

Stand Firm

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[0 : 00] We're going back to Ephesians, if you're vesting with us, we've been looking at the letter of Paul to Ephesians in our Sunday morning worship this is the second and ultimate sermon. And this last section is very practical, it's taken some amazing truths that Paul has been inspired to give to the church in Ephesus, and amazing theological, deep, meaty truths.

And then he's bringing the practical outworking of these truths into the lives of the church there. And this is a very famous passage about the armour of God, you could probably do a series on that on its own.

Someone said to me after this morning service there's six pieces of armour, said you should have done six sermons on that. So either he was saying you rushed it far too quickly, there wasn't enough meat in it, or there's just plenty of stuff to say.

And I thought I hope it was the latter there, because there is so you could easily do a series of sermons on the armour of God itself. So by its very nature today is going to be a kind of overview of this passage. But I hope a helpful one, and one that you can apply to your own Christian life and your own Christian understanding.

We live in a very scientific age, very scientific day, and people like to have empirical evidence for things. And they don't like to put their trust in anything unless there's empirical evidence for it.

[1 : 25] But I can guarantee you that science provides no empirical evidence for the origin, nor can it for the origin of good or evil.

That's an area out with their expertise, and it simply can't be done. They will have and can provide no answers to why humanity is, can be both good and evil.

Over this last week there will have been things in the news that were outstandingly evil, that belie understanding, that just seem to be so brutal that there can't genuinely be any reason that science, or indeed philosophy, can bring to explain why it happens.

And that holistic philosophy itself will often, in an underlying way, shrug its shoulders at that question, at the origin of good and evil in humanity particularly.

And many people, probably most people, live out their lives avoiding these kind of searching questions, living their lives avoiding them, and then dying with no satisfying answers to what is life about, why is it the way it is, why is there good and why is there evil.

[2 : 56] And for most people, whether wittingly or unwittingly, I think, I may be wrong, you're in the marketplace of the world more than I am, it may be that I'm out of touch, but I would suspect, certainly many people I know have no time for the unseen and for the spiritual.

They're not interested in it, the unseen spiritual realities of this world. Or if they are, they suppress it because they would rather just get on with the material significance of their lives as they see them, and living for the day.

However, paradoxically, God also wouldn't go away, and he wouldn't go away in a lot of people's thinking as well.

And that is something that's hugely significant and important. And we have come to know as believers that Jesus came to reveal the invisible.

He came to open up for us this unseen spiritual world. He came to show God in the flesh. He came to show the invisible God, what the invisible God, the spiritual reality of God, looks like in flesh and blood.

[4 : 12] That's what he came to do, he came to tell us and expose and explain and redeem the world in which he came into it.

That's our world. He came to remind us that the nature of good and evil is a spiritual reality, is an invisible reality, but nonetheless a very real one, just because we can't see it doesn't make it real.

We know that, don't we? Even in our material world we know we can't see electricity, but we know it's real. And so Jesus came to reveal behind the scenes of our need, why we live, why we die, that our death is not just a natural phenomenon, but it's a spiritual outworking.

It speaks of a spiritual separation and death between ourselves and God, which leaves us spiritually separated, that will lead to an eternal death, which our physical death brings into.

He spoke about angels and demons. He spoke about heaven and hell. He spoke about fallen angels and the fallen angel about the devil himself.

[5 : 23] Christ spoke probably most in the whole Bible about the devil. He was a very real enemy too, Jesus Christ. And so Jesus Christ comes and reveals the spiritual, the unseen world that we have come to know by faith, if we are believers today.

The Ephesians experienced that. They knew the unseen spiritual world. They lived in a very modern, for their day, commercial, successful city, but they were engaged in idol worship and they were engaged in their cult.

But yet when people came to faith in Jesus Christ in that city, it was so transformational that it affected the whole city. And there was a great change so that even the invisible realities, the changes revealed itself in what happened in the city, so that it would be like...

Ephesus was a commercial city where they sold a lot of idol related items, like idol tat, like what they do in the Royal Mile with tartan tat or Edinburgh tat.

