is a slave to God and the gospel.

And I think then that what he is doing is that he has really invited people into a negative way of seeing the gospel. In other words, if you're a Roman citizen you're going, "Well, I don't think I want that. If you're describing yourself as 30% of the population, as a slave, I think I'm going to pass on that."

And then he adds this profound statement. "But I am not ashamed of the gospel, nor of the God to whom I am enslaved, or the gospel that enslaves me." And I think we have to realize the impact of that. So that's kind of what I would say.

You're right; we've softened it to the extent that we translate *slave* to be *servant*. We've made employees to be servants, and slaves to be employees and masters to be employers. We've done all that sort of softening.

But we've really got it. You know, there's a profound impact on the way that Paul introduces Romans. It's a disdainful way of describing himself and his culture. In other words, if you think about it like this, he's not going to get an A in Evangelism 101, because he has immediately said, "I am like 30% of our culture that none of us want to be." That's the idea. That's good. Anything else?

Ron Baling: Sometimes he speaks ideally when he says, "*Children, obey your parents,*" and "*Slaves, obey your masters.*" To me he's saying, "I feel it in the Lord." You know, you can cut your hair, but if you do something illegal, then don't do it.

Jeff: Yeah? I don't think so; no. Is he saying that you're obedient all the time?

Ron: No. (*Laughter*)

Jeff: Bishop?

Bishop Rodgers: I just think that with Yahweh that there is a background to all this. There is a tradition in Israel and then also with Paul that to be God's servant is a radical act of surrender.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: Much like a slave who had no basis to object to his master. We really cannot criticize the Lord Jesus. And if we do then we're in some sort of sinful rebellion.

Jeff: Yeah.

Bishop: So I don't know what to say. There's a lot of meaning caught up in this whole discussion.

Jeff: Yes. And actually, when you think about it, think about 1 Peter, right? In 1 Peter it goes to slaves and women, (or wives, rather), and then to men or husbands, right? And then right in between them you have Christ who Himself is a slave. So you're right. The positive way of putting it is this. I think it's kind of a profound thing that he says, "Now, slaves, by the way, don't you forget that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was a slave."

Bishop: One more thought. It's gone now; it will come back.

Jeff: Well, when it comes back bring it to us. So I've already said this, but I'll say it again. And that is that there is something here for masters as well. And that is that they are to exemplify Christlikeness in the way that they treat their slaves as fathers and brothers. That's the admonition.

Bishop: It came back. If we had been celebrating the Lord's Supper together, it seems to me that at the meal of the Lord's Supper then we don't have these distinctions, whether

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Jew or Greek. If only they would have accepted that, it would have struck this down almost immediately.

Jeff: Oh, absolutely. You know, if you’re a master you pass the cup of forgiveness to your slave. What a powerful witness!

We were having Communion. I preached one evening about passing the cup of the Lord and thinking about the disciples passing the cup of forgiveness to one another. And a man from the congregation came to me and told me that his children had been fighting on the way to church. And he said, “I looked over, and both of those kids were fighting tears when you talked about that.” And they weren’t even able to take Communion at that age. But the message of what it was that we were about to do impacted them so much. You’re right. Yeah, what’s up?

Noah Falbo: Why is Christ a slave?

Jeff: Good question. Christ is a slave because He basically takes upon Himself our nature. Do you know what I mean? When we think about the Incarnation or we think about Christmas, the second Person of the Trinity, God the Son, takes upon Himself human flesh. You’re shaking your head yes, so I’m going to assume all this.

And then what does He do? He becomes a servant or a slave to the will of God so that He might obey the law of God in a way that we didn’t do and couldn’t do now, so that we could be counted in Him, by believing in Him, as if we had obeyed. The problem is that we have also disobeyed the law of God. And so we need to be punished for that, right? If you break the law you need to be punished. And so He was punished on the cross in our stead, on our behalf. So we not only have forgiveness in Him, but we also have His righteousness in Him. So He becomes a slave to God’s law—a slave to God—achieving all that we were unable to achieve in Adam and in ourselves, that we might have life in Christ. Does that make sense? Tom?

Tom Hansz: I think it’s important though to point out that Christ put Himself in the role of a slave voluntarily.

Jeff: Yeah.

Tom: Slaves do what they have to do. So Christ knew how bad it was.

Jeff: Yes, that’s right.

Tom: What a God!

Jeff: What’s that?

Tom: What a God!

Jeff: Okay. Let me remind you. This is all of the key; we started off thinking this way: that life is submission. And it’s submission that looks differently depending on your role. But this is the way that Paul started it off in 5:21: that we’re to submit to one another in these different ways. And I think that gives us some suggestion that life is difficult.

Well let me transition us now into the next part of this. This is 6:10 ff. There’s so much more that we could deal with here. But we’re going to try to work through this in the next few minutes.

So first of all, when you look at this text, one of the things that you notice is that it seems to be very offensive in nature. I mean, if you look at the text there is all sorts of donning armor and taking up the sword, and so forth. And yet, when you look at the text, it actually says “*stand*” four times.

