

The Right Christian Posture

Introduction:

Hallmark Father's Day Card: "Dad, thanks to your lectures I never change horses in the middle of a job worth doing, I know the squeaky wheel gets the worm, and I never count my chickens until I've walked a mile in their shoes... And you thought I wasn't listening."

Christian Thinking: [Phil. 4:4-9]

[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

"Rejoice in the Lord always" – "Rejoice" [chairō – to be glad; present imperative active; 2nd person plural]; "in the Lord" [dative of sphere]; "always" [pantote – adv. at all times]; "again" [palin – adv. once more];

"I will say" [eipōn (legō) – future indicative active; 1st person sing.]; "rejoice" [chairō – to be glad; present imperative active; 2nd person plural]; Twice in one verse the apostle Paul commands us to "rejoice in the Lord". This command is in the present tense in the original meaning we are to make it a daily habit in our lives to rejoice in the Lord. And just in case, that wasn't clear he writes "always" after the first command to rejoice. Or "at all times". And just in case we are tempted to dismiss this command, Paul repeats himself, "again I will say, rejoice!" Therefore we must understand at the outset that to rejoice in the Lord always is not a suggestion, it's not an option or good advice. The Lord is commanding our emotions to rejoice in Him at all times. As I said earlier your emotions matter to God.

Now notice with me church, what Paul did not say – "Rejoice in your circumstances always; again I will say rejoice." He doesn't write rejoice in your problems, rejoice at your trial, rejoice at your bad health, rejoice at your tragedy. But "rejoice in the Lord" despite your problems, despite your trials, despite your bad health and despite your tragedies. In other words, it is possible to be sorrowful in your circumstances and rejoice at the goodness of the Lord at the same time. "Lord, I'm saddened that this happen. But I am thankful You are with me and You will help me through this".

Quote: Karl Barth – no matter how painful and difficult your circumstances are there is still "a defiant 'Nevertheless!'" in the Lord I will rejoice.

Quote: John Henry Jowett [British Protestant preacher] – "Christian joy is a mood independent of our immediate circumstances."

Now you might ask the question: How is it possible for the Bible to command our emotions? Because when the mind is brought under serious considerations in regards to the truth it is possible to direct your emotions to respond accordingly. When the mind is brought under serious consideration of the promise of future blessings for being persecuted for righteousness Jesus can command us to rejoice and be glad for your reward in heaven is great [Matt. 5:12]. In Nehemiah chapter 8, after Ezra read from the book of the Law before the men, women and children of

Israel from early morning until midday. The text says that people were weeping after they heard the words of the law. To the point that Nehemiah had to say to them, “Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” [Neh. 8:10]. In other words, though we violated all of God’s law, yet He has forgiven us. And all the people went away to eat, to drink, and to celebrate a great festival [Neh. 8:12]. When the mind is brought under serious consideration that we deserve punishment for our sins but God granted us grace instead, it is possible to direct the emotions to turn from grief to joy.

And when the mind is brought under serious consideration of the goodness of the Lord towards you, the emotions will respond with joy. One of the words for “good” in the Hebrew means beautiful; best; kind; loving; well-pleasing, pleasant; benevolent; abundant and plentiful; sweet; precious; gracious – Psalm 16:2 – I said to the Lord, “Thou art my Lord; I have no good besides Thee” [remove God from the equation and every happy and blessed moment that has ever happened in your life disappears; your source of blessings comes from God alone];

Psalm 21:3 – For Thou dost meet him with the blessings of good things; Psalm 25:8 – Good and upright is the Lord; Psalm 34:8 – O taste and see that the Lord is good; Psalm 69:16 – Answer me, O LORD, for Thy lovingkindness is good [Every attribute of God is good – particularly His grace, mercy, compassion and kindness towards sinners; Psalm 84:11 – For the Lord God is a sun and shield; The Lord gives grace and glory; No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly; Psalm 92:1-2 – It is good to give thanks to the Lord And to sing praises to Thy name, O Most High; [2] To declare Thy lovingkindness in the morning, And Thy faithfulness by night;

Illustrations:

What Paul commands us to do here, he already put into practice in his own life: Scrip. Ref: Acts 16:22-25: When Paul and Silas came to Philippi. [22] And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. [23] And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely; [24] and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks. [25] But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them; [26] and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone’s chains were unfastened.

Paul and Silas were beaten and publicly humiliated but when they turned their thoughts away from their circumstances and started meditating on the goodness of the Lord. They started singing – “When peace, like a river, attendeth my way, When sorrows like sea billows roll; Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, It is well, it is well with my soul”. In your season of suffering, when time is filled with swift transition. And you begin to realize that the only possession you have in this world that is good, permanent and unchanging is God, you will rejoice.

Therefore to “Rejoice in the Lord always” means to be glad in who He is, what He has done and what He has promised. It doesn’t mean to be giddy; silly; goofy or hysterical. To rejoice in the Lord is not a mindless emotion, it’s not silly behavior, or shallow feelings of euphoria [irrational happiness], or an unexplained sensation that comes over you suddenly. This is an emotion which has responded to the mind’s contemplation on the goodness of the Lord.