In Ephesus they sold a lot of idol tat, so along with idol worship, they sold a lot of things related to the idols. And when a lot of people became Christians in the city, that trade was damaged because people's lives were transformed.

[6 : 45] They didn't worship idols anymore. And also there was a lot of occult worship within that city. And when people came to faith, they stopped going to the occult and they stopped worshipping the darkness of the occult, so much so that people who were involved in it burned their manuscripts and left that whole way of working to become Christians, because they'd seen this invisible reality of light and darkness and Jesus Christ had come to dispel the darkness and to dispel the power of darkness and Satan in their lives.

And that is what we have come to know, but what we often forget in our sophisticated, modern, scientific, technological world. This unseen spiritual world, but we forget at our peril as Christians.

And so Paul here and God through Paul is giving us very practical, very important spiritual truth that I guarantee you will, if you stick with it, as a Christian, will be a great basis for your spiritual dynamism and life, for the rest of your life. It's a great thing.

That's a big claim to make for one. It's not a sermon, it's the word that we have here. So I'm going to ask you to memorise things, not necessarily here, but go away and memorise things, which will be good for you spiritually, this is good for me.

Paul's speaking about the reality of invisible spiritual warfare, of spiritual battles and of the victory of Jesus Christ. So this section, the Armour of God, he reveals that he has themes, and we can only really look at themes today and very briefly at the armour as well.

[8 : 30] So the themes are, one is he reveals this, that I've introduced the sermon with this invisible spiritual world. He says, our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil, against the schemes of the devil.

Okay, it's very clear, it's unambiguous. He's saying that there is this unseen spiritual warfare in which we are engaged.

And that there is an unseen spiritual reality. You don't see it today because it's invisible. But we have come by faith to believe through Christ that there is a heaven to gain and that there is a hell to shun.

And that's the reality that we know and we experience. We acquiesce with Jesus' verdict of this world in which we live, that it's a world that is spiritually dark, that is lost and that is broken.

And not just a world, lest we distance ourselves from the guilt, naturally that we have, that Jesus Christ has come to forgive and deal with. It's a broken world, a deceived world, and it's broken primarily because of the destructive work of the evil one, this fallen angel, this malevolent real being who is opposed to all that is good and all that is God, and who has brought humanity down with him in his guilt and in his judgment, instigating a divisive, dark, death-inducing being.

[10 : 13] So that when we die in this world, it isn't simply the end of life and well, that's just the way it is, that's just life. We live, we get old, we die.

But God makes very clear, and we all know this as believers, that death doesn't just happen, death is the outworking of the disunity that Satan has brought into the world between ourselves and God and humanity and the world in which we live, and that the theme of Ephesians, a great theological theme of Ephesians, which is the work of Christ bringing unity, rebuilding the bridge between humanity and God and between ultimately the unity of the new heavens and the new earth in him.

So we do well to remember that spiritual battle today, and we do well to remember there's a spiritual enemy of our souls which we'll go on to speak about a little bit more.

But the second theme I think is very important also, which is that God is mighty in power, that God is absolute in and through Jesus Christ, we see the mighty power of God in this world.

Finally, he says at the beginning of the session, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might, or as the NIV has it, in his mighty power. And that is hugely significant when we consider and think about this invisible spiritual realm.

[11 : 41] We sometimes think of Jesus as gentle Jesus, and we think of him as nice. And nice is usually harmless, and nice is usually weak.

And nice is usually something that doesn't challenge us. Jesus is all of these things, but Jesus is ultimately mighty strength and mighty power, both in his incarnation, in his life and obviously in his death and resurrection, as the perfect substitute for us, as the perfect human being.

He as God resisted the absolutely most powerful attacks of Satan and the evil one in temptation. He resisted evil, he resisted unbelief, and he then plunged himself into hell's strongest domain, as it were, into hell's holy of holies.

That's where he went on the cross. He went into the place where the very source of hell's power and hell's darkness, he went there on our behalf.

