

Eph 6.18-24 Standing Firm and Gaining Ground

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Preacher: Dan Morley

[0:00] In Ephesians chapter 6, and we will be looking today at verses 18 to 24, standing firm and gaining ground! You might have heard different conversations which would raise the question, does prayer change things?

And if prayer changes things, how does it change things? Does prayer change God? God, who is eternal and infinitely wise, does His wisdom, His infinite wisdom, require our insights for Him to know how to act?

Does God require us to take counsel with us in order for God to either change His perfections or for God to change His perfect plan?

Perhaps you've heard the saying of the power of prayer. Is there power in prayer as though the one praying has power? Or is it better put the power of God, the power of God in whom we pray to, and such power, the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power, as is seen in Ephesians 3, 20 to 21. So we will be looking particularly at Ephesians 6, 18 to 24 this morning, but we will read from verse 10 through to 24.

[1:23] Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand, stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and taking the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak.

But that you also may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you, whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and that he may comfort your hearts.

[3:06] Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Lord, we thank you for your word, that we have divine testimony, and as we seek to understand your word and the things which are spiritually discerned within it, we pray that you would lead us into all truth by your Spirit and illuminate your word to us.

I pray that you would use even me, and that you would give me clarity of speech and articulation of truth for your glory and for the edification of the saints. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

So the verses which we will be looking at this morning are particularly verses 10 to 24, which is a larger portion. And in this text, what's going on is that the church, standing firm by the Lord's strength, and the Lord's armament, is to gain ground by the faithful ministry of the word.

So again, the church, standing firm by the Lord's strength and the Lord's armament, is to gain ground by the faithful ministry of the word. So if you remember last week, we looked at the Lord's strength and the Lord's armament as the defensive protection, and now we transition more into the offensive, or more particularly gaining ground.

[4 : 25] Gaining ground in the advancement of the kingdom in the spiritual battle. So, three things we'll draw particularly out of the text and examine is persevering prayer, second, a mentionable minister, and third, benediction blessing.

Persevering prayer, mentionable minister, and benediction blessing. So, from what we have looked at already, the church is called to stand firm. And standing firm is being strengthened in the Lord and in the power of his might.

And in light of this, we are given imperatives. The church is given imperatives of what we are to do. And the imperatives are, stand fast, belt up, put on, feet shod, take up, and again, take up. So, what these imperatives are doing for the church, for believers, is providing head-to-toe protection. And that head-to-toe protection is the belt, the breastplate, the shoes, the shield, the helmet, and the sword.

And these armaments, which is for head-to-toe protection in the spiritual battle, are used in analogical language, or as metaphors, for the spiritual resources given us in Christ.

[5 : 48] And to be specific of what those spiritual resources given to us in Christ are, is truth, righteousness, gospel, faith, salvation, and the word of God.

Now, the word of God, or the sword of the spirit, is what we ended last week's sermon on, and which transitions us from the defensive aspect of the spiritual battle to the offense, or to the gaining ground, which is why standing firm and gaining ground.

So, gaining ground for the church, for believers, for the saints, gaining ground in the spiritual battle in this present evil age. Stand therefore.

And then the imperatives follow. If you notice in verse 18, what are the imperatives that follow? First, praying always, and then being watchful. Praying always, and being watchful.

So that brings us to our first point. Our first point being, persevering prayer. That is the need for watchfulness, prayer, and intercession. So, in a sense, we'll answer the questions of, one, to pray.

[6 : 57] Secondly, when to pray. Third, what to pray. Fourth, how to pray. And fifth, to whom to pray. So many different aspects or components of the prayer which the saints in the church is to pray, and praying always, and being watchful.

So first of all, to pray. We are told here as an imperative, the church is told as an imperative, to pray. So what exactly is prayer? Prayer is not placing your order.

I'm sure you've probably been at a restaurant, and there's a table near you, and the server comes up and asks the table what they would like, and without any courtesy, the person will bark back saying, give me this, and give me this.

And sometimes, some people might see prayer as that way, as just telling God, give me this, give me this, this is what I want. But prayer is not placing your order.