There are three aspects of rejoicing in the Lord: **1] Rejoice in the Lord [past]** – what He has done; **2] Rejoice in the Lord [present]** – who He is; **3] Rejoice in the Lord [future]** – what He has promised:

1] Rejoice in the Lord [past] – what He has done:

Scrip. Ref: Psalm 13:5 – My heart shall rejoice in Thy salvation. Eph. 1:3-7 – Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, [4] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world [5] having predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, [6] to the praise of the glory of His grace, [7] In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace... [12] to the praise of His glory... [13] you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. [2:1-4] And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest. [4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of His grace love with which He loved us [8] For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; [9] not as a result of works, that no one should boast. Titus 3:3-5 – For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. [4] But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, [5] He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

If you want to experience joy remember what the Lord has done for you.

2] Rejoice in the Lord [present] – who He is:

Quote: A.W. Tozer classic book – The Knowledge of the Holy – “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

1. [He is] Almighty One – “...who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” Rev. 1:8
2. [He is] Alpha and Omega – “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” Rev. 22:13

3. [He is] Advocate – “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.” 1 John 2:1
4. [He is] Author and Perfecter of Our Faith – “Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Heb. 12:2
5. Authority – “Jesus said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.’” Matt. 28:18
6. Bread of Life – “Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.’” John 6:35
7. Beloved Son of God – “And behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Matt. 3:17
8. Bridegroom – “And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast.” Matt. 9:15
9. Chief Cornerstone – “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone.” Ps. 118:22
10. Deliverer – “And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” 1 Thess.1:10
11. Faithful and True – “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.” Rev.19:11
12. Good Shepherd - “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11
13. Great High Priest – “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.” Heb. 4:14
14. Head of the Church – “And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.” Eph. 1:22
15. Holy Servant – “...and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.” Acts 4:29-30
16. I Am – “Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” John 8:58
17. Immanuel – “...She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel, which means 'God with us.’” Is. 7:14
18. Indescribable Gift – “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” 2 Cor. 9:15

19. Judge – "...he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead." Acts 10:42
20. King of Kings – "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful." Rev. 17:14
21. Lamb of God – "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" John 1:29
22. Light of the World – "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12
23. Lion of the Tribe of Judah – "Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." Rev. 5:5
24. Lord of All – "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:9-11
25. Mediator – "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 1 Tim. 2:5
26. Messiah – "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ)." John 1:41
27. Mighty One – "Then you will know that I, the Lord, am your Savior, your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob." Is. 60:16
28. One Who Sets Free – "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:36
29. Our Hope – "...Christ Jesus our hope." 1 Tim. 1:1
30. Peace – "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility," Eph. 2:14
31. Prophet – "And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." Mark 6:4
32. Redeemer – "And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth." Job 19:25
33. Risen Lord – "...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that
34. Rock – "For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. 10:4
35. Sacrifice for Our Sins – "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins." 1 John 4:10

36. Savior – “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” Luke 2:11

37. Son of Man – “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Luke 19:10

38. Son of the Most High – “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David.” Luke 1:32

39. Supreme Creator Over All – “By Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together....” Col. 1:16-17

40. Resurrection and the Life – “Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die.” John 11:25

41. The Door – “I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” John 10:9

42. The Way – “Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6

43. The Word – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” John 1:1

44. True Vine - “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” John 15:1

45. Truth – “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” John 8:32

46. Victorious One – “To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.” Rev. 3:21

47. – 50. Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace – “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful

In order to rejoice in the Lord always. You have to remind yourself of who He is. Because how He relates to us will always be based on who He is.

3] Rejoice in the Lord [future] – what He has promised:

Scrip. Ref: Heb. 13:5 – Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you”; Phil. 4:19 – And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus; Rom. 8:28 – And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose; Prov. 3:5-6 – Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And do not lean on your own understanding. [6] In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight.

In order to rejoice in the Lord always. You have to claim His promises. To rejoice in the Lord always means that there's always a positive perspective in a negative situation. That positive perspective is the Lord. Therefore we ought to be able to say with the psalmist, "I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth". [Psalm 34:1]

[5] Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.

"Let your gentle spirit be known to all men" – "your gentle spirit" – KJV "moderation"; NKJV "gentleness"; New Living Translation "Let everyone see that you are considerate" [epi-eikes – the meaning of this word cannot be conveyed by one word in English. This is why you have a number of different translations of this Greek word. Theologians define this word as sweet reasonableness, generosity, goodwill, friendliness, charity towards the faults of others, mercy toward the failures of others, leniency, bigheartedness, moderation, forbearance and gentleness... Perhaps the best corresponding English word is "graciousness" – the graciousness of humility. [MacArthur]; Chuck Swindoll – "The idea here is having an easygoing temperament... Let insignificant things slide. Accept differences". [Swindoll]; "Gentleness of spirit" doesn't mean a person accepts injustice or is indifferent to the wrong against him. It simply means he doesn't allow injustice against him to cause him to act unjust in return. He doesn't allow hatred towards him to cause him to hate back. He doesn't become like those who have done him wrong, he is the complete opposite. He is gracious to the ungracious, kind to the unkind, patience towards the impatient, and gentle towards the rude. This person is willing to wave his rights in order to show kindness towards his neighbor. To give up being first in the line. To be willing to give up his turn. To consider others as more important than himself.

