

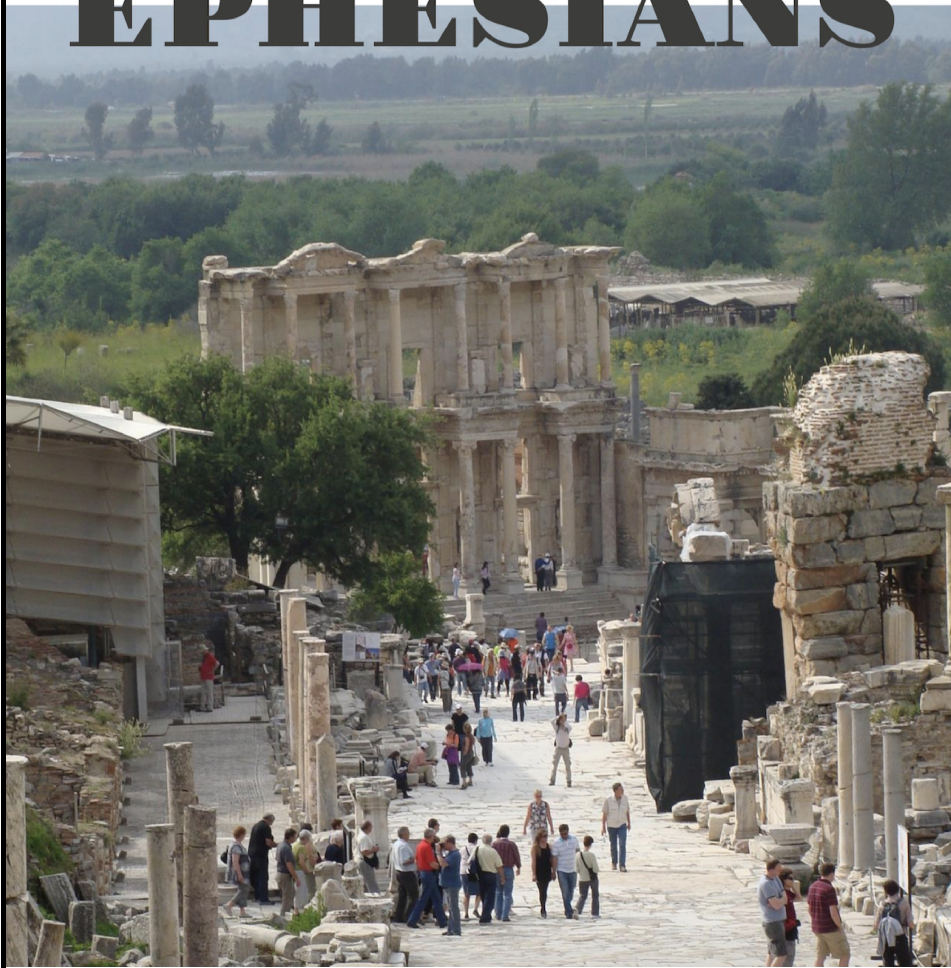
A Daily Devotional Study Guide



**By Scott
Barker**

www.lakeshorefellowshipchurch.org
www.homesteadcommunitychurch.com

The Epistle to the EPHESIANS



WEEK 8

“The Breastplate”

Study: Ephesians 6:14

Reading: Colossians 3:9-17, II Corinthians 6:1-10

Memory: Romans 8:29

During the winter months, I enjoy playing hockey. At times, I have not always played with all of my equipment on, but there are two pieces of equipment I will not play without. I always wear some sort of knee pads and my elbow pads when I play. The main reasons I wear those two things is because I fall down a lot. Whenever I fall, I will most likely hit the ice with my elbows or knees. Landing on the ice with your elbows and knees is just like landing on cement and it hurts! To avoid the pain and bruises, I always wear my pads. If I don't have the pads on, it will be painful. When it starts to hurt, it becomes unenjoyable to play the game.

Today, we are going to see that it is so important to wear the proper protective equipment. When in war, the enemy does not aim for the feet or hands. He aims for the heart and vital organs. That is what Satan does. He goes for your heart and mind. He knows that if he can injure you there, you will be useless for the cause of Christ.

What Does the Bible Say?

No Roman soldier would go into battle without his breastplate, a tough, sleeveless piece of armor that covered his full torso. It was often made of leather or heavy linen, onto which were sewn overlapping slices of animal hooves or horns or pieces of metal. Some were made of large pieces of metal molded or hammered to conform to the body. The purpose of that piece of armor is obvious. It was to protect the heart, lungs, intestines, and other vital organs.