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And standing doesn't put you in mind of an offensive posture, right? It puts you in mind of a defensive posture, right? I'm just going to hold my ground. I'm not going to advance the cause.

And yet I want you to think about it. And in fact when I was first a believer I thought to myself that I read this text when I stand. And why would we want to stand? You know, we want to run forward. And as you get older you kind of realize that sometimes standing is all I can do, right? And it's not all I can do; it's all I can do in Christ. And so the idea of standing in its own way is really inviting, especially when you think about being in full battle garb, sort of just standing and holding the line.

And I think this is important for us because this whole idea of standing means that we're to be strong in the Lord. And this is not pretending, not moralizing, not focusing on our feelings, but being strong in the Lord.

Now here's the problem that we oftentimes think about when we think about this whole idea of being strong. Is anybody familiar with the book *The Screwtape Letters*, about a senior demon writing to a junior demon about how to lead his patient, the Christian, away from the faith? Well, in his book C. S. Lewis talks in one place and he says that what you want to do is that you want to get your patient focused on his feelings. So when he prays that he might love God more, get him focused on his feelings, whether he feels like he loves God or not. When he prays that he might help others or be more loving toward others, get him focused on his feelings as to whether or not he loves others. Don't get him focused on actually loving others by doing things. Get him focused on feelings, his own feelings.

Now the interesting thing is that when you look at a text like this one, you could think that way. You can think, be strong in the Lord. Okay, I'm going to get in the car and I'm going to psyche myself up by listening to some kind of music—you know, “Onward, Christian Soldiers”—and then I'm going to feel strong in the Lord.

That's not the way this text actually works itself out. In other words, the idea of being strong here is a passive verb, which means this. It means that the subject is acted upon by the verb. In other words, we are being strengthened. So this whole idea of being strong in the Lord is not something we do. It's something that God does to us. He strengthens us.

Think about it this way, this simple example. Bananas are adored by monkeys, right? The bananas aren't doing anything; they're just adored. The monkeys adore them, right?

Well, when we are being strong in the Lord we're not doing anything. The Lord is strengthening us. That's the idea if you think about it.

The other thing I want you to notice—and it kind of comes back to something we thought about before; it's in Ephesians 3:16—is that he is praying, “*grant you to be strengthened.*” That's the prayer, remember? So let's go back to 3:16 for just a minute.

The prayer is that “*according to the riches of His glory He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being.*” In other words he's not talking about how you should feel in your inner being. He's praying that God would strengthen you in your inner being. That's the prayer.

So now he comes to chapter 6 and he says, “*Be strong in the Lord.*” We're not to work up feelings of strength, but to be that which God is making you to be through the answering his prayer. Be made strong.

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Now I want you to think about this. He really puts legs on this. He puts legs on this when he says, “Now put on the armor of God.” What is he saying? How do you do that?

I know people who look at this and they say, “You know what? I guess I’ve got to do this. Every morning I get up and I pray these things on me. I pray the shield of faith and I pray the sword of the Spirit, and I pray the breastplate of righteousness and I pray the helmet of salvation; I pray all of these things on me. If I don’t pray them on me in the morning, boy am I vulnerable throughout the day!

That is the wrong way to look at this. The right way to look at this is to understand that the armor of God is not your armor, but it’s a genitive; it’s God’s armor.

Brave Man: That’s right.

Jeff: The armor of God is God’s armor, okay? Now how do I put on the armor of God? I put on the armor of God by virtue of—or should I say it this way? The armor of God has been put on us by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ.

I want to show you something really neat. What are the pieces of the canopy? What are the pieces of the armor of God? Well, truth/belt, righteous/breastplate, peace/feet, faith/shield, salvation/helmet. The word of God is our sword.

Think about the book of Ephesians. Where have we witnessed those things heretofore? Well, let’s take a look at them.

Truth, righteousness and peace. In 4:21 we’ve been taught the truth in Christ. In 4:24 we’ve been “*renewed in the new self.*” And in 2:14 “*Christ is our peace.*” There’s truth and peace and righteousness. The new self is renewed in the righteousness of God.

What about *faith, salvation and the Word*? Well, think about this. Early on in chapter 1, “*in Him*”—Christ,—“*you were also, after listening to the message, the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, having also believed, (the word of faith, right?), ‘you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.’*” There’s faith, salvation and the Word. There are all six pieces of the armor of God mentioned in connection throughout the letter of Ephesians in our union to Jesus Christ. In other words we possess truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and the word of God by virtue of our union with Jesus Christ, not by virtue of getting up in the morning and being sure that we secure the armor of God in its place. The armor of God is secured in its place if we stand in Jesus Christ.

Now let me put it this way. There’s a sense in which I can become more and more aware of these things through a strengthening of my faith. Or I can trundle along throughout life from the weakness of faith. In other words I can live more of an awareness, and therefore live with more confidence, when I realize what I have in Jesus Christ. And I can live in a weakness of faith when I fail to realize what I possess in Him.