Paul command us to "Let your gentle spirit be known to all men" – "be known" [ginosko – to know; aorist imperative active; 3rd person sing; trans. "let your gentleness be recognized by all men"]; "to all men" [pasin anthropois – dative of advantage] – male, female, rich, poor, black, white, Republican, Democrat; regardless of who they are and what they believe we are to let our gentle spirit be made known to all men, not just the people we get along with but those we don't get along with. Quote: Hansen – "Paul calls for Christians to have a reputation of being courteous".

And here's the motivation behind the command – "The Lord is near" – This is not referring to the Lord presence being with us but His promise return for His people [Phil. 3:20-21]. When we will have to stand before the Lord at the judgment [bema] seat of Christ in order to give an account for how we live. Therefore knowing that the Lord is near is the best motivator in treating people graciously.

3 spiritual disciplines that will promote mental health in your life: The 1st spiritual discipline is: Pray about the things that worry you and you will experience the peace of God [vv. 6-7]:

[6] Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

"Be anxious for nothing" – In the original Paul begins with an emphatic statement – lit. "Nothing be anxious" – "nothing" [meden]; Nothing in the original means "nothing". There is nothing in

life you should be anxious about – not your health, not your bills, not family issues, not death, not natural disasters, nothing; “be anxious” [merimnao – to be troubled with cares; to be fretful; means to be pulled in different directions... The Old English root from which we get our word “worry” means “to strangle”. [Wiersbe] present imperative active; 2nd person plural]; The present tense command means to stop being in the habit of strangling your mind and emotions with anxiety. Worry is consuming your mind with concern that something unfavorable may possibly happen to you in the near future. It is living life in the “what-if”. And the “what-ifs” when it comes to your future are never positive but negative:

Scrip. Ref: In Matthew 6, Jesus commanded us not to worry – “For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for your life” [25]; which of you by being anxious can add a single cubit to his life’s span? [27] [Worry doesn’t extend life, it shortens it]; “why are you anxious about clothing?” [28]; “Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’; “Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” [34]

Quote: Corrie ten Boom – “Worry does not empty tomorrow of sorrows; it empties today of strength.”

Quote: E. Stanley Jones – “Worry is the interest we pay on tomorrow’s troubles.”

Quote: Anonymous – “Worry is a small trickle of fear that meanders through the mind until it cuts a channel into which all other thoughts are drained.”

So Paul commands us to stop being in the habit of being anxious – “Be anxious for nothing”. In other words, it is a sin to worry, it is a sin against God to be anxious; “but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” – “but” [alla – strong adversative]; “But” in contrast to being in the habit of anxiety “in everything by prayer and supplication”. Notice, how Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit instructs us on how to deal with the constant temptation to worry. He commands us to pray.

“Be anxious for nothing” – “but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” – The command to pray instead of worry conveys the truth that God expects you to take your problems and concerns to Him, rather than trying to deal with them yourself: Scrip. Ref: 1 Pet. 5:7 – commands us to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God by “casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you”.

“In everything” God wants you to direct your anxiety to Him by means of “prayer and supplication” – “prayer” [proseuche – communication address to God; adoration towards God] When you pray address God as Jesus commanded you, say, “Our Father, who art in heaven” – When we address God as Father this reminds us that He loves us and will take care of us, just as a father loves and takes care of his children; “who art in heaven” reminds us that our Father is transcendent and sovereign. He is not only near as Our Father but He is also exalted as King and sovereign over all things. In other words, what happens in my life is completely under my Father’s control and no one else’s; “supplication” [deesis – entreaty; an urgent request to meet a need, exclusively addressed to God. [BDAG]; And after you have adored God in prayer by

acknowledging who He is, then you tell Him what you stand in need of. But don't ever forget to add "with thanksgiving" [eucharistias – gratitude]; When you don't include "thanksgiving" in your prayers the attitude you communicate to God is arrogant frustration. It is coming into the presence of the Lord with a complaining spirit as if accusing God for being in the wrong for allowing problems in your life. As if God is obligated to pander to your wishes. Thanksgiving communicates that you realize that you are always doing better than you deserve. Thanksgiving takes into account past mercies over your life, present gratefulness for God's presence in your life and future hope that all things will work together for your good. No matter what you are going through in life there is always a reason to give thanks to God: Scrip. Ref; 1 Thess. 5:18 – in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus; When you can't think of a reason to thank God: 1] Thank Him for saving you. He could have given you what you deserve by sending you to hell; 2] Thank Him for providing for your needs; 3] Thank Him that He hears your voice and your supplication; 4] Thank Him for keeping His promises; 5] Thank Him for delivering you out of trials in the past; 6] Thank Him for keeping you; 7] Thank Him for His grace in your life, for loving you, for His sovereign control over your circumstances and His comfort in trials; 8] Thank Him for waking you up this morning; 9] Thank Him for new mercies every morning; 10] Thank Him that no temptation has overtaken you but such is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide a way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it [1 Cor. 10:13]; Thank Him;

"let your requests be made known to God" – "your requests" [ta aitemata – has been asked for]; "be made known" [ginosko – to know; present imperative middle voice; 3rd person sing.]; This command means to not pray in vague generalities – "Lord, I got a problem"; "Lord, You know what I am going through". Yes, He knows what you are going through. If you know that He already knows, then why pray to Him about it?