In ancient Jewish thinking, a reference to the heart often represented the mind and the will, and a reference to the bowels was considered a reference to the seat of emotions and feelings. The mind and the emotions are the two areas where Satan most fiercely attacks believers. He uses the world to appeal to both of these areas. We are told to protect our emotions and our minds with the “breastplate of righteousness.”

How do we put on righteousness? Righteousness is not an outside choice, but begins with the mind and emotions. We need to think right and follow the right feelings. To put on the breastplate of righteousness is to live in daily, moment-by-moment obedience to our heavenly Father. This part of God's armor is holy living, for which God supplies the standard and the power, but for which we must supply the willingness. Earlier in the book of Ephesians Paul prayed that we would understand the love of God and grow in wisdom of His plan for our lives. When we are growing in these areas, our mind will have an understanding of what righteousness is. Living in this righteousness will help protect us from the temptations that come our way. So often we let our sources of thinking come from the world, rather than from the Word of God.

When we fail to put on right thinking and right emotions, we will lose our joy as Christians. Living righteous day after day will lead to joy and fulfillment in life. When we let Satan attack our emotions and mind, we will lose satisfaction with our Christianity and seek after the world. When that happens, Satan will start to win the battle.

How Does this Apply to Me?

Is your life characterized by righteousness? Do you know what is right from the Word of God and do you establish your life in such a way that you will carry out that righteousness on a daily basis? Have you become enticed by Satan and the world's pleasures? You must daily seek to obey God. When the Holy Spirit convicts you about sin in your life, you need to immediately confess it and turn from that sin. Remember, Satan is a deceiver. He will try to deceive you into thinking that the world has so much more to offer than God does. That is why you need to protect yourself with the breastplate of righteousness.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Ask God to help you put on righteousness.
- * Ask God to reveal to you any area of your life where you are not being obedient to Him.

Thought for the day

What did a breastplate do (vs 14)?

Why do you think Paul described it as a "breastplate of righteousness" (vs 14)?

How can you put this armor on (vs 14)?

Why do you think that putting on righteousness should be a daily part of your life?

****Think about the idea of putting on righteousness as mentally preparing yourself for a situation you are about to face. When you are mentally and emotionally prepared for something, it is often much easier to face. When you are constantly preparing to do what is right and setting your life up to live in a right way, you will be much less likely to succumb to the attacks of the enemy.*

What do you think are some practical ways that you can be putting on righteousness in your daily life?

2 Timothy 2:1-7

How are we to be strengthened (vs 1)?

What should we do with the truth we have heard (vs 2)?

What are we to be prepared to share in (vs 3)?

What does a soldier not do (vs 4)? Why not?

When is an athlete crowned (vs 5)?

What does the hard-working farmer get (v 6)?

What will God give (v 7)?

What does this passage have to do with preparing your mind to live a righteous life?

“Proper Shoes”

Study: Ephesians 6:15

Reading: Romans 10:12-21, Isaiah 52:6-12

Memory: Romans 8:29

I played hockey all four years while I attended college. Our college had an outdoor rink that I would practice on several times a week. I would grab my skates out of my hockey bag and use the skates for a while, but sometimes I would forget to put them back in my hockey bag. It normally wasn't a problem, but one day, when I was sitting in the locker room getting dressed for a game, I searched my bag several times only to realize that I had forgotten my skates. It was too late to go back to the college and get my skates, so I had to borrow some. Ice skates are not all made the same and do not all fit the same. The only pair I could find to use were a couple of sizes too big for me. I normally fell down several times during a game, but in that game I fell more times than I had ever fallen before. I determined from then on that I would always check my bag to make sure I had my skates.

No matter what you are doing, it is important that you have the proper footwear. If you are working construction, it is good to have steel-toed boots. If you play football, it is important to wear cleats. Today, we are going to see how important it is to wear the right shoes into battle against Satan.

What Does the Bible Say?

A soldier's shoes were even more important than an athlete's shoes because his very life could depend on them. As he marched on rough, hot roads, climbed over jagged rocks, trampled over thorns, and waded through streambeds of jagged stones, his feet needed protection. A soldier whose feet were blistered, cut, or swollen could not fight well and often would not even be able to stand up which would be a perilous situation in battle.