He went there under God's judgment because he was taking the punishment for our sins and our rebellion and our separation, and he was denuding the evil one of his power.

[13 : 04] He was going to the very stronghold of Satan and taking from him his power, the power of death, the power of guilt, the power of the grave, the power of rebellion.

He was taking that for all who put their trust in him. Great power. We only understand that when we understand the spiritual darkness of the world in which we live.

So what Jesus does is he fights the battle, the invisible spiritual battle, that we could never win, that we could never win, so that in him we can win the battle against evil and personal sin and rebellion and guilt and pride and all these things.

We can win that battle against evil and against death, such that we will never lose. That is the power of Jesus Christ, as he has done for us which we could never do for ourselves.

So that in him we can win in such a way that we will never lose. We are part of life and we are part of God through Jesus Christ.

[14 : 18] Now just a little aside here, as we've read that and maybe you read the first verses and you've heard things about this before, you've heard sermons about the power of God and the power of God in our lives.

And you sit here and you think absolutely powerless, completely ordinary. When you envisage the power of God in someone's life, you think of a mighty warrior.

You think of someone who changes other people's lives, who was out of the gospel and who's life changing and who's never defeated and who somehow visibly shows that they are under the mighty power and strength of God.

I don't think that's what it's like because of this invisible reality. Can I take you back to, I think this is on the screen, the first chapter of Ephesians that we've been reading.

And in verse 19 it tells us that our hearts have been, the eyes of our hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you. What are the riches of his glorious inheritance of the saints.

[15 : 26] The same words are being used here in chapter 1 as are being used here in chapter 6. And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his great might.

So the might and power are the same words in chapter 1 as they are here in chapter 6. And in chapter 1 they're to do with the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

And that is the same power that is working as so. What am I trying to say rather poorly? What I'm trying to say is that you look very ordinary. I look very ordinary. None of us looks spectacular. None of us look like we're empowered by God.

You know we wouldn't go in the street and someone would be able to pick us out as they're empowered by God. We're no different. But can I say to you today the very fact that you are here today.

The fact that you can say, I love Jesus Christ. The fact that you could say Jesus is my Lord. The fact that you believe these things.

[16 : 26] When you are surrounded by the power of spiritual darkness. Which is as strong as death. Which none of us can overcome in our own strength.

That is evidence that you are here. And it's evidence of the strength of the Lord and his might in your life. You can't come to this small and insignificant hall and worship in a small and insignificant way so that the world doesn't really care or know what we're doing.

You can't do that unless you're doing it in Jesus' name. And you're doing it because you love Jesus and because he has worked his great power in your life so to do. It might not seem very much.

But it's as different from cultural Christianity as life is from death. So if you're only here today because it's cultural for you to be here. Because it's just part of your life. But you can't say you love Jesus.

You can't say that he's brought you from darkness to life. You can't worship him in spirit and in truth. Then there is a great need for you to recognise the need in your heart for the power of God to change you.

[17 : 37] And to give you life eternal. Because it's only in him that we can do that. It would be it's as dramatic as if there was a big stone here. Someone brought in a big stone.

And I did mouth to mouth on that stone. Mouth to mouth resuscitation. And it started having a beating heart. That's how remarkable it is that you're here as a Christian today.

That's the power that God has invoked on your behalf. That allows you, despite how ordinary you feel, to be able to say Jesus Christ is my Lord. And he has brought life where there was death.

Light where there was darkness. Hope where there was despair. Forgiveness where there was guilt. And a future where there was none. That is his mighty power. And we have that in our lives today.

And that is a remarkable fact. So God reveals his mighty power in this passage. He then goes on to speak with loving authority about the Christian life.

[18 : 39] And about living in his strength and what that means. We must remember that the word of God, when we come to the word of God, when we listen to the word of God, it must never be, please, please Lord, I pray that it would never be for us moralism.

We're not coming for a moral lecture. We're not coming to say this is how you can live. If you live this way, that'll be great. And God will love you. It doesn't work like that. He speaks with loving authority and reminds us that it's not a set of rules he's giving.