It is by telling Him exactly what you concerned about and how you feel that you will experience the reality that God is your Father. We don't pray to God simply because He already knows about it, we pray to God because the Bible says, "He cares for us". And when someone cares for you, you let them know what's wrong with you. Let it be known to God what it is that is causing you to worry.

Now this is an important truth I need to remind you of whenever you pray. Notice the phrase at the end of verse 6 – "your requests be made known to God" [pros ton Theon]; When you pray, never forget that you are drawing near into the presence of God: Scrip. Ref: Heb. 4:16 – Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Every time you pray you are coming into the presence of God who has promised to give you His mercy and grace to help you in your time of need. I don't know about you but I always stand in need of mercy and grace, have I got a witness? That's why the Bible commands us to – "pray without ceasing" [1 Thess. 5:17]

Quote: Someone has summarized this verse in this way be “anxious in nothing, prayerful in everything, thankful in anything.”

[7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Here’s God’s promise to you when you pray instead of worry – “And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” – God promises to bestow His peace to you – “the peace of God” [Eirene tou Theou – this refers to the tranquility God has within Himself.

God has no anxieties within Himself, He has never experienced worry, He has never been stressed out, He doesn’t know how it feels to be overwhelmed, because peace permeates His entire being. God always has peace within Himself, even though on the outside the devil and his demons oppose Him and sinful man dishonor Him. God possesses peace because none can harm His glory or thwart His plans, but everything is working according to His sovereign purposes. The peace of God flows from His sovereign, omnipotent and wise nature. God has peace because He is supreme and in control of all things. God has peace because nothing can defeat Him, He’s almighty. God has peace because in His wisdom He has design all things good and evil, right and wrong, to work in such a way to bring Him glory in the end. And when God gives you His peace. He is essentially giving you His perspective on your life – He has absolute control over your life. He is omnipotent, nothing can happen to you apart from His will. And He is wise, all things happening in your life is working together for your good.

Now there are two elements of the peace of God in the believer’s life: 1] Salvific peace – This is the peace you receive when you trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. This peace simply means that God’s wrath is not upon you, only His everlasting love. This peace says, “God doesn’t hate you. God is not after you. God no longer sees you as His enemy but only as His child”: Scrip. Ref: Rom. 5:1 – Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; This is peace between you and God; 2] Psychological Peace – this peace entails having peace of mind regardless of circumstances. It is inward tranquility despite outward chaos. Internal calm despite external confusion. “The peace of God” is God putting within your spirit what He always experiences in His own – Peace.

And the word for “peace” in the Hebrew is “shalom,” which means “well-being”. God wants to place the experience of His well-being in your soul. And this well-being “surpasses all comprehension” – “surpasses” [hyper-echo – to excel; to go beyond; present participle active; nom. fem. sing.]; “comprehension” [nous – understanding]; When you pray God promises to give His peace which surpasses/excels all comprehension. “All comprehension” means you don’t have it figured out on how it is all going to work out, but you got peace about it. It’s trying to explain to yourself how you went from worry to peace without your circumstances changing. In other words, the peace of God does not come from knowing how it is going to work out, it does not come because your circumstances have changed, but it comes from knowing that God’s got it.

So the real challenge in your Christian walk is to accept the reality that God's purpose in your life is not to remove every unpleasant situation. But His purpose is to remove the worry every unpleasant situation brings so that His peace may reign in your heart. It is not that God is powerless to remove the unpleasant situation. But He wants to show His power in not having to remove it, just to prove that He is able to give you His peace in it.

And the peace of God – “will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” – “guard” [phroureo – to protect by a military guard; future indicative active; 3rd person sing.]; As Paul is writing this letter he is in a Roman prison chained up to a guard who watches over him throughout the day. The promise that comes from praying to God instead of worrying is that God's peace will take up station and guard “your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”. Meaning God's peace will keep worry, doubt and fear from overtaking your heart and mind, your entire being – your mind, will and emotions “in Christ Jesus”. The phrase “in Christ Jesus” refers to our union in Christ.

The 2nd spiritual discipline that will promote mental health in your life is: Ponder over the things that are true and God will give you peace of mind [v. 8]:

[8] Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

“Finally” [to loipos – in addition]; In addition to praying to God, we must also think on the things of God if we want to experience mental health in our lives.

Quote: F.F. Bruce – As good food is necessary for bodily health, so good thoughts are necessary for mental and spiritual health.

“Finally, brethren” in addition to right praying, we must also have right thinking. Much of our worry comes from wrong thoughts about God and how our situation is going to work out. In other words, wrong thinking always leads to wrong feelings. Therefore in order to experience peace of mind, Paul lists six adjectives along with two nouns as guides in directing our thoughts on the things that are healthy for us:

Quote: Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny!