The soldier of Jesus Christ should wear the proper footwear when going into battle. Paul says that the shoes that believers need to wear are the shoes that are ready to give the gospel of peace. There are two

different aspects to look at when dealing with shoes for battle. First, we need to be prepared to move forward with the gospel. In Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15 there is an emphasis on using our feet for the proclaiming of the gospel. The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ and the peace that He brings us. We need to be constantly moving forward in our battle against evil by spreading the good news to others.

Second, we need to be prepared to stand against the attacks of the Devil. We can do this through the peace that God has given us. A soldier will not retreat if he has confidence that his army will win the battle. God gives us peace in our lives through Jesus Christ. We have that peace and along with it comes the confidence that we will win the battle. We can stand in the confidence of God's love for us, His union with us, and His commitment to fight for us.

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you have confidence that God will be with you in your battles? The more you get to know someone, the more confidence and trust you will place in that person. Many times Christians do not trust God, because they do not have a close relationship with Him. When you know God and are able to trust Him, your feet will be firm in the Gospel and you won't be moved when the attacks of the enemy come your way. How are your feet moving forward to reach others with the gospel? You should not just hold Satan off, but you should be moving forward and attacking his forces by proclaiming the Gospel of peace. This is done in many different ways. Whatever way God has called you to share Him with others, be active and move towards those opportunities.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Ask God to help you be ready to present the Gospel to others.
- * Ask God to help you know Him more.

Thought for the day

Why is footwear important (vs 15)?

How can you be ready to share the Gospel (vs 15)?

How can understanding the Gospel of peace give you stability to fight off the attacks of the enemy (vs 15)?

What can happen if you are trying to fight the enemy without the assurance of the Gospel of peace (vs 15)?

Romans 5:

What do you have with God (vs 1)?

How do you have this (vs 1)?

What do you have access to (vs 2)?

Why can you rejoice when difficulties come your way (vs 3)?

How does this relate with putting on the shoes of the gospel of peace?

What does God want to produce (vs 4-5)?

What did God do for you when you were weak (vs 6)?

Why is understanding this so important to understanding the whole gospel?

What will a person have a hard time doing (vs 7)?

How did God show His love for you (vs 8)?

What will you be saved from (vs 9)?

What did God do when you were His enemy (vs 10)?

How can understanding this part of the gospel give you the confidence to stand firm for Him?

“Shield of Faith”

Study: Ephesians 6:16

Reading: Genesis 1:1-19, Hebrews 11:1-7

Memory: Romans 8:29

Dreams are always strange things. In a dream I had one night, I was under siege by a renegade band of paintballers. I was riding in a bus with a group of people, when all of a sudden we heard shots fired. I ducked down and all I could hear was continuous shooting for several minutes. I could feel paint splatters on my hand as the paintballs were hitting all around me. I looked up only to see that all the shooters were riding in a bus that was right next to ours. The only way I could escape getting shot was to duck down and let the windows and body of the bus absorb the balls. Everyone on our bus had been shot and bruised, except for me. (It was my dream, what do you expect!) I found out that I was the only one who was able to duck down low enough to allow the bus to be my shield.

We have been talking about armor in Christian warfare for the last few days. The armor we have been talking about deals with items that the soldier wore all the time. For the next few days we are going to talk about armor that the soldier would need to take with him during battles. He had to take up this armor when the enemy was approaching.

What Does the Bible Say?

A shield was about two and a half feet wide and four and a half feet high. It was designed to protect the entire body of the Roman soldiers, who were considerably smaller than the average man today. The shield was normally made of a solid piece of wood and was covered with metal or heavily oiled leather.

The soldiers who carried these shields were in the front lines of battle, and normally stood side by side with their shields together, forming a huge wall extending as long as a mile or more. The archers stood behind this protective wall of shields and shot their arrows as they advanced against the enemy. Anyone who stood or crouched behind such shields would be protected from the barrage of enemy arrows and spears.

In every temptation that comes our way, Satan tries to get us to doubt God. When we doubt God and what His Word says, we will fall to the enemy. When Adam and Eve committed the first sins in the garden, it was because Satan talked them into doubting God and His Word.