It's a way of life that can only come as we have submitted to his Lordship and said, I am lost. I am dead. I am guilty. I need what Jesus has done to give me life.

And therefore in the light of that, we live empowered by him and victorious in him. He's struggling in your Christian life. I struggle in my Christian life.

Very often it's because we try and live it in our own strength as if we can. And this whole passage is about saying, look, I provided for you. I'm giving you everything you need.

[19 : 45] You have an enemy of your soul, but you are protected and safe as you rely on me. So he speaks with loving authority and he says a few things. Okay. He says the first thing and we've already really worked this out.

That's a spiritual enemy. That is what you have. When you came to peace with God through Jesus Christ, when you became a Christian, you woke up Satan, in other words, to your name and to your life.

And to be at peace with God means that you're at enmity with Satan. And Satan we know from God's Word is defeated on the cross.

Ultimately will be destroyed, but still remains one who has not been destroyed. And as he waits for his destruction, as it were, he invokes a scorched earth policy to try and do as much damage as he can and discourage Christians as much as they can and draw them away from Jesus as much as he can so that we feel defeated and we feel far away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

His aim is to be, he's a schemer. It's a great word that is used here that we can stand against the schemes of the devil.

[20 : 59] That's what he does. He is powerfully intellectual, powerfully knowledgeable about good and evil. And he's a schemer. He has all manner of schemes that will keep you and I from relying on the Lord Jesus Christ and from being in his company.

He seduces, he distracts, he beguiles, he entices. And probably his most powerful weapon is his own self-denial. And I don't mean that in a spiritual way.

What I mean is that if he can get people not to believe in him, he's delighted. We spend our lives getting people to want to believe in us. We're worth believing in him, but the devil is delighted if he can get people just to think, ah, the devil, that's old fables, that's old wives' tales.

Martin Lloyd-Johns gives a very powerful quote when he's speaking about this in one of his commentaries. He says, I'm certain that one of the main causes of the ill state of the church today is the fact that the devil is being forgotten.

All is attributed to us. We have all become so psychological in our attitude and thinking. We are ignorant of this great objective fact, the being, the existence of the devil, the adversary, the accuser and his fiery darts.

[22 : 11] So he is a malevolent and a deceptive and a destructive and a scheming being whose aim is to draw us away from the light into the darkness spiritually, this invisible world that we've come to know.

So Jesus with his loving authority through Paul here, God says, you have a spiritual enemy, therefore what do we do? We stand firm. God says, you should be strong in the Lord, put on the whole armour of God that you may be able to stand, that you can withstand, that you can stand, that you can stand.

Four times he talks about that. What do we usually find out? If in a short space of time something's repeated often in scripture, it usually means it's important. And what God is saying here on the basis of what Jesus has done, we have to be stable and committed to standing even when the worst things are happening.

And not only are we to be committed to that, we can do that. We can stand firm. We have the victory in Jesus Christ because of what he has done, but we must avail ourselves of his strength and so to stand.

We are to stand in a generation in a society which doesn't believe. We are to stand among our friends, we are to stand when difficult, as it says here, when the day of evil comes, now that might be a particular day of temptation or oppression or attack, or it may refer to that day of evil or death.

[23 : 48] Because death is still an evil day, it's an enemy, it's a defeated enemy for the Christian, but it still remains an enemy and yet we are promised that we can stand on that day. Isn't that amazing?

It's the day when everything crumbles. It's the day when everything falls. The day of our death is the day when everything ends. But for the Christian we can stand and we can withstand on that day.

So we are to stand firm and only in Christ can we do that. Only in Christ. If you think, and if I think we can live the Christian life intellectually or socially or culturally, we are absolutely deceived.

The only hope we have of standing firm as Christians is in the strength that God provides for us. And he gives us clothes to wear.

Now it's obviously, this is a picture, an illustration. He says, not only stand firm, but you'll stand firm. How do we do it? How do we stand firm as Christians? How do we not give up?

