



Ephesians - Chapter Six

XI Ephesians 5:21-6:9 - Submission to One Another (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Six

The theme of appropriate Christian obedience continues, with Paul exhorting children to obey both parents, citing God's commandment for them to do so. He calls on slaves to obey their earthly masters, not out of compulsion but because of the Lord. Likewise, masters should treat their slaves with dignity and without threats of violence or intimidation.

Paul then calls all believers to be resolute in their faith, reminding them they are in a battle with dark spiritual elements that have strong influence over the affairs of the world. To combat this Paul encourages them to put on the full armour of God that will provide the defence needed to protect them.

Paul then turns to his final weapon in the Christian armoury - prayer. He asks them to pray that the whole church may remain alert to the dangers that will confront them, and he asks that they pray for him in his confinement, that he might still be given the words to proclaim when the opportunity, his forthcoming trial, presented itself.

He tells them that Tychicus, who was the bearer of this letter, would keep them informed of how Paul is and what he is doing, for Paul knew the church held him in high regard and cared for his welfare. He then ends with a benediction, calling for God's peace, love and grace to be upon all of them.

XI.b Ephesians 6:1-4 - Children and Parents

The submission of both wives and their husbands in Ephesians 5:21 is further explained as meaning that children also should submit to their parents. This submission takes the form of obedience to them. Parents are to nurture their children in the Lord.

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Ephesians 6:1

Children and parents are the second family relationship used to illustrate submission to proper authority: <<**Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ**>> (Ephesians 5:21). This verse is mirrored in: <<**Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord**>> (Colossians 3:20). The Mosaic Law prescribed death for the child who struck or cursed a parent: <<**Whoever strikes father or mother shall be put to death. Whoever kidnaps a person, whether that person has been sold or is still held in possession, shall be put to death. Whoever curses father or mother shall be put to death**>> (Exodus 21:15-17), and: <<**All who curse father or mother shall be put to death; having cursed father or mother, their blood is upon them**>> (Leviticus 20:9), and Paul lists such disobedience as one of many grave sins: <<**They were filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, covetousness, malice. Full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, craftiness, they are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, rebellious towards parents**>> (Romans 1:29-30), and: <<**For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy**>> (2 Timothy 3:2). However, Paul urges in vv.1-3 the positive duty of children to obey their parents. Obedience and submission is due to both parents; the mother's submission to her husband does not remove her parental dignity but rather increases it.

In the Lord modifies the verb obey. What makes such obedience right or just is that it conforms to God's holy commandment, quoted in vv.2-3. Since the parents entrust their faith in God in the way they raise their children, the children should then follow the guidance they are given by their parents: <<**My child, keep your father's commandment, and do not forsake your mother's teaching**>> (Proverbs 6:20).

² 'Honour your father and mother' – this is the first commandment with a promise: ³ 'so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'

Ephesians 6:2-3

Children obeying their parents (v.1) is in part how they honour them, as in: <<**Her children stand and bless her**>> (Proverbs 31:28a NLT), which describes children rising to bless a wise and godly mother.

Paul appears to be addressing the children directly and may have expected his letter to be read to at least those old enough to appreciate who was writing and what was being stated. That Paul calls for obedience by faith shows that children can still trust what they are being told to do, even if they cannot understand the purposes of the command, for it was ordained by their Creator. After all, God's plan is beneficial to all who follow his commands.

The first commandment with a promise. There were earlier commands of God with promises, for example: <<**When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will**

make you exceedingly numerous'>> (Genesis 17:1-2), but this is the first and only one of the Ten Commandments to contain a promise: <<*Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you*>> (Exodus 20:12), and is repeated in Deuteronomy 5:16.

In the new covenant, the promise of the land is not physical land on earth but eternal life, which begins when one is regenerated here and now, and comes to full reality in the age yet to come. Paul is not teaching salvation on the basis of works. The obedience of children is evidence that they know God, and it results in receiving blessings from God.

⁴ And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:4

As earlier, Paul begins his admonition with a negative action to avoid, followed by a positive action to develop, see the comments made on Ephesians 4:28. Paul addresses the responsibility of fathers in particular, although this does not diminish the contribution of mothers in these areas; refer to Proverbs Chapter 31.

Provoke your children to anger. Obedient children are particularly vulnerable, so a domineering and thoughtless father's actions would be discouraging to them: <<*Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart*>> (Colossians 3:21). Punishment in anger for punishment's sake is not the correction that God has ordained, and Paul calls on fathers to refrain from such treatment.