For instance, think about the sovereignty of God, right? Somebody really latches onto the sovereignty of God. And he’s like the man of Psalm 12; nothing shakes him because he realizes that God is sovereign.

And then there’s the Christian who hasn’t latched onto that. And he struggles with anxiety and fearfulness and all kinds of things. They still trust God, but they don’t have that same assurance of God’s sovereignty. So they sort of trundle about through life.

And that’s the difference. The one has had access in his understanding to the sovereignty of God, such that he has a deeper sense of abiding peace; the other has not. And that’s the way with the armor of God.

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Now we put on and therefore strengthen our faith, and we put off and so too strengthen our faith. And yet—and I’m going to pass over a couple of these,—we have a foe who is constantly against us. The wiles of the devil are all about us. And I simply would say to you that we have had exposure to this throughout the book of Ephesians when we went over some of the magical cults of Artemas or Diana, whichever you choose to call it, in the early church and especially in Ephesians.

Clinton Arnold talks about how with the demonic there’s a close combat that takes place. I often feel that this is the way of it, don’t you? When you think about this whole idea of fighting not against flesh and blood but against the powers of darkness, the devil and his wiles, I oftentimes think about the way that the combat takes shape.

I don’t know if you remember this or not. But early in the days of Octagon Fighting, remember when Hoice Gracey was the champ? No? Okay. It was back in the ‘90s. When cage fighting first came onto the scene it was on Pay Per View. And there was a guy by the name of Hoice Gracey who was the champ. No one could beat him. And he was a Brazilian jujitsu guy.

And there were these stand-up fighters. He would take them down in seconds. He would tie them up and they would tap out.

Well, at once people started to realize that you had to have some ground fighting in order to even stand in the ring with this guy. There was this guy who was a Greco-Roman wrestler. And it was the most boring match that you could possibly imagine, because they immediately went to the ground. And they were tied up in this pretzel knot. And you could not tell who had the upper hand or what was going on under the surface, until finally—and I don’t even remember how many minutes this thing went on—the Greco-Roman wrestler had tapped out.

And that’s the way of it. With such close combat it’s sometimes imperceptible that we’re fighting these battles so closely, which is why we need to be even closer with the lord through prayer, Bible reading, Christian fellowship, and so on—those kinds of things. And that’s why I think prayer is introduced at this point, because there’s a sense in which prayer unites us, or at least makes us aware of the union that we have with God. And so we pray in the Spirit. And again that really summarizes it, if we pray in the Spirit in the midst of this battle.

I realize there’s a ton there that I passed over. But any last –minute questions or thoughts before we leave the book of Ephesians altogether? Yes, Don?

Don: I think it’s important for us. You know, we’re constantly bombarded with all of these things that are happening today in our society and in our culture, whether it be abortion or gay rights, or a secularism that is increasing in our society. I think we have to realize that it’s not politicians or world views. Like Paul said, “*we wrestle not against flesh and blood,*” but against the principalities and powers. It is all spiritual battle, spiritual warfare. We have to keep that in mind.

Jeff: Yes. And thanks for that, Don; that’s good. One of the things that I used to read at first when I was a believer was Frank Perretti’s *This Present Darkness*. They were exciting books; the guy was a great storyteller.

But if you remember the books, if you ever read the books, one of the things that you learn from those books is that Perretti believes there’s a demon behind every evil. So is somebody is greedy it’s because of the demon of greed. If somebody is lustful it’s

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because of the demon of lust, and so on. And if you would just exercise the demon then the person will be free of lust, right?

That’s a major problem. Those are not the kinds of the wiles of the devil that Paul has in mind. He’s not thinking about the demon of lust and the demon of greed and the demon of power, and so on and so forth. Some of these things are our own sinful desires, right? And so we’ve got to remember that.

I would say to you that if you want a great book on the devil’s wiles it’s by Thomas Brooks. He’s an old Puritan. And it has a beautiful way about it because it talks about the wiles of the devil. But it also has a healthy dose of grace; it’s just a marvelous book. *Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices* is the short title. But I think that’s basically it. It’s a Puritan paperback. If you would just type in “Precious Remedies Against Satan’s Devices by Thomas Brooks,” you would find it. But it’s a great book on the devil’s wiles. Anything else? No? Okay, let me pray with you.

Father, thank You for this day and for the time You’ve given. Thank You, Father, for reminding us that we possess the armor of God as we stand in Jesus Christ. Thank You that we do stand against the devil and against his wiles and against his minions. But we stand against them in Christ. Thank You, Father, that You’ve given us the victory through Your Son. Thank You, Father, that we live in Christ. And in Christ there is victory over things in our culture like slavery and its consequences, even some of the ugliness that we see today, Lord, both as a result of our country’s heritage but also as a result of the global situation of human trafficking. Lord, we know that in the gospel these things can be overcome and are overcome. And so, Lord, we pray that You’ll cause us to be zealous for that gospel, for we ask it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)