It all begins with what we sow in our minds: “Finally, brethren, whatever is true” [alethes]; think on reality as it relates to God. Don't think on lies or the unreality of mental fantasies. True entails thoughts that governed by God's Word as your authority; Quote: Wiersbe – “whenever we believe a lie, Satan takes over!” If we want the peace of God to take over, we must believe what is true; “whatever is honorable” [semnos – reverend; comes from a verb that means to worship or revere [Gr. sebomai]. Thus, honorable thoughts are dignified and serious, prompted by holy morals and motives. [Gromacki]; in its other NT uses, it describes the dignified lifestyle required of deacons [1 Tim. 3:8]; deaconess [1 Tim. 3:11], and older men [Tit. 2:2]. Peace of mind does not come from thinking on the things that are trivial, temporal, silly and coarse; “whatever is right” [dikaios – upright; just; that which conforms to God's standard of righteousness as

revealed in His Word] our thoughts must accord with the standard of righteousness; “whatever is pure” [hagnos – sacred; chaste; modest]; “whatever is lovely” [pros-philes – used only here in the NT; acceptable; well-pleasing; causing pleasure or delight, pleasing, agreeable, and lovely.[Hansen]; “whatever is of good repute” [euphemos – sounding well; Related to the term “euphonic” the term [euphema] means “fair-spoken, fair-sounding. Whatever words, works, or persons are well spoken of by people deserve our careful consideration. [Hansen]; used only here in the NT], “if there is any excellence” – “if” [1st Class Condition Statement of Reality”]; “excellence” [apete]; “and if anything worthy of praise” [epainos – praise; Scrip. Ref: Eph. 1:6; 11;12]; “dwell on these things” [logizomai – to consider, to reckon, to take into account, to ponder, to think on; “use your facilities upon them”. [The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek NT]; present imperative middle voice; 2nd person plural]; The present tense command calls for us to continually and habitually meditate on God’s Word and then view the world through the lens of its truth. This command conveys the truth that we can control what we think.

Scrip. Ref: Isa. 26:3 – The steadfast of mind Thou wilt keep in perfect peace, Because he trusts in Thee.

Quote: Chuck Swindoll gives the opposite of these virtues in order to assist our thought life: whatever is true – not false, untrustworthy, or imagined; what is honorable – not shameful, twisted, or foolish; what is right – not wrong, sinful, or rebellious; whatever is pure – not tainted, coarse, or immoral; whatever is lovely – not distorted, ugly or offensive; whatever is of good repute – not gossipy, slanderous, or sarcastic; whatever is excellent – not inferior, wasteful or flawed; whatever is worthy of praise – not objectionable, insulting, or evil. [Swindoll]

The 3rd spiritual discipline that will promote mental health in your life is: Practice the truth you have learned and the God of peace will be with you [v. 9]:

[9] The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Paul never commanded others to live in such a way, that he himself was not living. While writing this letter from prison, Paul uses himself as an example of how to experience the peace of God regardless of one’s circumstances. First, he reminds the Philippians of “the things” he taught them: “The things you have learned” [manthano – to learn; aorist indicative active; 2nd person plural]; “and received” [para-lambano – to receive with the mind; aorist indicative active; 2nd person plural] in my letter; There has to be a purpose and goal for sitting under the word week in and week out. To put into practice the things you have learned and received; “and heard” [akouo – to hear; aorist indicative active; 2nd person plural]; “and seen in me” [orao – to see; aorist indicative active; 2nd person plural] in my presence; We need examples to show us how to live God’s Word. I am responsible as pastor to be one of your examples. Older men and older season women are called to be examples also in this church; “practice these things” [“prassete” – to exercise; present imperative active; 2nd person plural; the verb contains ideas of continuity and repeated action. [The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek NT]; “and the God of peace will be with you” – “the God of peace” [His very presence]; “will be with you” [estai (eimi) future indicative active; 3rd person sing; promise]

Christian Standing: (The Battle against Evil (vv. 10-18)

6:10-11 – Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Paul draws to the close of his epistle by saying, “Finally” or “In conclusion”. In other words there is one more important command Paul must give these believers: “**be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God**”. The first command that Paul gives is to “**be strong in the Lord**”. This command is in the passive voice in the Greek which means to continually be yielded or surrendered to the strength that is in Christ Jesus. Believers are powerless in living for Christ, that’s why Paul earlier commanded that believers be filled by the Spirit (5:18). In the Gospel of John 15:5, Jesus said that in order to bear righteous fruit believers must abide in Him, then He said “for apart from Me you can do nothing”. So believers must be surrendered to the Lord. What does a surrendered life look like? A person who surrenders to the Lord is one who recognizes that he is completely depended upon the Lord. In other words, he is humble, he sees himself as God sees him – completely powerless against the world, Satan and his flesh, that he cannot honor God or live a holy life in his own strength.

A person who is surrendered to the Lord has this mindset expressed by Charles Bridges, “There is not a sin, that the highest saint of God may not commit, if trusting in himself”. “**The strength of His might**” was mentioned earlier by Paul in Eph. 1:19, when he talked about “surpassing greatness of” God the Father’s “power toward us who believe”. In other words, the very power that was displayed in rising Jesus Christ from the dead is the very power that believers have in God to live a life to His glory. So when Paul mentions, “**the strength of His might**” he is speaking of the power that was displayed through Jesus Christ’s resurrection, the very power that gives evidence that He is God Almighty, because only God can conquer sin, death and Satan. Now the question remains, how do believers surrender to the Lord so that they may obtain this power? Put on the full armor of God. The strength to live the Christian life takes the power of the Lord Jesus and the willingness of the believer to do what God says. God’s power is only available when believers are humbled enough to obey His word.