Bring them up. Parents play a crucial, God-ordained role in the discipleship of their children 'in the Lord' (v.1): <<*No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice; so that the Lord may bring about for Abraham what he has promised him*>> (Genesis 18:19); refer also to Deuteronomy 6:1-9. For a child to grow up healthy she or he needs to be nourished physically, morally and spiritually, which can be best achieved through God's Word. Parental discipleship in the discipline and instruction of the Lord should centre on the kinds of practices already outlined in Ephesians chapters 4-5.

In Paul's world, children had no rights and were under the sole authority of adults: their parents, those involved in their education and those in authority. What Paul is alluding to is that, under God's plan, children had rights that were to be respected too, and parents had the responsibility to protect those rights and to ensure their discipline was appropriate in God's sight.

XI.c Ephesians 6:5-9 - Slaves and Masters

The submission of Ephesians 5:21 is further illustrated with slaves and masters. The duty of both is based on their being fellow heirs of eternal life.

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as you obey Christ; ⁶ not only while being watched, and in order to please them, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

Ephesians 6:5-6

Slaves or bondservants were commented on in 1 Corinthians 7:21. It is estimated that slaves composed about one-third of the population of a city like Ephesus. They were considered to be an integral part of a family, so Paul's instructions for slaves were a natural part of his dealing with family relationships. In both Greek and Roman culture, slaves had limited rights and were subject to exploitation and abuse. Paul does not condone the existing system of servitude but instead provides instructions to believing masters and slaves regarding their relationship towards each other in the Lord, and how this should be lived out within the bounds of their social and legal culture. The result, as is often observed, is that this kind of servitude slowly died out in antiquity through the influence of Christianity, refer to the Purpose section of the Introduction to Philemon. The principles of this passage apply today in terms of submission to any lawfully constituted authority, the only exception being if such a lawfully constituted authority were to require a believer to disobey God's Word or to fundamentally compromise one's commitment to Christ, as in the case of: <<***But Peter and John answered them, 'Whether it is right in God's sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard'***>> (Acts 4:19-20).

Obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling. This call to obedience is not in fear of retribution from the masters if they fail to comply but a fear before God for not truly representing him in the relationship. Paul writes in similar fashion elsewhere: <<***Let all who are under the yoke of slavery regard their masters as worthy of all honour, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be blasphemed***>> (1 Timothy 6:1), and: <<***Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to answer back***>> (Titus 2:9); as did Peter: <<***Slaves, accept the authority of your masters with all deference, not only those who are kind and gentle but also those who are harsh***>> (1 Peter 2:18).

Obey Christ. It would be natural for Christian slaves to despise their earthly masters in the name of their heavenly one; however, fulfilling one's earthly obligations is in fact service to the Lord, as also reflected in v.7.

Not only while being watched. Paul does not only want them to do their duty while they are being observed, for that would have the motivation either of paying lip service to the master or simply trying to avoid his condemnation. By doing their best at all times, they would, in fact, be doing the will of God from the heart.

⁷ Render service with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not to men and women, ⁸ knowing that whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord, whether we are slaves or free.

Ephesians 6:7-8

Render service is fundamental to the Christian life for it is a demonstration of love for one's neighbour and an emulation of Jesus: <<***For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many***>> (Mark 10:45). Slaves mostly only received their food and accommodation for their work,

although some could earn money that could then be used to purchase their freedom. The main point that Paul is making is that slaves should work with honest endeavour to do their best for their owner, for in reality they were working for God's purpose and not those who owned them in this life.

Whatever good we do, we will receive the same again from the Lord. Selfless service is not ignored or forgotten by God: <<*For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done*>> (Matthew 16:27). There is no discrimination with the Lord, for he will reward every faithful servant equally, whether we are slaves or free.

⁹ And, masters, do the same to them. Stop threatening them, for you know that both of you have the same Master in heaven, and with him there is no partiality.

Ephesians 6:9

Masters in antiquity had the power of life and death over their slaves and bondservants. Beatings, imprisonment, or sale into harsher servitude were other punishments masters meted out. The duty of masters and all in authority is to treat those in submission fairly in God's sight and not to take advantage of their authority by threatening them: <<*If I have rejected the cause of my male or female slaves, when they brought a complaint against me; what then shall I do when God rises up? When he makes inquiry, what shall I answer him?*>> (Job 31:13-14). Paul called on Philemon to accept his former slave Onesimus back as a brother rather than as a slave despite the wrong that the runaway slave had done: <<*Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever, no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother – especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me*>> (Philemon 15-17).