[24 : 51] Wear his armour. That's how we do it. We wear his armour. It's not even our own armour. We don't even need to do it ourselves. He provides it for us.

He gives us what we need. I can't live the Christian life. It's so hard because we're relying on ourselves. He provides us with what we need as we are plugged into him in prayer for our needs.

So he gives us this picture of wearings because it's a spiritual war where the enemy defeated, though he is, is not destroyed and he seeks to discourage and take us away from Christ. We need to recognise that and wear his armour to stand firm.

Now Paul was in prison when he wrote this. He may not have been actually chained to a Roman soldier. He probably wasn't chained. He would have seen and knew what Roman soldiers wore and what they looked like and he would have a good understanding of it.

So he uses that as a picture of what the King of Kings, the great Emperor Jesus, provides for us spiritually in this invisible way, what he provides for us to wear in order to stand firm as Christians.

[25 : 56] So if you're a Christian and if you're interested in standing firm, which I imagine you are, because you love Jesus and you don't want to let him down, then he provides us with the armour and I would encourage you to memorise these six words.

You don't need to pray the armour on in a visual way, you can if that helps. But he uses six pieces of armour to speak about six important spiritual truths.

We don't have time to go into them, just mention them briefly. And the first is truth, isn't it? As you wear the armour. The belt of truth, where take up the whole armour of God that you'll be able to withstand that you go on.

Stand firm having, being fastened on the belt of truth. Now the belt is a good thing, we still wear belts. But the Roman soldier wore a belt and it was kind of pinned all the undergarments together and kept everything together.

But most importantly, when they were running, when they were in battle, the belt was great because you tucked up the under tunic into the belt so that you could run.

[27 : 01] Good old fashioned girding up of your loins, that's what it means. Gird up your loins, it means sticking the coat or the undergarment up into the belt so that your legs are free to run.

And it keeps you from tripping up. And he says that is a picture of the truth, it holds our lives together and it keeps you from tripping up spiritually and stumbling and falling.

When we rely on the reality of Jesus Christ and his character, who says I am the way, the truth and the life. When we put our faith in him and when we understand who he is and when we found our lives in him, it keeps us from tripping up and it binds our whole spiritual life together.

That's why the first half of Ephesians is all doctrine because it's the truth of Jesus. It's no good saying I love Jesus but I can't stand all that doctrine nonsense. It's just a complete paradox. You can't say that.

That's saying I love my wife but I hate her character. It doesn't work that way. The more that we see of Jesus, the more we understand him, the truth is what stimulates everything about our life.

[28 : 12] Not only the truth of Jesus but therefore in our lives, living in a truthful Christ reflecting way defeats the power of the evil one.

You see, if we resort to untruth, if we are living a lie, if we are hypocritical in our life, we're doing the devil's work for him. What is he? He's the author of lies, isn't he?

If we think lying doesn't matter, if we don't guard the truth that carefully, not just the truth of Jesus but truth as opposed to lies, then we will stumble and Jesus tells us how we can avoid that.

The Bill of Truth, then the breastplate of righteousness. So truth is the first word, righteousness is the second word, very important word because we defeat the evil one when we recognise and know that we need to be covered in the righteousness of Jesus.

The breastplate didn't actually just cover the front, the heart, it also covered the back, put it on like that. It covered the torso of the soldier and we are covered front and back in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It's the breastplate of righteousness.

[29 : 23] In other words, we will defeat the flaming arrows of the evil one when we recognise that we are not Christians in our own strength or our own goodness or our own background but because of what he has done.

We are covered in his righteousness. It's a great gift to us. We don't need to earn our way, he's done it for us. And I think also, therefore, our life reflects that kind of righteous living, that we are like Jesus in our morality, in our integrity and in our humility.

Righteousness and truth. Then the third one is the peace that comes from having our feet put into the readiness to be given to us by the gospel of peace.

So it's a great picture of the soldier. He's not talking about Jesus Sandals here, Heyman Peace. It's not that kind of hippie peace that he's speaking about but he's speaking about a spiritual peace that comes from the work of Jesus Christ and the gospel of peace.