So the first command that Paul gives can be looked at as continually being convinced in your heart that you need the Lord's strength to stand in spiritual warfare, while the second command to "**Put on the full armor of God**" is your urgent response in light of that first commandment to obey God's Word. Ignoring the reality of spiritual warfare is serious, and I believe one of the reasons why we ignore the reality of spiritual warfare is because we all live in a materialistic, naturalistic society that teaches that every problem has a physical cause. There is no such thing as a spiritual realm. Thus depression, stress, murder, adultery, drug addiction, drunkenness all have physical causes and thus should be dealt with physically, either through medication or confinement in prison or a rehab facility. So we, as Christians borrow this approach to life and are totally ignorant or confused as to why none of the solutions that the world gives is solving the problem. Why are there evil thoughts in my head? Why am I driven toward drugs, drinking, or pornography? Why am I so depressed or stressed out at times? So Satan is not considered a possible suspect to the problems and thus he goes undetected because of the denial of Satanic oppression. Others of us may not have our eyes closed to the reality of spiritual warfare. We would affirm the existence of Satan and his demons and I am sure you are well versed in how Satan works, but practically you live as if he doesn't exist. I think the reason for that is because of the Charismatic Movement's overemphasis and misunderstanding of what spiritual warfare really is – It's not trying to bind Satan, or pleading the blood of Jesus, or praying in tongues (private prayer language), or saying that every sickness is the result of demonic oppression. This mishandling of who Satan is and how he works has drawn some of us to be more hesitate or leery of claiming any Satanic involvement in the problems that are happening in our lives and the lives of others. Because of the Charismatic Movement's abuse of the doctrine of Satan we have thrown the baby out with the bath water.

But the Bible is clear that Satan exist, that he is a person and not a force. In fact Jesus Christ makes reference to Satan 25 times in the gospels. Satan means adversary, this title is used of him some 52 times in the Bible. The devil, which means slanderer is used 35 times in the Bible. The other titles he goes by are:

The Prince of the Power of the Air

The god of this Age

The Prince of this World

The Dragon

The Deceiver

Apollyon (Destroyer) & Abaddon (Destruction)

Beelzebub (Prince of Demons)

Belial (Vileness, Ruthlessness)

The wicked one

The Tempter

The Accuser of the Brethren

The Father of Lies

A Murderer

The Enemy

A Roaring Lion

The Bible teaches that before Satan became wicked he was an anointed cherub of God; that he possessed great musical ability; that he was perfect in wisdom and beauty (Ezek. 28:11-16). But through pride in wanting to be like God he was removed from living in heaven. The Bible describes Satan as possessing intelligence, supernatural memory, a will, desires, pride, wrath and great organizational ability (he's good at organizing his kingdom of demons).

Paul, in these verses gives us the reason why the believer must be surrendered to the Lord, in order that he **“may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil”**. **“May be able”** is a power word, which is also used in v. 13. The Lord's strength gives us the necessary power **“to stand firm against the schemes of the devil”**. **“To stand firm against”** is a military phrase, which means to stand in front of with the view of opposing. It's having the mindset that the Christian life is not a playground but a battlefield. And therefore in order to survive the believer must be serious about standing firm against the devil. Now notice what Paul says the believer must stand firm against – **“the schemes of the devil”**. The Greek word for **“schemes”** or **“wiles”** (KJV) is where we get our English word **“method”**. The American Heritage College Dictionary defines method: a means or manner of procedure, esp. a regular and systematic way of accomplishing something. Paul wants believers to stand against the evil methods that Satan uses to keep them from being surrendered to the Lord.

Though Satan schemes or wiles are many, they all have one objective and that is to keep believers from being yielded, surrendered or submitted to the Lord. This is no easy task because the enemy has been in business for thousands of years and if you have been in the business of deception for thousands of years you become real good in your trade. He has been a part of splitting churches, ruining marriages, causing despair and deceiving believers into not trusting God. In fact, to show how crafty he is here is a few of his evil methods, each of these points and the verses with them all show that Satan is directly involved in these situations:

THE EVIL METHODS OF SATAN (EPH. 6:11)

1. His method is to ruin the sanctity of marriage through sexual infidelity (1 Cor. 7:5)
2. His method is to take advantage of our refusal to forgive in order to cause deep depression upon the one who offended us (2 Cor. 2:5-11)
3. His method is to capitalize on our anger in order to ruin relationships (Eph. 4:26-27)
4. His method is to put evil suggestions into our minds not to trust God's will for our lives but to do things our way (1 Chr. 21:1; Matt. 16:21-23; Acts 5:1-3)
5. His method is to use unbelievers to intimidate us for standing for Christ (Lk. 22:31; 54-62)
6. His method is to lead our hearts away from sound doctrine, which produces "purity and devotion to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3-4)
7. His method is to hinder our ministry to one another through trials (1 Thess. 2:18)
8. His method is to get information about us in order to accuse and slander us before God's throne (Job 1:7-12; 2:3-6; Zech. 3:1-4; Rev. 12:10)
9. His method is to get us to take matters into our own hands instead of waiting on God (Matt. 4:3)
10. His method is to get us to rationalize sin by justifying it with Scripture (Matt. 4:5-6)
11. His method is to get us to disregard seeking first God's kingdom and His righteousness in order to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin in this world (Matt. 4:8-9)

12. His method is to get us to be self-reliant so that God may oppose us (Jas. 4:6-7)
13. His method is to ruin the reputation of the church and its leaders before the unbelieving world so that God may be mocked (1 Tim. 3:7)
14. His method is to bring suffering in our lives in order to weaken our faith in God (1 Pet. 5:8-9; Rev. 2:10)
15. His method is to cause us to lose faith in God because of the affliction of a loved one (1 Thess. 3:1-5)

These are some of the many schemes of the devil. But my point in showing you this is not for you to memorize each evil scheme but to keep in mind its main objective, to cause believers not to be surrendered to the Lord or simply, to not trust and obey Him.