There is no partiality with the Lord: <<*But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart'*>> (1 Samuel 16:7), <<*Now, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the Lord our God, or partiality, or taking of bribes*>> (2 Chronicles 19:7), and: <<*For God shows no partiality*>> (Romans 2:11); for he will judge fairly both masters and servants.

Slavery was a way of life in Paul's day and for him to try to imply that a slave's freedom in Christ extended to freedom in the world would have brought harsh retaliation from slave owners and the authorities, as the economy depended on that social structure. However, Paul clearly is not condoning slavery and his call here is counter-cultural, calling on those in charge of slaves to see them as equals in God's sight and treat them with respect and dignity.

XII Ephesians 6:10-20 - The Whole Armour of God

Paul concludes his exhortations with instructions for all Christians. His imagery is a sustained portrayal of the Christian life as spiritual warfare using the Lord's resources.

XII.a Ephesians 6:10-13 - The Lord's strength

Paul introduces the armour of God by focusing on the strength it provides.

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.

Ephesians 6:10

Be strong. Because Christians cannot stand on their own against superhuman powers, they must rely upon the **strength** of the Lord's own **power**: *<<and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power>>* (Ephesians 1:19), which he supplies chiefly through prayer (v.18). This passage alludes to the battle cry of Joab, the leader of David's army: *<<Be strong, and let us be courageous for the sake of our people, and for the cities of our God; and may the Lord do what seems good to him>>* (2 Samuel 10:12), and a call from the prophet: *<<Yet now take courage, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; take courage, O Joshua, son of Jehozadak, the high priest; take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts>>* (Haggai 2:4).

¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:11

The Greek word for **whole armour**, *panoplia*, refers to the complete equipment of a fully armed soldier, consisting of both shields and weapons like those described in v.14 and vv.16-17. Paul's description here draws primarily on OT allusions, yet the terms used also overlap well with Roman weaponry, especially the terms for the large, door-shaped shield and the short stabbing sword. Visible portrayals of such weaponry can be found on the numerous military reliefs throughout the Roman Empire, especially on sarcophagi. Paul alludes to this in part elsewhere: *<<the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light>>* (Romans 13:12), and: *<<But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation>>* (1 Thessalonians 5:8).

The wiles of the devil. Here the diabolical origin is exposed, regarding the deceitful schemes of those teaching false doctrine: *<<We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming>>* (Ephesians 4:14), *<<Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour>>* (1 John 2:18), *<<and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world>>* (1 John 4:3), and: *<<Many*

deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist!>> (2 John 7).

¹² For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12

Our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh. Paul makes it clear that the Christian struggle is not with the secular world, whom they are to treat as a neighbour with appropriate love, but it is with the dark forces of evil that align themselves with the devil's schemes: *<<Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil>> (Hebrews 2:14).*

This list of spiritual rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers, as referred to in: *<<so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places>> (Ephesians 3:10), gives a sobering glimpse into the devil's allies, the spiritual forces of evil who are exceedingly powerful in their exercise of cosmic powers of this present darkness. And yet Scripture makes it clear that the enemy host is no match for the Lord, who has: *<<disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it>> (Colossians 2:15).**

¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Ephesians 6:13

Therefore. Because the Christians' enemies are superhuman spiritual forces, they cannot rely upon mere human resources but must take up the whole armour of God. The divine armour and the 'sword of the Spirit' (v.17), which belong to the Lord himself and to his Christ in: *<<but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins>> (Isaiah 11:4-5), and: <<He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle>> (Isaiah 59:17), are made available for believers.*

Withstand. Along with 'stand' in v.11 and stand firm here, Paul portrays Christians as soldiers in the battle line holding fast against the enemy's charge.

That evil day. In Ephesians 5:16 Paul identifies this whole age as 'evil days', yet the outbreak of the Satanic onslaught against Christ's people ebbs and flows

throughout this era until the final day when the Lord of Hosts will return in power and great glory: <<***Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in a cloud” with power and great glory***>> (Luke 21:27), to rend the heavens and rescue his people forever: <<***O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence***>> (Isaiah 64:1), and: <<***For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever***>> (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

XII.b Ephesians 6:14-17 - Standing firm

Paul reiterates the charge to stand in the face of dreaded spiritual enemies because the Lord has not left his people defenceless. They have the complete armour of God from head to foot, which consists of the belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet and sword. These are metaphors for the spiritual resources given to them in Christ, namely: the truth and righteousness (v.14); the Gospel (v.15); faith (v.16); salvation and the Word of God (v.17).

