

The Conflict

"Selections from the Writings and Ministry of G. V. Wigram."

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Chapter 1.

Eph. 6: 10-12.

There are two things which, when considered, bring out into light, in a simple way, the position in which the Christians at Ephesus were standing when the apostle addressed them.

First, we find the intimation of better things to come connected with the scene in the garden of Eden, "The seed of the woman."

Second, that particular development of the truth in which we stand; that that very "Seed of the woman," having had His heel bruised, is up in heaven, the Head of a body, which body is on earth filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.

I should like to rest a little in detail on these two points. They seem to bring out the needs-be of angering for a redeemed people.

When Eve had been beguiled — when she had got under the power of the adversary — there was One spoken of by God as "the seed" to come, and, in what He was to do, there was a ray of light for the man and the woman; there was a hope introduced; but a hope which brought with it the certainty of suffering for those who were the possessors of it. If I look at it — this intimation thus come forth from God — it is plain that the setting up of a power in opposition to what they sold themselves to, must be at some cost to themselves.

There is great joy in seeing God's Son put in the place of power — Lord of all — all put under the sway of this "Seed of the woman." Test your thoughts of the gospel by this; not merely its meeting the need of your lost soul, but my God, setting up His own power in the hand of His own Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

But how could it come to me, devil possessed as I am by nature, without suffering? How can this light come in contact with darkness? It will find that in me which is ever ready to lend itself to Satan, even "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Can this new thing meet all the evil in me without there being conflict from beginning to end? Our position must be one of *endurance* — of

suffering — of *wrestling* "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." God is going to establish His power, and that will overthrow all the natural thoughts of my heart.

Observe the exquisite grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with redemption as displayed to us. Are you saved sinners? That enables you to say: "Not a cloud above; not a spot within." Is it something you have done? No; this something *God* has done for you; and every step of the way afterwards too it is the same; *all is God*. God will not let the people come out of Egypt under *His* power, and then leave them under their *own wills*. When they were out of Egypt He left the way apparently open for them, to prove whether they had a God or not. If they would go back He would stop them; He would not head their retreat. He would *break them down*; He would have a "willing" people — would make them take *His* will for *their* will: His position for their position; He will make us take His God for our God, as Ruth said to Naomi; He will form us in heart to be *willing* to have the portion of our Lord here below.

What was the difference between Paul and the Hebrews? It was that Paul was not satisfied just to begin; he would hold fast — would be "firm unto the end." They went forth, their hearts failed them, and then they let slip.

But these Ephesians had got fast hold of the truth, and the truth had got fast hold of them; so to them Paul writes, led by the Spirit, to strengthen them for conflict. He would have them above the fear of the power of darkness; if these were high, *God* was higher still. They need not be daunted; He would have them raising their heads; would have them know that there was a living Head for them in heaven, as well as a head in heavenly places to their enemies.

"Be strong in the Lord." — How could they stand in such a position — living members of a living Head — how could they stand down here where He had been, occupying a place between Him and the enemy, and not be suffering? Impossible! — He, when in this world, was the "man of sorrows." In His grace He had left them down here, that it might be truly brought out that there was such a thing as a heavenly Christ. And all who are partakers of the heavenly portion are born to suffering — dare not expect exemption from it; far from that, they must be willing and ready to endure it.

I found it one thing, when God, with mighty power, let His light into my conscience as a prisoner in the world, having the joy of salvation, and getting out of the house of bondage; and quite another, the being there alone in the wilderness with the God who has brought me out. It is one thing for God to have brought me out of Egypt; it is another thing for me to be on the other side of the Red Sea. And when He says: How do you like walking with me alone in the wilderness? there comes in the thought of the leeks, and the onions, and the cucumbers; not, as before the deliverance, the pinch of the prison, the oppression of the task-master, the escaping from the spears of the Egyptians under shelter of the blood; but being in the wilderness, having to learn what is in our hearts.

God challenges our hearts as to how far we prefer wilderness fare with the living God, to Egypt's fare without Him. Do not be discouraged if you find yourselves on the other side of the sea beginning to count the value of a leek or a melon. You *will* think of them, just because you are poor wretched things. God counts on what you are; He counts not to find a single amen to one single bit of grace that He has given you. Do not be discouraged, but take care not to fall as Israel fell. They fell, *not* because they found their hearts did not tally with God's heart, but because of their *determination to have their own will* — to have ways and resources that were not God's, and the not seeking in brokenness of heart to know His; this was why they failed.

Take care it is not so with you. He can give you hearts not to know a leek or a melon. There is

nothing He cannot do. If I know my God, it is not with me: Oh, the sorrows of the way! but: I am in the place where God would have me. I am with Christ, and it is far better to be without a leek than to be without such a Christ. I can bear the yoke with Christ.

And God can form this in our hearts for us. *He* does not want to learn that there are no springs in us, but He wants *us* to look in and see that there are none. We must learn it by failure, or in His presence in communion with Himself.