The soldier's shoes, they were kind of sandals, they were quite light, they were open at the front but they had really strong grips on them like Ur-Wallet's Tackety Boots.

[30 : 35] You know, they didn't slip. They were really strong so that in warfare the soldier was swift and movable but wouldn't slip because of these shoes that he wore.

And I think if Paul was thinking about the Old Testament passage in Isaiah that Corrie read earlier, he was also maybe thinking here about this passage in Isaiah as well.

In Isaiah 52.7, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says design your God reign.

Because the runner, when the war was won, the runner went ahead and he went ahead to tell the king of the good news of victory and his feet were regarded as being great because he brought peace.

And so as believers we bring the peace of God both by our lives and by our witnesses. We share this peace and as we our walk reflects this victory that Jesus has won.

[31 : 40] Okay, we're moving on quickly. The fourth one is faith. And this is the, in all circumstances, take up the shield of faith. Now this is God's armour. Faith is his gift.

Do you struggle with him? I'm kind of a person of, I've got rubbish faith, small faith, little faith. Well it's his gift, ask for more. And recognise that faith is this great enabling that enables, it helps us to live the Christian life.

And you know what's interesting about it? Is that if you know anything about Roman warfare, which I don't really but I'm pretending I do, but there is a small shield that you could wear for hand-to-hand combat.

It was a round shield, you know, you used to see them wearing it on that shield. But that's not the kind of shield that's spoken of here. It's rather the big long oblong shield that was used by Roman armies on the front line where they were being attacked by, you know, the arrows that were flying over what they would do.

They put the shield above them, they would be under the shield and they would link these shields together so they became a massive long wall of protection for the army above their heads. And that's what's been spoken of here, that's the word for shield that's been used here.

[32 : 53] And it's reminding us that our faith is strengthened when we are linked together. That community matters, that being part of the family matters. That if we are to deflect the arrows of false accusation, of guilt, of doubt, of disobedience, of temptation, we can't just do it on our own.

We need one another and we're to be linked together. And faith is a linking community glue in the Kingdom of God. It's not good to be an isolated Christian, it's really tough to be a Christian.

And God says, I provide armour with you which links you together and helps you live the Christian life. Faith, a couple more very quickly. The helmet of salvation, God gives us this knowledge of what he's already done and what he promises to do.

And it's like a helmet over our minds to protect us and to give us confidence and to give us a sense of boldness. I had a crash in my motorbike a few years ago and I was very glad for the motorbike helmet.

And as you climb on a helmet after a crash, it gives you more confidence and more boldness and more security because you know it protects you. And so salvation that we've already experienced, that we look forward to in glory, is the salvation of God which is our protection, our helmet.

[34 : 19] And lastly is the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Take on the helmets and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. Now if the shield was the big shield, not the small shield, then the sword is not Mel Gibson's brave heart sword which is massive and big, but it's the small dagger, that's the word that's used here, for one to one mortal combat.

And he's reminding us that in the spiritual battle we have an enemy who will attack us personally, with whom we will wrestle. The word for wrestling against flesh and blood is not one combat, it's just the word we use for wrestling, it's one on one.

And so the evil one is an interest in you and in me to defeat us and to bring us down. And as we wear God's armour and as you wear God's armour, you're empowered to resist him and overcome him and defeat him and have courage in your spiritual lives.

That's a great thing and you will do that with the word of God, which is the sword of the Spirit he uses his word. Jesus used it in the temptation in the desert, didn't he? Thus says the Lord.

He knew what God said and it caused Satan to resist the devil and he will flee from you, with the word of God and the promises of God and the hope of God and the person of Jesus. So these are the six things.

[35 : 42] You can wear them, you can pray them on in that kind of physical way where you wear the helmet and the shield and the feet, or you can just remember these six words, these gifts from God, the armour that he gives that enables you to stand and to be strong as a Christian.

And I finish just with this last thing. Jesus speaks with authority. He tells us we have a spiritual enemy to stand firm, to wear my armour, and he lastly says, speak to me, speak to me.

That's what he says. He finishes this section by saying and pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication, with all perseverance, to all the saints. And now that is overwhelming, isn't it?

It's all encompassing. He says, I don't just want a little dribble of prayer that just will help you survive the day, like a last drip of water to keep you from drought.

He's saying, you know, pray in every circumstance, pray for every situation, pray for all the saints, pray in every way. We can't live the Christian life without dependence on God in prayer, because that's where we receive the gifts and where we understand that it comes from him and that we are living an impossible life of victory.

[37 : 04] I have no doubt that people can't live the Christian life without prayer. I have no doubt it's impossible. I would not believe anyone who said they hadn't prayed for six months and that they are spiritually vibrant.

Impossible, absolutely impossible, because it's a life of relationship with the living God. And he tells us we need to be alert and awake and dependent.

Coming to church, reading your Bible, doing moral things, giving to charity. None of these things will keep you spiritually alive other than relationship with the Savior, Jesus Christ in prayer.

And remembering, as you're dependent, that you need his armour, that you will be strong in his might, you will be victorious and you will be helping others in the same way.

Because he says remember to pray for all the saints. And he goes on then to say, well please pray for me as well. So Paul recognised the need for prayer, you know, Paul, the great apostle Paul, did he need prayer from the ordinary Ephesian Christians?

[38 : 07] Of course he did. Do we need prayer? Of course we do. When was it that you last prayed fervently for more than maybe five people who are in your immediate vicinity of concern?

It's so easy for us to shrink our prayer lives just to our immediate concerns and our immediate contacts. What is he's wanting us to have a visionary and clear and sacrificial prayer life for all the saints?

Because we've got a missionary meeting on Wednesday evening where we're going to just highlight the needs of Suraj and Russell and some other missionaries that are connected with us.

And that's good because it helps us to pray for them and they'll love that and need that and we love to pray for them and you know, and I've said this hundreds of times in this pulpit, the nicest thing, the nicest, nice another eight word, the best thing that anyone can do for us is when they say, well I prayed for you today.

Isn't that a great thing in your Christian life when someone says, just maybe randomly, you maybe, texts are great things for lots of bits, best use of the phone, iPhone 6 and 5, is to text someone and say, I prayed for you this morning.

[39 : 20] Lord put you on my heart, I prayed for you. It's the most encouraging thing in the battle. You know that there's someone there who's got that shield and they're linking that shield with you against the powers of darkness.

So the challenge is not to be spiritually alone, not to be spiritually independent, not to be defeated, to realise the power that's already coursing through your veins spiritually because of what Jesus has done and to delight in the victory that is yours, that is already yours in Christ Jesus, but know that there's a battle and that this enemy seeks your discouragement and you're drawing you away from Jesus Christ and that the victory and the strength is only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you're not a Christian today, can I encourage you to think about the invisible spiritual world that Jesus introduces and the reality that death is not just a natural part of life, it is indicative of a spiritual separation that it already is ours naturally, but will be eternal if we die out of Christ and without reference to Him as our Lord and Saviour and without giving ourselves to Him by faith.

Let's bow our heads and pray. Father God, we thank you for your word, we thank you for the simplicity of your word, you take great and cosmic concepts and that you apply them in very illustrative and practical and ordinary ways so that we can understand and that we would understand what it means to be Christians, that we would look beyond moralism and look beyond culture and tradition and routine and that we would see this amazing, if invisible, spiritual victory that has been won for us in Christ and that we've been brought from darkness to light, from death to life.

And the fact that we are here today at all is an amazing means of thanksgiving to God who has already worked in our hearts if we come in the name of Jesus, confessing Him as Lord and Saviour.

[41 : 36] So bless as we pray today, may you open the door of our hearts to receive your word more and more. And if there are any who come today into the house to worship, which is great, but yet who don't know Jesus personally, we do pray that you would speak to them today and that they would come to a living and true and powerful recognition of the gift of salvation and the victory that is only to be found in Jesus Christ.

Amen.