As mentioned in the comments on v.13, these are aspects of God’s and the Christ’s own character and work, as depicted in Isaiah, with which Christians are now equipped. For example, the Lord saw no one to deliver his oppressed people, so he put on his own ‘breastplate of righteousness’ and ‘helmet of salvation’, before coming in wrath against his enemies.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness.

Ephesians 6:14

With the simple, rousing order **stand**, Paul urges the Ephesians to withstand the enemy (v.11 and v.13), and not give in to fear. This is also a clear call to all believers, and Paul starts by listing the first two defensive weapons in the Christian armoury.

The belt of truth is a reference to the Word of God, the Gospel that is the source of all truth: <<***Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free’***>> (John 8:31-32). Truth is a fundamental weapon in the Christian fight, for the message of the Gospel is true. It is as simple as that!

The breastplate of righteousness. A soldier would wear a breastplate to protect the vital organs from injury, so often resulting in death. Spiritually, it represents the righteousness of God through Christ, and the principle of a holy life empowered and guided by the indwelling Holy Spirit in a believer’s heart, thoughts and resulting actions, as called for in: <<***Let your priests be clothed with righteousness, and let your faithful shout for joy***>> (Psalm 132:9). The self-sacrificial act of Christ and his subsequent resurrection has imputed God’s righteousness to those who believe in him.

¹⁵ As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace.

Ephesians 6:15

Just as they would put shoes on their feet, believers must always be ready to proclaim the gospel: <<*And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'*>> (Romans 10:15). In the military campaign, feet and legs had to be protected in order to maintain mobility. This is also vital in taking the Gospel of peace outside the walls of a church building and into the wider community and world.

¹⁶ With all of these, take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:16-17

The flaming arrows. Burning arrows were designed to destroy wooden shields and other defences, but the shield of faith is able to extinguish the devil's attacks, i.e. quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. These flaming arrows represent the evil thoughts and intentions of people, and can be repelled by those who have placed their trust in God, who will give them the strength to persevere despite the temptations of the world: <<*For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith*>> (1 John 5:3-4).

Roman shields had a metal covering that was not combustible and their tactical uses in formations such as the Testudo gave maximum protection against the weapons of that era. So too the shield of faith gives all round protection against the devil's schemes and trickery.



A Roman Testudo

The helmet of salvation. The helmet was there to protect the head, the source of thought and the senses of sound, smell and most of all sight. A person is protected from the contrary and confusing temptations that are all around to ensnare the unwary. The whole purpose of this armour is protection from evil influences.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. The spiritual nature of the church's resources is nowhere more plain than in its reliance upon God's Word, which is the only offensive weapon mentioned in this list of spiritual armour. The Word of God is to be wielded like a sharp two-edged sword, in the mighty power of his Holy Spirit: *<<Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart>>* (Hebrews 4:12).

Today, the Word of God is used to describe the entire bible. However, the NT did not exist as such when Paul wrote this letter, although some of what would become the NT was starting to be circulated around the churches. What Paul had in mind was almost certainly selected passages from the OT prophecies, such as: *<<but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins>>* (Isaiah 11:4-5), *<<He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away>>* (Isaiah 49:2), *<<How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'>>* (Isaiah 52:7), and: *<<Look! On the mountains the feet of one who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace! Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, fulfil your vows, for never again shall the wicked invade you; they are utterly cut off>>* (Nahum 1:15); all of which were seen as Messianic prophecies. This was confirmed by John: *<<Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force>>* (Revelation 1:12-16).

XII.c Ephesians 6:18-20 - Being constant in prayer

This section offers instruction on prayer, the main weapon of spiritual warfare, and explains when, how and for whom to pray.

¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:18

Pray in the Spirit. The weapons for warfare are spiritual because they are rooted in prayer, which is the Christian's most powerful resource. Prayer is to permeate believers' lives as a universal practice, as seen by the use of all four times in this verse, also translated as every and always in the NRSVA: at all times, in every prayer, always persevere, and for all the saints, both within the local and the global church.

On one level prayer remains a mystery, for no one truly knows how it works; and not knowing seems to be part of the point, for it is undertaken in faith. Yet it is a deeply practical thing that all believers can do at any time.

Pray in the Spirit is a form of worship: <<*But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth*>> (John 4:23-24), enabled by the Spirit of God, who intercedes on behalf of the person who prays: <<*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God*>> (Romans 8:26-27).

Keep alert and always persevere in supplication. Prayer is perhaps the key weapon in spiritual warfare, keeping both the mind and the spirit in consciousness of God's will in each situation.