Just notice the peculiar position of those who came in from the time God gave the first word about the "Seed of the woman," till the time when God shall be all in all. When He set up a kingdom in man's hand, He was obliged to make good certain things against the powers of darkness. When it was an earthly testimony, the Jew found that obedience did not bring him into poverty, but into wealth. But it was not so with the Lord Jesus, and we are heirs with Him. He was *poor*, yet He did not *want* — never wanted. God would take care to feed His Son. And there is a monstrosity comes into our minds when we think with anxious care about our wants, or think that, because we follow One who had not where to lay His head, we are to want. Did not God take care for that Son of His? You would not think of temporal need, and fear it, if you were in the light of the Lord Jesus. It is quite a different thing for Him to hide from you the *channels* through which He will care for you, and His *forgetting you*.

This winding up of the epistle is most important. Paul's heart was enlarged; how should he stop short of God's thought about them? He had blessed them with "all spiritual blessings;" how could the apostle help reminding them that these were given to them that they might use them, and that, too, at the present moment for God's glory?

We go to the Lord with a burdened heart, and bring it away with us, because we have the cross still, and do not understand His way. But, when we know Him better, we are content the cross should be there, because He cannot take it off until it has done its work upon us, and so His Father be glorified. We say: The cross is too heavy. He says: No, my Father put it there, and, if I take it off, the flesh will break out; the cross must remain until the will bends to it.

You will often find yourself in a Pi-hahiroth; sit still and watch. Moses' sister was in a very blessed position; the little ark had gone out among the bulrushes, she sits down and watches. It was a blessed place for faith to watch, and see what was done. If you cannot sit still and wait for God, you are not in the right position. Do you say: But we have given all up; now what will the end be? How will the Lord show Himself? — Sit down before God, and say: Thy ways are too great for me; what wilt *thou* do?

There is a largeness about His ways that beggars our understanding. It goes *beyond* His people's requests. Many of the restrictions the people of God suffer come from themselves, because there is not simplicity to say: What wilt *thou* do? Abraham's intercession stopped at ten; but God goes farther, and takes up the desire of His heart. If I leave God to act He will act much more munificently than if I say: Do this, or do that. — "He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? "

"The wiles of the devil" are methods — methodical actings; it does not mean "fiery darts" merely. Leighton observes: "It is not the half-laden caravans he cares to attack." He may retire when the heart is not keeping watch; and elsewhere just come in, and cause the heart fun of joy to get a fall.

Christians want more quietness. There is often too much haste in accrediting what we fall amongst. Much truth may be believed — many high truths assented to — such as union with Christ, and the like; and yet it may come out after all, that the heart has never known the taste of grace, not

knowing itself the chief of sinners. What, then, is the good of all that knowledge? There has been much of the wiles of Satan in it. You get no good from truth unless it bring your heart into communion with Christ. It is God putting home the points of truth, and making them home-stores, that is really good. There may be quantities filling the imagination, and much talked of, and written about, but the question is: Do I know this Son of God who became Son of man for me? — He who came down into all my need as a Saviour.

"We wrestle." We must not only be prepared for active service — for going forward; but we must be ready to stand against the immense array of opposing power. And this is much the more difficult of the two — to hold fast for your own soul what God holds fast for the church in Christ. I do not think the thought of "flesh" and "world" is excluded here, but it is not these only, but their "rulers." It is not only the world, it is the master of the world; not only the flesh, but the master of the flesh, that we have to contend with. It is not a question whether you can break this or that bad habit in yourself, but there is that great power of darkness above you, who only found his match in One. When the Lord was here he tried Him, but could not overcome Him in anything; and the way *He* acted is *ours*. The more power Satan put forth, the more Christ left Himself in the hands of God. And none can be a match for Satan now but He who baffled him entirely, and set him aside. Christ did not either exhaust His power in doing it; He carried a perfect righteousness all through. And now I can overcome, because the blood is what Satan can never stand against, and God has said He will destroy Satan under our feet shortly. Trial you will have; you will be tried to the very bottom. Would to God you might be always "more than conquerors;" but depend upon it, whenever you are, you will have nothing to boast in but Christ.

Another thing of importance is faithfulness to others and to one-self. I see two souls, one, perhaps, carrying a burden a thousand times heavier than others; and he walks quietly, just having as much as he can bear, and no more. I see another, with a very little burden, who breaks down. None but God can judge about these two; God and Christ can. Remember you have not come to the end yet. To one who has a trial which seems to him past all bearing, I would say: Cannot you identify yourself with God's counsels? and say "I will glory in my infirmities." — In judging, you must consider not merely the weight of the trial, but the character of the vessel, and the nature of the strength given. The weakest vessel cast into the hottest furnace if the Son of God be there, will come out unhurt; while the strongest will be burnt up if the Son of God be not there. Is my girdle broken? Shall I say He has laid too heavy a burden on me?

It is a very important thing to see what my walk has been, and what the state of my heart is. Perhaps He will say to me: Your eye is not single enough; you are truly looking to me, and desiring my glory, but you do not see yet how I am sure to meet you. God says: I do count my Christ worthy. Do you ask me to fill you up? Well, I count *Him* worthy, and therefore I *can* fill such a vessel as you! It is not a question of whether I will give it to you, but whether I will give it to my Christ.