6:12-13 – For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood”. Notice that Paul is stating a fact not a possibility. Believers are in a struggle or spiritual wrestling match, whether they recognize it or not. The word **“struggle”** refers to the proximity of the battle, it’s not a long distance battle but face to face combat. Satan and his demons are close to believers at all times, observing their lives to see spiritual weaknesses in order to tempt them and then accuse them before God (Job 1:7-12; 2:1-6; 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 12:10). Satan and demons have the ability to plant evil suggestions into believer’s minds (1 Chr. 21:1; Acts 5:3); to work through unbelievers to frustrate us (Luke 22:31-34 compare with 22:54-61); and to provoke a believer against another believer in order to weaken the body of Christ (Eph. 4:26-27). So Paul says recognize that this struggle is not against human beings (saved or unsaved). Though unbelievers can be our enemy, we are not commanded to stand against them but to pray for them, bless them and do good towards them (Luke 6:27-36). But the believer’s struggle is **“against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places”**. There is an organized hierarchy of demons that submit to Satan’s methods of destroying the lives of believers. Satan is not everywhere at once, so what he does is strategically station demons in different parts of the world.

According to Dan. 10:13-21, demons oversee nations, that's why Paul calls demons in this verse "rulers" and "powers" or authorities. As the world forces of this darkness they know those who are in their kingdom and those who are not (Acts 19:14-15). And since they are allowed access into heaven they are considered the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (1 Kgs. 22:19-23; Zech. 3:1-7). Therefore, the full armor of God is the only defense that believers have against Satan and his demons. But notice how Paul states the reason for taking up the full armor of God – **"that you may be able to resist in the evil day"**. It's interesting to think that each day the believer lives in this world is considered **"the evil day"** because each day is a day of battle against the devil. How a believer evaluates each day should be based on what the Bible says how he should evaluate each day. The believer cannot say that their day is good unless they have on the full armor of God and are resisting the schemes of the devil. This is the second time Paul commanded believers to put on the **"full armor of God"**. And the point of repetition is to emphasize the seriousness of spiritual warfare.

6:14-17 – Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, AND HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. From vv. 14-17, Paul explains how to be suited for the battle. In v. 14, Paul commands believers to **"Stand firm"**. He mentioned in vv. 11 and 13 the phrase **"stand firm"** but it was not used as a command but an ability that comes as a result of putting on the full armor of God. So here in v. 14, the command to **"stand firm"** is given with an explanation of how to stand firm, which is putting on the full armor of God. In other words, you obey the command to **"stand firm"** by "having girded your loins with truth"; by putting "on the breastplate of righteousness"; by "having shod your feet with the gospel of peace" and by "taking up the shield of faith". The analogy of spiritual armor came as a result of Paul being imprisoned in Rome and observing the soldiers that were around him (Acts 28:16). Now the full armor of God is just another way of saying – "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25) or "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 13:14) or "walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8).

They all produce the same result, holy living. But the metaphor of spiritual armor helps believers to discern the areas in which Satan and his demons attack – our character and our understanding and confidence in God’s Word. The order of the spiritual armor fits exactly with how a Roman soldier would dress himself for the battle: **“HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH”** – Or the way the NIV translates it, “the belt of truth buckled around your waist”. Before a soldier entered battle he would take the loose ends of his tunic or robe and tuck it into his belt or girdle for greater freedom of movement in battle. When the believer puts on the belt of truth, it is a picture of the believer’s commitment to obeying the truth of God’s word. In other words, he has committed himself to living a life of integrity. There is no greater movement in spiritual warfare than to have a clear conscience because of standing for the truth. The apostle Paul said this about himself in Acts 24:16 – “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men” That’s how believers stand firm with the belt of truth. If believers are not striving to maintain a blameless conscience then they will yield to Satan’s evil suggestions: to get their thoughts off of God’s will and on to other things (Matt. 16:21-23) and even deceive them into doing good things with evil motives (Acts 5:1-3). The next piece of armor that Paul mentions is **“HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS”**. The **“breastplate”** consisted of leather that was overlaid with metal in order to protect the chest of the soldier in battle. The **“breastplate of righteousness”** here is talking about practical righteousness or sanctification. Satan loves to trap believers in sin and thus hinder their effectiveness. When believers stand firm by putting on **“the breastplate of righteousness”** they are seeking to do everything right according to God’s standards.