¹⁹ Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

Ephesians 6:19-20

Pray also for me. Paul was in prison and was due to present his defence before the Emperor Nero, charged as an insurrectionist by the Jews for his stout proclamation of the Gospel. Paul had asked the Roman church to pray for his work towards unifying the Gentiles and Jews in taking the Gentile collection to the poor in Jerusalem: <<*I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in earnest prayer to God on my behalf, that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judæa, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints*>> (Romans 15:30-31). It seems that the prayer requested here was offered and answered, for not only was Paul finally released but he received the type of hearing he had hoped for: <<*At my first defence no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth*>> (2 Timothy 4:16-17).

As an apostle chosen personally by Jesus, Paul knew how powerful his prayers for all the churches proved to be and he prayed relentlessly it seemed, for

example: <<*I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you*>> (Philippians 1:3-4). Yet he also knew that any believer, no matter who they were or how long they had been in the faith, could pray just as powerfully for him as he did for them. This is one of the true mysteries of God and further proof that he is no respecter of persons with regard to human standards.

A message may be given to me to make known with boldness. Paul had been given the Gospel by divine revelation: <<*For I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin; for I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ*>> (Galatians 1:11-12), yet he still desired further revelation that he sought through prayer, both his own and that of others who were praying on his behalf.

The mystery of the gospel was that God had all along intended a unified church to include not just the Jews but all who would come to him through the message of his beloved Son, irrespective of what they would have to repent of in their lives.

For which I am an ambassador in chains. Paul had been imprisoned for his resolute defence of the Gospel of Christ. There had been plenty of opportunities for Paul to be set free but he was determined to be heard and make clear what had been made known to him on the Damascus Road. He had appeared before two governors and King Agrippa, when: <<*Agrippa said to Festus, 'This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor'*>> (Acts 26:32), which was not a decision Paul had taken lightly: <<*But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to the emperor – even though I had no charge to bring against my nation*>> (Acts 28:19). Paul must have felt like a great eagle, created to soar on high yet finding itself with its wings clipped and grounded. Paul asked for prayer and would indeed fly with the Gospel once more. Ultimately though, Paul would be executed for his work following a subsequent arrest and second trial in Rome. Yet this would come to pass only after he had completed his work on earth: <<*As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing*>> (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

I must speak. Paul was instructed by Jesus to be his chosen instrument for taking the Gospel to the Gentiles, as well as to his own people and their rulers, and wrote of this to the church in Corinth: <<*If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel!*>> (1 Corinthians 9:16).

XIII Ephesians 6:21-24 - Personal Matters and Benediction

Paul concludes his letter with closing remarks (vv.21-22), and a final benediction (vv.23-24). The remarks concern his introduction of Tychicus' role in coming to them.

²¹ So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus will tell you everything. He is a dear brother and a faithful minister in the Lord. ²² I am sending him to you for this very purpose, to let you know how we are, and to encourage your hearts.

Ephesians 6:21-22

So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. Paul was not being conceited for he knew that the churches he was involved with, and indeed others that had been planted subsequently from those he had seen come into being, had genuine love and concern for Paul. He felt it important to encourage them that his imprisonment was something that could actually be used to advance and not hinder the Gospel he loved so dearly. Therefore, he sent representation for this very purpose.

Tychicus, a local man from the Roman province of Asia and a dear brother, had served Paul faithfully for some time, accompanying him to Jerusalem with the offerings from the Gentile churches: <<*He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Beroea, by Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, by Gaius from Derbe, and by Timothy, as well as by Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia*>> (Acts 20:4), and, after delivering this letter to Ephesus, he travelled on through the Lycus valley with the letters to Colossæ and Philemon: <<*Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow-servant in the Lord*>> (Colossians 4:7), and possibly to Hierapolis and Laodicea. Paul was considering sending him to Crete: <<*When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there*>> (Titus 3:12), and there are indications that he had been with Paul during his final imprisonment in Rome: <<*I have sent Tychicus to Ephesus*>> (2 Timothy 4:12).

²³ Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴ Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 6:23-24

Paul concludes his letter with a benediction of peace, love, faith, and grace upon the church, as he had done in the opening: <<*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ*>> (Ephesians 1:2). He mentions love twice, which is fitting for a letter where the love of God, the love of Christ, and Christian love have been prominent themes.

The format of praying for peace was quite a common conclusion to Paul's letters: <<*As for those who will follow this rule – peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God*>> (Galatians 6:16), and: <<*Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with all of you*>> (2 Thessalonians 3:16).

Some manuscripts contain the postscript: 'Written from Rome unto the Ephesians by Tychicus' and is considered to have been a later addition. It is not included in most translations of the letter.