Faith and doubt are two opposite things. Faith is a total dependence upon God that is based on the trust that we have in Him. When we are faced with a trial or temptation we need to put up our shield of faith and trust God that He knows what is best for us. Failure to trust God could lead to spiritual wounds and may eventually lead to spiritual deadness. Faith is trusting in something you know to be true, even though you can't fully see it. In a world that constantly wants to have all the physical facts, having faith becomes more difficult. Yet, your faith can help you through any enemy attack that comes your way.

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you find yourself being hit by the temptations that Satan sends your way? Is it hard for you to stand against the attacks of the Devil? If you find yourself constantly giving into the same temptations, you need to take up the shield of faith. If the Word of God says it is wrong to do something, you should not do it. If It tells you something you should do, you should do it. You need to have the faith that God cares for you and wants to see His best in your life. At times, it may not always be the easiest thing to trust in God because we see things differently than He does. You have to have faith in Him and trust that He knows what is best.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to daily help you take up the shield of faith.*
- * *Thank God that we can always trust in Him.*
- * *Ask God to show you any area of your life where you have not taken up the shield of faith and have been wounded by Satan.*

Thought for the day

What are you to take up (vs 16)?

Why do you think you need to do this in “all circumstances” (vs 16)?

What will faith give you the ability to do (vs 16)?

Why is faith often so difficult?

Why is faith so extremely important?

Hebrews 11

What is faith (vs 1)?

Define faith in your own words.

What did believers receive for their faith (vs 2)?

What do we have to believe by faith (vs 3)?

Why do many people have a hard time doing this?

How did Abel show faith (vs 4)?

What happened to Enoch because of His faith (vs 5)?

What is impossible to do without faith (vs 6)?

What do you think this means?

What must you choose to believe (vs 6)?

How did Noah express faith (vs 7)?

Why do you think faith would have been hard for Noah?

What benefits did Noah receive for his faith (vs 7)?

Why is believing that God will reward faith important?

“The Helmet & Sword”

Study: Ephesians 6:17

Reading: John 10:27-30, I Kings 18 :27-19:18

Memory: Romans 8:29

What Does the Bible Say?

Whenever a soldier goes into battle, he needs to protect his head. A helmet was an essential piece of armor for battle in those days. Wounds to the head would normally be fatal.

Almost all Christians at one time or another have doubted their salvation. The main reason we doubt is because of sin in our lives. As we saw yesterday, Satan wants us to doubt God and His Word, and if we allow him to get his ideas into our head, we will be defeated. It is important to understand that, because of our salvation, we are protected from blows of Satan. When we begin to doubt our salvation or doubt that God does what He says He will do, it is like a soldier taking off his helmet. When we go into battle with great assurance of our salvation and protection, we can fight without fear.

The sword to which Paul refers here is the *machaira*, which varied in length from six to eighteen inches. It was the common sword carried by Roman foot soldiers and was the principal weapon in hand-to-hand combat. Carried in a sheath attached to their belts, it was always at hand and ready for use. It was the sword carried by the soldiers who came to arrest Jesus in the Garden (Matt. 26:47), used by Peter when he cut off the ear of the high priest’s slave (v. 51). It was also used by Herod’s executioners to put James to death (Acts 12:2).

Without a sword, a soldier would be rendered powerless. He might be able to block off the attacks of Satan with his armor, but He has nothing to fight the battle with. When Jesus fought off the temptations of Satan, He used the Word of God. Hebrews describes the Word as being “sharper than any two edged sword” (4:12).

If a soldier did not practice and learn how to better use his sword, he would become a vulnerable soldier. Many Christians live their lives content with what they know about the Word, but in doing so, they are only opening themselves to being defeated. We need to strive to

continually know more about the Word of God so we can use His Word to defend against the enemy (vs 17).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you confident in your salvation? Do you believe that God will do what He says? The more you grasp the understanding of your salvation, the more you will be protected from the attacks of the enemy. When you realize that your salvation is not based on your works or good deeds, you will begin to understand the great mercy and grace of God. As you understand this you will have the confidence to face the accusations and attacks of the enemy when you sin and don’t meet God’s standard of perfection. A biblical understanding of salvation reveals that you don’t have to live a defeated life.

Do you know the Word of God? Many believers are content just going to church most Sundays and hearing God’s Word and having a general overview of what God says, but that is like a soldier going into battle without much training. When you daily study the Word of God for yourself and put what you learn into practice, you are training to be a better soldier for Jesus Christ. As you continually read and study His Word, you will be ready to do battle when the enemy attacks. Choose to take up the sword of the Spirit by regularly memorizing, studying and meditating on God’s Word.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to show you any sin in your life and then confess it.*
- * *Thank God for giving you salvation.*
- * *Praise God for being a God who always keeps His Word.*

Thought for the day

What is the helmet of salvation (vs 17)?