It is often the case, in trial and conflict, that we give ourselves credit for something more than we have; then he has to make us open our hand to let it go. I must take the place of having nothing, and act simply on what God is, and on what Christ is, and not be vindicating myself as Job did. When *God* comes in to vindicate, how graciously He does it!

There must be patience. God will try you; He will make you know that the springs are not in yourself; He would have you sure that you have none in yourself, just by your being filled up with those springs that are above, that others may see it too.

Ephesians 6: 13, 14.

One remark I would make as to the quiet way in which the apostle assumes it is all right in the hearts of these Ephesians.

He had drawn a striking picture of how God, to please Himself, spontaneously from His own heart, had come in and taken up a people out of a state of devil-possession, had revealed Himself, and made them members of Christ, His Son at His right hand, the Head in heaven. Last time I was looking at the position taken by God down here, Jesus of Nazareth being up there at His right hand, as the Head in heaven. He has the answer down here in a people who know His name, and who have to make good a certain position according to it, in spite of all Satan can do.

Think, dear friends, what grace! God in heaven making good in you a position by the Holy Ghost, answering to that of His Son in heaven. Grace, for height and depth beyond the creature, reaching to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Grace, which comes down to us under all our ruin, even when we were "dead in trespasses and sins," rolled about by Satan as the withered leaf is tossed by the wind in autumn — those whom he had in his possession.

Who are you, that in you God should make good this answer? Yet to us He says: You are the proof to Satan, and to the world, that my Son is sitting on high as the Head; and this is the position in which you have got to stand.

How quietly the apostle assumes, as I was saying, that the tone of their hearts was right, as well as that they were ready to live to Him who "died and rose." There is no stirring them up — no pleading with them to take the position he was putting before them; they are *in* it. How different the people of God are now! We see them having a thousand objects but the one the Holy Ghost would cause to thrill in us. How ashamed we should be when we see what is around us, and then look closer home, and find our houses unpurged, our heart unjudged, and He still having to say to us as members of that living Head!

He speaks here not of motives but of position. He supposes the soul to have a character suited to that of sons of such a Father — of vessels sealed by the Spirit, and filled with the Spirit. How different the church of God was to what it is! They had a single eye — one object — seeking in everything Christ's glory — light bearers in the world. And what decrepitude in us! how it shames us!

With regard to this armour for the church militant, whose soldiers are you? — God's? — And what for? Pleasure? or conflict? And how far are your hearts interested in the conflict? Are you only taking it because "no cross, no crown?" or has it taken hold of your hearts as the spring of your souls?

"Her seed shall bruise thy head." — How far are you counting that all connected with Satan is shortly to be bruised? But nothing connected with the Son of God shall be bruised; He will not let you be, because you are connected with His fortune. How far does *that* tell on your hearts?

Then with regard to this conflict, is it for ever? No! there is a time when rest will come: "They shall learn war no more." There will be a happy end to it all, but now we are learning to endure. And, as to the service whilst we are in it, what provision has Christ made for us? — This brings us to the armour.

"Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth." — Do you know the value of a girdle in regulating and increasing strength? As Christians we cannot do without the girdle; it tells home upon us, and speaks much of the grace we have to do with. Truth is the girdle; it comes searchingly home, it surrounds us. Have you a clear idea of what it is? Can you put it into other words so as to satisfy

yourself? There are certain things true to God's mind, and certain things which are not true. His word tells us this. If you have His word close round about you, you will find it uncommonly searching.

The eye of Christ was always on God's word. When Satan came to Him, He could say, That is not truth. I am bound to what is truth. — Satan tried to misapply truth, and what is misapplied is not truth. It was not that Satan could not quote Scripture; he did; but he applied it to Christ, not as One going down, down, down — as the Servant come to do His Father's will — but as thinking of Himself and not God. Truth was the girdle to Him, and He had power to endure. What a contrast in Peter. "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." He was not a Nazarite — his heart filled with a single desire; with him it was not always the thought: Where is my God in this thing? So there was weakness.

I believe if this were entered into more in our own souls, it would explain much as to our failure in walk. There is such a thing as the truth of God — God's thoughts about *you* — coming down into your very circumstances, which, if applied to you where you are, will be the strength of the Nazarite to you, and, while faithful to Him who has separated you, none shall be able to bind you. It will be ever with you: "Lo, I come to do thy will."

The thought I have about the girdle is not that it is merely truth in contrast with error — God's truth about Christ, and the like; but it is truth coming down to me here, and encircling me right round where I am in my circumstances. People are often astonished at what happens to them — borne down where they expected to stand. When I look back, I see that I have not had the experience of Paul "in all things more than conquerors," if I have not had the girdle on. I should avow it. Perhaps I was a soldier for myself, and not for Christ. Perhaps I have had a girdle on of my own, not the girdle of *truth*.