[15] “and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.” Roman soldiers wore boots or a half boots (caliga) with straps that would be tied half way up the shin. At the bottom of the boot there were nails that gave them the ability to stand their ground without slipping like cleats. The believer who has his feet strapped firmly with readiness with the gospel of peace is confident in the peace he has with God through salvation and the peace of God that he has as a result of living an obedient life. In Col. 3:15, Paul commands believers to “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”. Rule means to be the umpire. The peace a believer experiences as a result of having on the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the boots of THE GOSPEL OF PEACE should be the umpire or should enforce the biblical rules when tempted to sin by

Satan. In other words, will the decisions that you make cause the peace that you have with Christ to be disrupted? Satan loves for believers to make hasty decisions without considering how the decision will affect their communion with Christ. Thus, the believer becomes unbalanced and sure to fall or stumble into sin. But with the believer's feet being strapped with **THE GOSPEL OF PEACE** he/she is able to stand their ground while being pushed by Satan to sin against the Lord.

[16] “in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.” The shield of the Roman soldier was four feet in height and two and a half feet in width and was in the shape of a door. It was made of wood and overlaid with leather. When going to battle the Roman soldier would wet his shield so that it would extinguish all the flaming arrows that were shot at him. The believer's spiritual shield is his faith, the confidence that he has that God will be faithful to His word. If you notice in v. 16, this is the only piece of armor that is given an explanation of its purpose – “with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one”. Without “**the shield of faith**” the believer's heart will be torched with the flames of doubt, despair, anger, lust, pride and so on. The Hebrew writer says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him”. Satan knows that if believers don't trust the Lord, God is not pleased and they will not be blessed or rewarded. That's why Satan's main objective is to keep believers from seeing a need to trust in God. Satan is always seeking to attack our faith in Christ (1 Pet. 5:8-9). The apostle James writes, “But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE’. Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”. (Jas. 4:6-7) How do you become humble so that you can receive grace? Verse 7 – “Submit to God” – How do you submit to God? Trust and obey; What will be the result? You will be able to resist the devil's temptations and he will flee from you. That's how you extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one.

[17] “And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”. The last two pieces of armor that a Roman soldier would put on was his helmet and his sword. The helmet protected the soldier from blows to the head. The spiritual “**HELMET OF SALVATION**” protects the believer's head from the evil suggestions that Satan will try to plant in your mind, such as condemning suggestions that when you sin Christ doesn't love you, or lying suggestions that sin is an addiction which can never be laid aside.

The “**helmet of salvation**” repels such evil insinuations with the promises of salvation. Since Paul doesn’t specify that the helmet is a picture of the future hope of our salvation as he does in 1 Thess. 5:8, it’s best to view the “helmet of salvation” from a comprehensive perspective: salvation from the penalty of sin (Rom. 8:1 “There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus); salvation from the power of sin (Rom. 6:11-12 “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts”); and salvation from the presence of sin (Rom. 8:31 “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us [glorification], who is against us?) This is how the helmet of salvation protects us from Satanic blows.

Now the last piece of armor is the only offensive weapon the believer has against the enemy – “**And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God**”. A Roman soldier’s sword (gladius, 20-24 inches long) was used in the close hand to hand combat that he would face in battle. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” is not referring to the Bible as a whole but specific statements or commands in Scripture that directly counteracts the temptations of Satan. It is not human rational, clever philosophies or mysticism that is going to protect the believer from Satan. The believer cannot afford to be lazy when it comes to the study and memorization of Scripture. The best illustration of how the sword of the Spirit is to be used is how Jesus dealt with Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4:2-11).

6:18-19 – With all prayer and petition praying at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. Paul adds the importance of prayer at the end of putting on the armor not because it is a part of the armor, but because it is what gives the believer strength to put on the armor and to walk in it. Like someone once said, “Prayer is not a substitute for work, thinking, watching, suffering, or giving; prayer is a support for all other efforts”. When Paul says, “with all prayer and petition praying at all times in the Spirit” he means that in light of the intense spiritual warfare believers should be committed to praying for themselves and for others asking God for needs that relate to the spiritual struggle according to the Spirit’s will as revealed in His Word.

If believers really see the dangers of spiritual warfare, they will pray for the right things and pray more often. But if they are blinded to spiritual warfare, they will not see a need for prayer. In light of the spiritual warfare that was going to happen on the night of His betrayal Jesus told Peter to “pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40). Jesus had already told Peter that Satan was after him that night (Luke 22:31) but what did Peter do? He didn’t pray (Luke 22:45) and what happened? He denied the Lord three times, because he didn’t seek God’s strength (Luke 22:54-62). So in light of the intense battle against Satan and his demons the apostle Paul gives two prayer requests to the Ephesian believers concerning himself – 1) that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery which is the gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains; and 2) that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. Paul understood that his time was coming to stand before Caesar (Nero) to make his appeal against the accusations of the Jews that he violated the Law of the Jews, the temple and Caesar (Acts 25:2-3; 8-12, 21; 26:32; 27:24; 28:17-19). Therefore, knowing that the devil controlled the kingdoms of the world (Dan. 10:13, 20; Matt. 4:8-9) Paul wanted the Ephesians to pray that utterance may be given to him from the Lord in the opening of his mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel that Jews and Gentiles are one through Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:1-6). For which mystery Paul was an ambassador in chains (Eph. 3:7-13). It was prophesied to Paul that this situation would happen (Acts 9:15; 21:11) that’s why he wanted to the Ephesians to pray that he may speak boldly, as he ought to speak.

Christian Walking: