

## WALK WISELY FOR CHRIST

### Summary and Historical Background

One of the most familiar sights to any resident of the Roman empire was the Roman legionnaire. Paul was well acquainted with the equipment of the typical legionnaire. The heavy infantryman, was one of the best soldiers of antiquity. His fighting ability gave Rome victories from the Sahara to London, from Spain to Syria. One of the advantages that the legionnaire had was the armor that he wore. The armor gave him protection from head to foot without decreasing his mobility. In fact, the shoes he wore gave him such great ability to march quickly that he often caught his enemies unprepared for battle.

Paul draws spiritual analogies from the Roman soldier clad in his armor. His close associations with Roman soldiers, who guarded him in his imprisonment at Jerusalem, Caesarea and Rome, gave him ample opportunity to study their armor. Each piece of Roman armor illustrated an important spiritual counterpart. Each piece of spiritual armor is important to the Christian because his foe is far more powerful and intelligent than any foe Rome ever faced. Successful use of the believer's armor does guarantee victory.

Paul concludes his letter by introducing Tychicus, his letter-carrier. To avoid writing a lengthy list of greetings, Tychicus would carry Paul's greeting to his many friends in Ephesus. Paul gives a benediction which includes the traditional elements: peace, love, and grace.

### I. The Christian Family — 6:1-4

6:1 — "Children, obey your parents in the Lord" - Paul commands children to obey their parents. The phrase "in the Lord" modifies "obey." Christian children are to obey their parents whether or not their parents are saved (Col 3:20). Children are to obey their parents as they would obey Christ. However, anything contrary to God's Word need not be obeyed, since obedience is governed by our relationship with Christ.

6:2 — "Which is the first commandment with promise" - the command to honor parents is one of the Ten Commandments. This command was the first to have a promise with it. The promise of long life is a general blessing that comes to those who live a life of decency and self-control learned from obedience to one's parents.

6:4 — "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath" - fathers are addressed since they are the leaders in the home and have the responsibility for discipline. Their provocation leads to a settled disposition of anger. The government of families must not be based on criticism, on inconsistent or hard discipline, on unreasonable demands, or on favoritism. Children have a keen sense of right and wrong and can easily become embittered.

"Bring them up" — children must be nurtured to maturity from the crib to full adulthood (the same word is translated "nourishes" in 5:29). The present tense shows a consistent, steady, continual exercise of discipline.

"In the nurture and admonition" — two words define discipline: "nurture" (actually discipline; is used of physical discipline in Heb 12:11) and "admonition." The "nurture" refers to training by act and discipline. Physical punishment is included in this nurture, along with example. "Admonition" may mean encouragement, comfort, or (very commonly) stern rebuke (Eli failed in this respect - I Sam 3:13). All these meanings of admonition are aimed at changing the life of the child.

"In the Lord" — both the physical and verbal aspects of discipline are based on Biblical principles coming from the Lord and commanded by Him.

### II. The Christian Workplace — 6:5-9

6:5 — "Servants" - Paul actually addresses the master-slave relationship, but present-day employer-employee relationships can apply these principles.

"With fear and trembling" — there is no idea of timidity or fearfulness, but the desire to show great zeal in work, seeing that nothing comes short.

"In singleness of your heart" — the word "singleness" referred to something simple, not complex; something sincere, not hypocritical. The slave was to serve openly, with an undivided heart, free from double motives.

6:6 — "Not with eye service" - the service was not to be done only when the master was watching.

"Doing the will of God from the heart" — literally, "from the soul."

Obedience at work is to be done from the inmost part of one's being.

6:7 — "With good will" - there are two possible ideas here. (1) Kindly feeling must underlie all service. A slave's service was to come from affection, as if the slave were working for the Lord. (2) Service must be enthusiastic. A papyrus describes "diligence and enthusiasm" as virtues of slaves. A slave should be as enthusiastic in serving his earthly master as he is in serving the Lord.

6:8 — "Knowing that whatsoever good thing" - a slave's careful, undivided, honest, enthusiastic service to his earthly master will be rewarded by the Lord Himself. Every job for a Christian (no matter how menial), is a service, not a burden. Secular work demands the same care as sacred labors.

6:9 — "And you masters, do the same things unto them" - the responsibility in the workplace is mutual. The golden rule applies to masters as well as to servants. The master is to treat his slave with the respect he would show to Christ.

"Forbearing threatening" — habitual harshness and threatening must not be practiced.

"Knowing that your Master" — here is the reason for not using harshness. There is a divine Master over every human master, and He plays no favorites. What is due to every man, He gives to him.

### III. The Christian Warfare — 6:10-20

6:10 — "Be strong in the Lord" - Christians are to find their enablement in the Lord's ability.

"And in the power of His might" — "power" refers to force or mastery expressed in action; "might" refers to inner ability, strength.

6:11 — "Put on the whole armor of God" - very similar is Rom 13:14. Christians need a divine armor that is complete in order to combat their enemy. Most of this armor is defensive. Even the sword is basically defensive. Christian soldiers are not to seek out their enemy, but when he attacks, they are to stand (vs. 11, 13, 14). The devil is constantly attacking (1 Pet 5:8-9). Instead of seeking him out, we are to pray for deliverance from the evil one (Matt 6:13).

"The wiles of the devil" — "wiles" is the word from which we get the English word, "method." It refers to crafty stratagems and plans whereby he seeks to defeat believers. But instead of fleeing, God desires that they stand.

6:12 — "For we wrestle not" - "wrestle" suggests two ideas: (1) strenuous effort and (2) combat. Wrestling is one of the most strenuous activities. The believer's conflict with Satan is a strenuous activity. Wrestling is also an individual sport. The believer's combat against Satan is a personal, individual hand-to-hand combat.

"Against flesh and blood" — the Christian's opponents are not human. They have high rank (principalities and powers); they govern the present darkness of the world; they are wicked; and they have some access to the high throne of God (like Satan in Job 1, 2; Rev 12:10).

6:14 — "Having your loins girt about with truth" - Paul was well acquainted with the equipment of the Roman soldier since he had been guarded by them many times. The "girt" is better translated "having girded"- putting on the belt is the soldier's own act. This belt was an essential part of the armor. It was a wide leather belt studded with nails, on which hung the sword and dagger. It helped keep the other parts of the armor in place and provided freedom of movement. Two ideas are suggested by this belt of "truth." First, the Christian soldier needs Christ, Who is the truth (Jn 14:6). Second, he needs to personally work out the truth of Christ in his life. He needs to be honest and truthful in his relationship with God and with his fellow men.

"Having on the breastplate of righteousness" — the breastplate was a metal plate over the heart or a mask over the chest. It protected the vital organs of the chest from a disabling or death-dealing wound. The spiritual counterpart to the soldier's breastplate is righteousness (cf. Isa 59:17). Christ is the Christian's righteousness which he receives at salvation. Then he must take Christ's imputed righteousness and develop it into personal righteousness until he has a holy life. Notice in I Thes 5:8, the breastplate is faith and love. This is a fuller explanation of what the Christian must possess to protect his spiritual life.

6:15 — "Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" - the soldier's shoes were heavy shoes with spiked or ribbed soles for secure footing and fast action. Such shoes were the reason that Alexander and Julius Caesar were able to cover long distances and surprise their foes. The shoes also included shin guards. The spiritual counterpart is that believers must be prepared (that is, ready for battle) by the peace which the gospel brings. No matter how great the difficulty, they should have peace with God and always be ready to fight Satan. They need to experience the peace of God within their lives by earnest prayer with thanksgiving (Phil 4:6, 7).

6:16 — "Taking the shield of faith" - this shield was a large (2 1/2' X 4') wooden frame covered with leather. It was used for defensive purposes as a roof or as a wall to protect the soldiers from the enemy's arrows. The counterpart is faith. The flaming arrows were arrows loaded with pitch and set on fire just before they were fired. Satan's arrows are the temptations which dart into the mind to inflame it to sin. Faith in Christ quenches these arrows. Trust in Christ is needed for protection from Satan's temptations (II Cor 5:7, I Jn 5:4-5).

6:17 — "And take the helmet of salvation" - the helmet was made of metal to protect the head from blows. Its counterpart is salvation (cf. Isa 59:17; I Thes 5:8). When the Christian puts on Christ, he puts on salvation (Ps 27:1). Salvation includes the assurance of salvation. The confident assurance of salvation protects his mind (I Jn 5:11-15). This salvation must be understood correctly so that his mind is protected from discouragement or doubt.

"The sword of the Spirit" — the sword was a two-edged, pointed hand sword, about 18 inches long. It was used for hacking and piercing. Its counterpart is the Word of God (Heb 4:12). Jesus used the Word of God when He faced Satan's temptations (Lk 4:1-11, Matt 4:1-11); the believer must do the same (Ps 119:9-11).

6:18 — "Praying always" the best armor will be useless unless there is the right spirit or attitude in the soldier. He will be ready for combat only when he keeps constant communication with his commander and depends on him, not only at times of special difficulty, but at all times. The Christian soldier shows this attitude of dependence by incessant prayer to God.

"All prayer and supplication" — "prayer" is the general word for making requests of God and showing devotion to Him; "supplication" refers to a petition for God's supply of some need. The believer is encouraged to pray every kind of prayer and petition to God.

"In the Spirit" — only in the Holy Spirit can true prayer be offered. The Holy Spirit helps and prompts believers to pray.

"And watching" — this word recalls Jesus' admonition, "Watch and pray." Christians need to watch out, not only for themselves, but they must be alert for the needs of others and pray until that need is satisfied.

6:19 — "And for me also" - to catch the effect of the original, underline the word, "me." Paul for the first time mentions his own needs. Paul asks for boldness to present the gospel. Every day he needed the enablement provided by the prayers of others to be able to speak as he should.

#### **IV. Paul's Christian Conclusion — 6:21-24**

6:21 — "Tychicus" - This man was one of Paul's close friends. He was a native of Asia and had helped Paul on the third missionary journey. Paul also gave Tychicus personal greetings for many of his friends in Ephesus where he had ministered for several years.

6:23 — "Peace...love with faith" - Paul desires God's peace and love to be with the Ephesians. "Love with faith" shows that the source of true love is faith. Faith is also the source of true peace.

6:24 — "Grace" - in conclusion Paul asks for God's grace to be given to those that love Jesus Christ. Their love must be expressed with sincerity. The word means "incorruptibility," that which is unchangeable and unchanging. Their love for Christ must be without change, without decay, and without any diminishment.