How far, I ask you, is your eye single? The single eye is that which sees God as He is. None but Christ did that perfectly. Many saints who have heard about the grace of God, and can confess that they are the chief of sinners, yet, when you get to their hearts, you do not find mercy and grace there, and the knowledge of God and His Son Jesus Christ, as you should expect to find it. It is a very solemn thing to see how imagination may dress up and play with truth; the mind filled with fantasies, instead of the heart being in the dust before God, bowed down in His presence, and tasting, as individuals, mercy and grace.

Do you know God for yourself? Are you familiarised with God in Christ — that Christ who is the model God Himself looks at, and has given to you? Has God looked into your heart in power to show you Christ, in whom is all His delight, as the One into whose likeness He would have you moulded? He has seen loathsome, creeping things in there, and He has made you to see what you had no idea of. Christ is to be there, instead of everything else, in the end: but you will see at first how mercy alone suits you. If you do not see what a horrid black thing you are in contrast with Christ, you have no true thought about God's mercy, and should not take the place of a soldier, but go and look for "the girdle of truth." You must have it quickening and taking hold of your heart, or you will not be able to take the place of one fighting the good fight of faith.

"And having on the breastplate of righteousness." — I know not how better to take this up than by contradicting two errors. The Protestant error, in connection with justification by faith, has been to make the righteousness of Christ applied to a person who has been previously occupied with *Christ* — *imputed righteousness*. This is untrue. The Romanist says there is no such a thing as imputed righteousness. The Protestant would establish some ground for Christ's favour by his own happy feelings and so on; and, when these are gone, the whole process has to be gone through again of getting his soul into that state once more. He only sees *imputed* righteousness, and not *imparted*; and this error has arisen in answer to the Roman Catholic notion of *imparted* righteousness only, with no imputed

righteousness. These say, when you have overcome all the evil in you, God will give you the benefit of imparted righteousness.

But the breastplate is not according to either of these views. It is something covering the front of the person all over, and protecting it. Is it that a certain power has come inside me, and will in the end cast out all evil? No, it is more than this. The Christ that spake to Saul, took him up, and made him *one with Himself*; Christ's life throbbed now in Saul. The members here are in vital union with Christ the Head, and this union links them up in one life.

Where do I begin when I talk of righteousness? *With God*. I say: It was righteous of God to raise Christ from the dead, and thus to vindicate Him as worthy of all glory; it was righteous of God to show out what the world was, to show out the impotency of Satan, and to show out what He Himself was, too, by raising Christ from the dead and putting Him there on the throne of God, everything put into His hands by right and title. "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Here is the perfectness of righteousness.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;" there is value in the blood to put them away. But there is more than that. He has *stores* of righteousness in that One up there, which He could throw over the sinner. But He does more than that. He makes the pardoned sinner *one* with that Christ — with that *righteous* One. God looks at us not in ourselves, but in Christ; and thus the righteousness I have is perfect; it is "the righteousness of God."

The tempest-tossed conscience, knowing its feelings about sin, but not seeing the full measuring out of its guilt on Christ, needs to see the question of sin for ever settled — needs to see it as connected with the great plan of God. The foundation is Christ. The separate stones do not give the value to the building; it is the temple as a whole, and the foundation on which it stands. The righteousness of God, who "when we were dead in sins, quickened us *together* with Christ." Different this, to the thought of a white robe thrown over me.

It is not my mind at work on God's truth; it is God's truth at work on my mind. If you have the unction from the Holy One, you need to look to God to have His truth so brought home to you. A person may be holding truth himself, instead of having it as a girdle round him. There is all the difference possible in our grasping at truth, and truth holding us.

The righteousness we have is not only imputed, which gives the idea of something thrown down to me from a distance, but it is mine by the power of a life communicated. Life is there; the seal of the Spirit is there. To be without any power but my own would be agony: for then all the purposes of my heart must be found, like Peter's, to be insufficient. God must keep all, as well as lay the foundation. The Spirit of God teaches me, that it is the righteousness in life of a Christ who has died and is risen. Christians want quietness, but it must be quietness of life — of resurrection life. I would rather be a poor, dark, uninstructed one living on Christ, than have all the blaze of truth without Him. The one who has intercourse with the living Christ has the power of life.

There is no power of living Christ, and quitting ourselves like men, but by living out here the life He has communicated to us. Of course it is no question now of guilt upon the conscience: there would be no *living* Christ to us unless He had been a *dead* Christ. But I would rather see any one in bondage, not knowing what to make of the contrast between himself and the Christ who has given him forgiveness and divine righteousness, than to see much liberty, in the sense and knowledge of grace, and no self-loathing at the contrast. Doubtless, I am to have liberty, but God would have me see *myself*, and learn that I *shall* be a blessed person when I awake in His likeness.

Oh, beloved friends! one thing is pressed much on my heart for you — for many whom I see individually, and for all collectively. It is that you may feel the importance of living, practical holiness before God. Having life — having righteousness — to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away, as the living members of Christ before the throne, you should individually most earnestly seek to walk before God.

Chapter 2.