Why is understanding what you have in salvation so important?

Describe how to know you are saved.

Why do you think Paul described the sword as “the sword of the Spirit” (vs 17)?

What did Paul say this sword is (vs 17)?

How can the Word of God be an offensive weapon?

How can the Word of God be a defensive weapon?

Hebrews 4:12-13

What does it mean that the Word of God is “living” (vs 12-ESV)?

What does it mean that the Word of God is “active” (vs 12-ESV)?

What is the Word of God sharper than (vs 12)? What do you think this means?

What does the Word of God have the ability to pierce (vs 12)?

Why is it important to realize that the Word of God can help you know what the motives of your heart are (vs 12)?

What is not hidden from God (vs 13)?

Why is it important to realize that you can not hide anything from God (vs 13)?

Why is knowing and reading the Word of God so vital when it comes to your salvation and your spiritual life?

“Always in Prayer”

Study: Ephesians 6:18-20

Reading: Luke 8:1-14, I Kings 8:51-61

Memory: Romans 8:29

What Does the Bible Say?

One of the greatest weapons for spiritual battle is prayer. The term “prayer” is a reference to a regular place and consistent time. “Supplication” is a type of request or plea for something, the word normally applies to praying for personal needs. This is something that we need to be doing all the time. We also need to be praying “in the Spirit.” This means that our prayers are not just times of telling God what we want, but submitting to the plan of the Holy Spirit. Paul also emphasized that we need to persevere in our prayers. It is easy sometimes to give up when prayer becomes difficult or monotonous. Just as a soldier would tire at times, he would have to continue to fight if he wanted to be victorious.

Our prayers should not just be blind prayers, but we should be alert to everything that is going on around us, just as a soldier needs to be alert to his conditions as well as status of his fellow soldiers. This way we can be praying on behalf of other saints, especially those who are on the front lines (vs 18).

It is easy for us as Christians to get to a point where we think that we do not need prayer. We let our pride tell us that we are doing just fine. To admit that we need prayer is admitting that we have weaknesses. Paul wanted others to pray for him. He knew that the work God had called him to do would not be accomplished without the power and the strength of God (vs 19).

Paul’s desire to share that gospel, the good news of Christ, was very evident in verses 19-20. It was his life’s goal and desire to share Christ with everyone that he could. Notice what Paul desired prayer for, when he was in jail. He did not ask for prayer to be released, or that his pain from the shackles would stop. He asked for boldness to share Christ.

Paul’s prayer for boldness reminds us that even the “best” of Christians can still struggle to boldly share the truth. When reading about Paul, it seems that Paul was superhuman in his endeavors as an apostle.

He understood that he was an ambassador for Christ even though he was in jail. He wanted the Ephesians to pray that he would have boldness and not be shy, even if it meant that he would lose his life (vs 19-20).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you in a constant state of prayer? Do you just pray at meal times? Do you just pray for a couple of minutes after your devotions? When a problem arises or something exciting happens, do you pause to pray? Do you find yourself repeating the same things over and over when you pray? Prayer is not saying the exact right words. It is the communication that builds your relationship with God. Prayer is what will help you grow, give you strength and allow you to win the battle over the enemy. It is easy to let prayer fall by the wayside or to tire of praying for yourself and others. Prayer is vitally important for you as a soldier of Jesus Christ.

Do you pray for boldness for yourself and others to share the gospel? If you are a Christian, you are an ambassador for Christ. You are a representative of God's kingdom. Being a representative means that you need to not only live your life as an example of Christ, but it also means that we need to tell others about it. Don't be ashamed to ask others to pray for you and boldness to share the Gospel. When you feel you miss opportunities to share the Gospel, you can be comforted with the fact that even Paul felt he was not bold enough at times. Don't be satisfied with making excuses, but like Paul, pray for boldness for yourselves and others.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Praise God because he hears and answers prayer.
- * Ask God to help you to be in a constant state of prayer.
- * Thank God for the privilege you have to pray to Him.

Thought for the day

What do you think it means to always pray (vs 18)?

How can you put this command into practice?

What do you think it means to pray in the Spirit (vs 18)?

What is the difference between prayer and supplication (vs 18)?

Why do you think Paul told us to keep alert in prayer (vs 18)?

Why is perseverance so important in prayer (vs 18)?

What are you to do for all saints (vs 18)?

How do you think you can put verse 18 into practice on a daily basis?

Why did Paul ask for prayer for himself (vs 19)?

Why did he call it the "mystery of the Gospel" (vs 19)?

Why do you think Paul needed and wanted boldness (vs 19)?

How did Paul describe his situation (vs 20)?

Why did he call himself an "ambassador" (vs 20)?

Why is it important to realize that you are an ambassador?

***Paul described himself as an "ambassador in chains." He wasn't bemoaning the fact that he was in prison, but was asking God to give him boldness in the situation that he had been placed in.

Why is being content with your position and status in life so important when it comes to sharing the Gospel?

How are you practicing putting on the armor of God?

“*Servants Together*”

Study: Ephesians 6:21-24

Reading: Colossians 4:7-17, Ephesians 3:1-13

Memory: Romans 8:29

The first several years that I pastored, I had a pastor friend who played on a hockey league with me. Many times when we played together, I played defense and he played offense. One year, we decided to play offense together. Before that year, I would score a few goals a season, but the first game we played offense together we scored 8 out of the 9 goals that our team scored. We found that there was a connection between the two of us that caused us to work together in great teamwork.

In the body of Christ, God has not called one of us to do all of the work, but has surrounded each of us with the people who will help us serve the Lord better. Today, we are going to see what Paul said about his fellow servant in the Lord.

What Does the Bible Say?

Verse 21 reveals that Paul was not alone in his work for Christ. Paul thought very highly of Tychicus. We can see from this that the work of Christ is not an individual effort, but it takes all types of people working together for the cause of Christ. In verse 22 Paul explained why he was sending Tychicus. He was sending him to do the work of the ministry. He knew that Tychicus was a man that could comfort the people who were worried about him.

There are three major parts of the Christian life mentioned in verse 23 – Peace, Love, and Faith. These three things sum up what the whole book of Ephesians is about. We have peace with God since Christ has stepped into our lives and has removed our sins. He did this because of His love. He has also placed this love in our hearts so we as Christians have the ability to love. A Christian also must have faith. God has proclaimed who He is through His Word, but unless we believe He is who He says He is, it doesn't do us any good.

Paul closed the book by telling the readers that God's grace, His

undeserved favor, will be on those who truly love Him. A sincere love for the Lord comes from the heart. It does not just involve outward actions, but it is an inward love. Love is a choice. We either choose to love God or not to love God. The more a person loves God, the more that love will be displayed by their outward actions. The more we know about God the more we love Him. We don't just love blindly, but grow in our love. Above all else in our lives, God desires that we love Him.

How Does this Apply to Me?

How much do you love God? The more you love God, the more you will desire to live for Him and serve Him. When you begin to see the peace that He brings you and the love that He gives you, you will choose to love Him more. Love does not just happen naturally, but it grows over time. God loves you no matter what, it is up to you to decide if you will love Him and how much you will love Him.

It can be seen from Paul's appreciation for Tychicus that God uses more than one person. Do you ever feel that you don't have the talents or abilities to serve God? Tychicus did not write books of the Bible, but he was still considered a great servant of God. You don't have to get up in front of people or have the jobs that are seen by others to be a great servant for Christ. As we have seen throughout Ephesians, God gives you the gifts that He wants you to have and use to help build the body of Christ.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to help you be a faithful servant.*
- * *Ask God to help you love Him more every day.*
- * *Thank God for the grace that He gives to you.*

Thought for the day

What did Paul want the Ephesians to know (vs 21)?

Why do you think communication with other believers was so important to Paul?

Who was Paul going to send (vs 21)?

How is Tychicus described (vs 21)?

Do you think others would describe you as a faithful minister in the Lord? Explain.

What two reasons did Paul give for sending Tychicus (vs 22)?

- 1.
- 2.

How would the message from Paul be an encouragement to their hearts (vs 22)?

How can you be an encouragement to others in the same way?

What three things did Paul want the believers to experience (vs 23)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How could these things be experienced (vs 23)?

Why is grace such an important theme in Scripture (vs 24)?

What type of love did Paul say Christ had and that they should have for other people (vs 24)?

Romans 8

10 But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. 12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, In 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. 18 Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. 19 For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. 24 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words 27 And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.