Eph. 6: 15, 16; Luke 2: 34, 35.

No sooner does Mary know the sweetness of having this Babe, than it is told her, while she might well count herself blessed, "A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." No sooner was He born into the world, than nothing but slaughter of babes is heard of. And so, in our hearts, no sooner is Christ there than Satan, who does not like to give up his power, brings in conflict. Some old suppressed habit will, perhaps, break out with new power. Do not be surprised if Christ has displaced Satan in you, that Satan should try to regain the mastery. We cannot stand without knowing this.

The first thought with a newly-saved soul often is: Now I have God; I have Christ for my peace; and now all will go on quietly. Instead of which we find that we have to do with a God who brings in death and resurrection on all that is in us, that we may know that the excellency of the power is of God and not of us. We are connected with the triumphant party — with the One who has conquered; so there is peace, in spite of all that Satan can do, made good by God in the very field where Satan seemed to have triumphed.

"Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." — The shoe-sandal, not for strength, but for comfort. The heart uninstructed in God's ways is often tripped up, where, if it knew the ways of God — if it understood His thoughts, it would find cause for thanksgiving.

God does not come off His own ground in dealing with us; He expects us to come on to His ground. Often when Christians get a quiet standing before the Lord, and look back on their past history, they see how their restlessness arose from want of understanding God's way. They thought to get something for themselves; God's thought was to get something for Himself. God does indeed hold forth something good for us, but His thought is to train us to know that He has taken us up for Himself. He does not always care for us according to our own thoughts for ourselves, and then we are astonished. He told us before that it would be a desert — a conflict — but we have not taken in what He told us.

You know the position God has claimed for Himself. You know how He took up at Pentecost a people connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, and subject to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. You must not then make yourselves the centre of your system, but you must take in this God with whom you have to do.

"Taking the shield of faith" — That by which all the counter movements of Satan are met. You have a wicked one to contend with. I, individually, have to compete with an enemy who has been well nigh six thousand years skilled and versed in the heart of man; an enemy who has tripped up every individual but One, because he has found in every other in the world something of which he could say: There is a tender spot in you, in which I can put a ring, and lead you captive. He has given servant of God after servant of God heavy falls, and has found but One who could bruise his head, and who will shortly bring it down bruised under our feet.

If you go into the battle thinking it is a fine scene, you will soon find out the solemn truth that Satan is against you, and will give you no quarter. He thoroughly hates Him who puts you forward in the battle; he abominates from the bottom of his soul the object God is making good through such poor worms as you or I are — that he should have, through us, a witness for Himself on earth.

"Ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." — It is important to judge whence evil is. It is all in one sense from Satan; but, when in the presence of God, judging yourselves, you cannot always quietly put things off on Satan, for Christians often tempt Satan, instead of his tempting them; they often put themselves where they know there is temptation, even if Satan were out of the way. They lay the train, and invite Satan to put the spark to the tinder. *They* then bear the moral guilt of it before God.

We cannot calculate about fiery darts hurled by Satan. God will put up an object before a young Christian, and Satan will hang up another. You may set off thinking of God's object, and, on the way, Satan may get you off to another; and God will teach you by it. You did not know it; but perhaps you loved money — a little bit of power — something of that sort; and you have perhaps learned that you did by a fall. Or again: there may be some service God is going to launch a man in, and He may allow Satan to come in and try him with fiery darts, so that he may be humbled right down before Him at the first, and then may go into the work softly.

There need be no setting on fire, for the shield of faith is ours. And which is best? for God to teach us the evil of our hearts by fiery darts, or by falls which dishonour His name? Mark, I do not say it is necessary to learn your hearts in either of these ways, but you must learn them in some way, Peter learned something of his by his falls. Luther learned his, to an immense extent, by fiery darts from the enemy. The proper way is to learn them by that which comes from communion with God, and using the shield of faith. Satan stands plying his fiery darts, and the man of God stops, holds up the shield of faith, and shuts them out. The child of God in communion with his Father can say: I know what you are about. The Christian taught of God finds in God's presence what Christ is, and how Satan could not get one bit of dross out of Him, for there was none there.

Satan's ways with us are threefold. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The temptation will take the form of the mind, and of the position of the person addressed.

Where is the answer to each? Is it the lust of the eye? and is my answer to be: Oh, I am to please my eye? I am to admire what is beautiful? — When I get to the scene *God* tells me to admire, I *will* admire it. — Is it the lust of the flesh? — I am no debtor to the flesh to minister to it, for it is because I have this bad flesh, that will lust, that Christ died.

If you cannot get to see that your portion is not here — that you are passing through a world that crucified Christ — I do. Something for myself, is it? and my Lord not glorified? Oh, the power of knowing that God has taken you up for Himself! Oh, the power of a single eye enabling you to meet all that Satan can do against you! What would trouble you in your troubles if you had this thought; God has sent me here, and He would have me here — *exactly here*.

A cross on one shoulder, and a cross on the other, and is there not peace? "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" God says: take that weak body. And can you not take it from Him? Fiery darts coming in thicker than hailstones, and can you not say: I will bear them all for the sake of Him who has called me to be a soldier? Would they disturb your peace, if the sense of *God's* having put you there were fresh in your mind?

One thing to notice is, that Satan does not make a stand with a passing shot; he will keep to it.

But God does not like to be constantly troubling the quiet walk; so He will sometimes let things accumulate, and then take the soul apart to learn it all at once. So the enemy may be allowed to ply his fiery darts a long time before God will come in about it. Evil suggestions — a sort of whispering in the ear — sometimes it is a heresy Satan-inspired, which none but God could meet. You cannot account for many things without seeing that they come direct from Satan into the minds and mouths of persons.

EPHESIANS 6: 17, 18.

Before entering on the helmet and the sword, I desire to recall what has been said on former occasions, as to the way in which the Spirit of God shows us in the context a certain position taken up on earth by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He has a people whom He has placed in that position, which they have to make good against the power of the adversary.

The minds of people have often been confused about this passage, by their not seeing that it is not a question of aggressive warfare, such as the work of an evangelist; but that it is the saints of God standing fast in the camp — holding the position in which He has set them.

"The helmet of salvation" is the next thing connected with the panoply. It is important to bear the principle I have spoken of in mind in connection with this, because, in another place, the fifth of the first of Thessalonians, we find the helmet spoken of in another way. There it is: "Putting on for an helmet, the hope of salvation." A soldier may have a helmet of one kind for one position, and another for a different kind of warfare; just as the different shields that are spoken of; if standing under the wall of a besieged town, he would need the large shield to cover him completely; while in active warfare the light small one would be used.

People want to reconcile the two expressions, but they do not need to be reconciled. If you do, you rub out the distinction. It would spoil the whole, if it were said here "the hope of salvation;" because God says: I have put you to stand in a certain position; if you do not *stand* in it, you will be driven back from off it. Therefore it is not "The *hope* of salvation," but "salvation" itself which is the helmet.

What is our helmet? Just as, in connection with the feet being shod, it is the gospel of peace, so now it is the helmet consisting of salvation. The head — the vital part — is protected by it. It is a finished salvation; you take your position as a saved man.

But there is more than this. Just as the breastplate is not only righteousness imputed individually — a true view but defective — but God's righteousness in Christ; so here it is the salvation that becomes the Saviour-God; it takes in *God's* work, and not only meets the contingencies of my walk here. The Saviour-God has done the work. I must look up there, and see Him the centre of a new system, in which my salvation is comparatively but a small part. My head is here encircled by a glory connected with all that *God is*. My salvation flows from this, that He is the Saviour-God.

I have no claim or title. God says; I reckon you perfectly guiltless, because I did reckon the guiltless One guilty for your sake. I can look down on you through Him, and cannot separate the feeblest member of His body from Himself. I look down on you as those on whom descends all that He has, all that He is, and all my delight is in Him.

Most blessed, but even this is not all. God did not set Himself in movement because of what we were — for our individual salvation. He delights Himself in salvation; and He bids us look up, and see in Him the measure of this salvation — a salvation for eternity — for the earth — for the heavens — showing out the riches of His grace, according to His eternal character as the Saviour-God.

So the apostle speaks here of the helmet of salvation, as what I know as the answer to Satan — the answer to the world — the answer to my own soul, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ on the throne of God as my Saviour-God.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." — Here again we find the importance of attending to the context. The sword is mentioned in different ways in the word. In Hebrews 4: 12, 15, we have the Lord Jesus as One who has "passed through the heavens," and is on the throne to sympathize. His sympathy is with God first; and next He sympathizes with what is of the Spirit in us, not with what is of the flesh. He will not strengthen the flesh, but the Spirit.

What do you want? Do you say God's glory in you? Then He may have to put you through discipline. There are many things in your heart that He may see have to be removed, for He will ever sever between the heart and the cherished idol, and the word will be like a lancet in the hand of a surgeon to us.

Mark that in the fourth of Hebrews there is no question of the adversary as there is in Ephesians. It is Christ dealing with His people for the glory of God, looking after the people He loves, and therefore judging hearts.

In the second of Revelation we find "the sharp sword with two edges." He comes out of His place to judge, on the one hand; He will go right down to discern the "thoughts and intents of the heart." On the other hand, He will not be deceived by false testimony. In Revelation it comes in, when failure was amongst the candlesticks, to see what light they were giving, He being One whom smoke would not deceive; but, at the same time, so used to handle the sword, as to be able to give deliverance by it to any in the evil having "ears to hear."

Here, in Revelation, it is Christ outside; in Hebrews, it is Christ within the veil, judging His people; in Ephesians, it is the saint standing in testimony — that is, in a position he has to make good. What is the use of the sword there? Much. There is the adversary against you, and you have to withstand him.

In the fourth of Matthew, in our Lord's temptation, we have the brilliant illustration of this use of the sword of the Spirit. Mark, it is before the Lord begins His aggressive work that He goes through the fiery ordeal. What grace was there in this to us! In grace Christ stood in the wilderness to measure Satan, and well he could stand in that position against the enemy. There are three things connected with it. But first, always in connection with the right use of the sword, is the single eye. Christ being led up by the Spirit to be tempted, takes His stand as a servant to defend Himself with the sword; answering always from Deuteronomy, He takes the place of the humbled One.

First, it is the lust of the flesh: "Command that these stones be made bread." Does God like His people to hunger? Thou knowest His delight in Thee, put forth thy power. Mark the answer. Ah! if it is blessedly true that there is such a thing as Jehovah's loving to feed His people, there is something more blessed still than being fed; there is the being sustained by God without it. Man does not live by bread alone; man may be without bread, but not without the word of God. Thus Satan was foiled by Christ taking the place of perfect dependence.

Next it is "the lust of the eye," and such a promise brought to back it as that "angels shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." But Satan garbles it, as he did to Eve. He presses home on the Lord something that the eye can see. He had got Israel down in that way: they wanted a sign. Does he never get you down thus? Do you not want something to look at, or to feel, instead of the simple word of God? If Satan come to you, and ask you to give him some visible token of God's care

for you, answer him with, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Why ask for signs — for feelings — when God Himself is close at hand? The emphasis of "Thou shalt not tempt" is, thou shalt not challenge God for signs. Why do I want a sign? Because I cherish lust. He says: No; thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Then Satan makes another attempt with what belongs to him. There is no sense in asking whether Satan had the power to do this, for there is no use in asking if a liar can speak the truth; it might, or it might not, be; but assuredly Satan can do nothing but as God allows it. As with Balaam, he could not curse Israel.

Satan has no power over a saint of God unless he yield it to him; could he ever succeed with a child of God who is using the sword? Never! If he succeed, it is because you have betrayed yourself into his hands. It was thus with Eve; it was thus with Israel before the calf; it is thus with the church, unfaithful likewise; and the saint unfaithful to God puts himself into the enemy's hands.

The third thing I would notice here is the "Get thee hence, Satan." He had not said this before. It is remarkably connected with the use of the sword of the Spirit. If you put yourself into a place of temptation, you have no right to say "get thee hence, Satan." If God lead you into it, as Christ was led of the Spirit, you have to bear it.

It was not when Satan was merely tempting Him that Christ uses this language, but also when God's honour was touched. When Peter took upon himself what belonged to God alone, it was: "Get thee behind me, Satan." And when Satan does this with me, then I am justified in saying the like. Satan will sometimes so turn things round, that he will go beyond himself; and then there is rescue for you; while before, you have had only to stand in the temptation — to endure — whilst having no power to put an end to it, at last a question comes up which does not in the least tempt your heart, that before may have been tempted; something that seeks openly to set aside God; and then without difficulty you can turn round and say: I have nothing to do with that; "get thee behind me, Satan."

All this teaches us forcibly the meaning of taking the sword of the Spirit. It is to be used in the active energy of service, but it is to be used also, if only standing on some corner of a rampart, utterly unable to go forward in anything. Even if a bedridden saint, you will not be able to make good your position, and Satan will betray you to yield, if you are not skilful in using the sword of the Spirit.

The temptation of our Lord gives us an immense amount of experience; it shows up the ways of Satan; he would throw us into a dilemma if he could. The Lord met him in the spirit of a servant — as meaning to be a servant. Then Satan puts Him between the two horns of the dilemma; he tempts both as a servant and as God. Christ passes through and maintains both.

We are in a position to be tempted all day long to give up; and where he succeeds with us so often is through our not having a single eye — so contrary to Christ's: "Lo, I come to do thy will."

Then, again, there is with us the want of understanding God. Some lust begins to move in our heart; we think of what we like, or of what we do not like, instead of delighting in God; and immediately we are in danger. Never so with Christ.

Closely connected with the armour is the spirit of the believer — the spirit of dependence it must be, for with the soldier there must be prayer — hanging upon God. Not only getting this feeding supply hourly from God to meet his need individually, and to meet that of all the church militant, but also that all his springs are in God.

"Praying always." God often puts His people into new paths — paths unsought and unthought of

by you. Why are you there? — God would see whether you have the spirit of prayer there or not. The Red Sea is before you; the enemy behind you; then a waste howling wilderness beyond, but it is no waste howling wilderness to God. He can go through it. We learn in these new scenes how little we know of these feeding-springs in Him for us, and He would have us learn them. The question is, not as to the springs being there, but as to whether we know how to draw water from them. Sometimes, when the saint has learned the lesson, he is taken home. God says: Why should I leave him there any longer? he may go home.

"Supplication for all saints." The spirit of the camp is to be the spirit of dependence; each saint looking for — drawing for — all the rest, the consciousness of God's supplies being all full for every heart.

Ah, beloved friends! you cannot do without the camp. And whatever your outside position, remember you must have the spirit of dependence. You had far better be a living saint, walking in dependence on the living God, though very ignorant, than one who knows a great deal about position, and so on, but who is meanwhile double-minded and lukewarm, knowing little or nothing of this praying always" — of the springs that are in God.

Oh, that our souls may know them to His glory!

Ephesians 6: 18-24.

The closing portion of this chapter divides itself into three parts. Prayer; interest in the details of the work in prayer; and the benediction. The great subject in which the Ephesians ought to have been interested was the glory of God; and their prayers would have flowed forth about it, in the intelligence of renewed hearts that know what to pray for.

There is such a thing as drawing near to God, conscious that there is something He has got to give. I cannot tell what, but He that searcheth the hearts knoweth.

If I am a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a happy thing to see the special need of the work, so as to be able to present it definitely. As to prayer, much is often passed heedlessly by; whilst in others, there is often more correctness in the heart than in the understanding.

There was no such thing as prayer in Eden; prayer is the expression of want. Directly I find a person praying, I am sure there must have been sin connected — either with himself, or with the place he is in. The blessed Lord, when He prayed, was in the place where sin was. Paul prayed when he found out there was a God in heaven whom he knew nothing about.

The opening of the subject of prayer in Scripture is in the case of Cain. There was in him no dependence whatever upon God; but when God had pronounced his judgment, then he says: "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" he makes an appeal to God; and God takes care that nothing of what he dreaded should take place. What does Cain do with the gift he gets in answer to his appeal? He settles down quietly to make himself as happy as possible without God's presence on earth. A solemn thing this in connection with prayer; the fallen heart may appeal to God, and God give an answer, and, as the result, the heart, being unrenewed, only makes itself as happy as possible out of God's way.

Persons constantly say: I am safe, because I pray. Take care. If *God* says of you: "Behold he prayeth," it is well, but not otherwise. It is not a question whether God gives you gifts, but what you do with them. Is it for yourself that you use them, or for the glory of God?

Our blessed Lord took the place of one who had put in abeyance all His power — who held

Himself in abeyance! He took the place of a servant. His being able to do this proved who He was. Man cannot hold himself in abeyance, for his character is too strong for him. Sin is in, and sin will come out. Look at the Lord's prayer in Gethsemane — the only instance of the kind, and replete with instruction for us. He goes into Gethsemane, to pass through, in solitude with God, all that was upon the threshold — all that was coming upon Him. And what is it? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The Lord, holding the place of the perfect Son of man, could not forget what rested on His bearing that name — even the question of guilt. But how was it possible, if He were perfect, for Him to think it an unimportant thing for God to hide His face from Him? He would not have been perfect if He had not shrunk from only this one thing. He did not shrink from the temptation in the wilderness; God led Him into it. But there was in this what was anguish to His soul in the very measure in which He was perfect.

Human nature, in all its perfection, may present desires before God which will not be received. On the other hand, there is such a thing as man entering into God's counsels. This comes out in Paul, where he says: "Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now, as a good man, could He do otherwise than abhor Satan's messenger? God says: I will not take it away. I give you my light to show you my reason, and leave it there to throw you upon Me. Better rudely to strand your vessel on the shore, if it make my strength perfect in your weakness; you will then pour out your heart before Me.

There never was a case like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul did not stand in the light of the divine counsels; that was why he did not like the thorn in the flesh. But Christ stood in the full light of the thoughts of God, and, therefore, He could not but hate that cup.

There is the flowing-out of grace through human hearts down here. It may be felt that some Christian is so walking with God as to have the ear of God. And this is a blessed thing, but there is something above it, and that is a person so walking with God that you can go to him to know what God's mind is. It is a blessed thing to have the ear of God; but how much better to feel that the sympathies of Christ are flowing through my heart, and that I can *know* what He is going to do.

There is none with whom the power of prayer is more remarkable than with the weakest members. A babe will get an immediate answer, whilst a father may have to wait, because he has, or ought to have, learned to trust.

If it be not on our hearts in the present day that there is a testimony to go out for God, we shall sink down into some little local interest. The apostle wanted them to care for the work going on then, not merely out of love and friendship for him, but that he wanted their souls to bear part in the work by bearing it on their hearts before God. There is an immense burden on us before the Lord, connected with this want of sympathy with what God is doing.

God, in dealing with the souls of His people, traces in His word the path for their feet, and marks out the proper subject for prayer. There may be in prayer a great deal of affection and thoughtfulness, and yet it may be all *human*. Persons might think God would say: Go; you pray for a wrong thing. But no; He often gives the answer, and then lets us learn by bitter experience how, if we had left it a little more to Him, He would have done far better for us. Often one is plaiting a scourge for one's own back, before one learns to place oneself as a child, and say: Take thou the lead, and I will follow. There will be pressing desires before God, and He will grant them, and let us see how we have been planning — not for God — but planning difficulties for ourselves. You cannot dictate to God. The blessed Lord only once said: "I will;" and then it was His Father's will.

Do you feel that there is this war going on between God and Satan, and that you are connected

with it? And that your heart is out and abroad in connection with it? If it be so, it is surely a special time for prayer. There are countries all the world over that need a testimony which none but God can render, but which we, if we are like men that wait for their Lord, may have laid on our hearts to pray for them.