Prayer is communion with God. Prayer is communion with a holy, righteous, just, omnipotent, eternal, infinite God. Prayer, this communion with God, is pouring out your soul.

[8 : 11] Prayer is a posture of dependence, and eagerness to be changed. It's not a posture of demanding for God to change, or demanding for God to give us what we want, but it's a posture of dependence upon God.

Without Him, we can do nothing. An eagerness to be changed by God in His holiness, and righteousness, and goodness, and mercy, and grace, and love. Furthermore, prayer is a recognition of God and His perfection.

We'll kind of flesh this out more, but recognition of God, for example, that God is infinite, that God is holy, and as such, the prayers in which we offer up to God, when our contemplations are consumed with who God is, according to His perfections.

And as a result, praying is returning proper responses to God, of which He is worthy of. So, as our thoughts contemplate God's perfections, God's essence, God's attributes, and we marvel at the astonishing essence of who God is, our responses is towards that which He is worthy of.

For example, praise. Praising God for His essence, for His attributes, for His perfection. Praising Him that He is almighty. Praising Him that He is eternal. Praising Him that He is infinitely wise.

[9 : 30] But it's not just an acknowledgement of God's perfections, but it's adoration to actually love God for who He is, loving God for His holiness, loving God for His grace, loving God for His wisdom.

And it's not just acknowledgement, and it's not just praise, but it's also being moved to how we are to respond, because of personal experience of who God is, to thanksgiving.

So, praise. Praise for who God is, and His excellencies, His wondrous works. Adoration, adoring God, loving God for who He is in His wondrous works.

And thanksgiving, thanksgiving towards God for what that means to us. Our prayer will be more rightly aligned when we are more rightly aligned with God's excellencies and wondrous works. If our thoughts are not consumed with the excellencies and wondrous works of God, then perhaps our posture might be more of just telling God to give us what we want, but the more our thoughts and our hearts and our wills, our whole soul, is aligned to who God is, then as we overflow and return onto Him the responses that are due to Him, and pour out our souls to Him, our prayers will be more rightly aligned with God's excellencies and wondrous works.

[10:54] So, continuing with the question of what is prayer, the Baptist Catechism asks that question and gives an answer. So, the Baptist Catechism, question number 105, gives this answer to what is prayer.

Prayer is an offering up our desires to God by the assistance of the Holy Spirit for things agreeable to His will in the name of Christ, believing with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of His mercies.

So, the church is called to pray. Second of all, when to pray. When are we to pray? Well, our text tells us to be vigilant in prayer.

When to pray? Always. The text says to pray always. That is, in every opportunity or as necessity calls. So, this obviously then brings up the question, how can you pray always?

How can you always be praying, praying without ceasing, when there are other things that need to be done? I cannot pray while I sleep. I cannot pray while I'm listening to a sermon. I cannot pray while I'm having conversations with somebody.

[12:04] And while there are certainly moments where we might offer up brief, on-the-spot, spontaneous prayers to God during those things, clearly our thoughts are sometimes taken up by other things.

So, the call to be vigilant in prayer, to always be praying, means this. That prayer is the basic disposition of the life of faith. There is no time where it is not appropriate, where there is no place for prayer.

Living before God in a posture or attitude of prayer, acknowledging that we depend on Him, we are to pray always, that is, when times are hard.

When times are hard, we are to pray. When times are easy. When in trials, when in joy, when in need, when in prosperity, when in grief, when in blessings.

all stages of life is appropriate stages of life to pray. So, we are to pray always. We don't have to stop praying. We ought not to stop praying when in times of prosperity.

[13:12] And we ought not to stop praying in times of hardship, persecution, or trials, or in grief. All of these times, we ought to be praying. Furthermore, to pray always is a posture of dependency.

We are always in dependency upon God. We rely upon Him for our very existence. He created us and sustains and maintains all of creation, so we depend on God for our very breath and our very life, let alone to do God's will.

So, praying always is a posture of dependence. Without Him, we can do nothing, as we read in John 15, 5 earlier on. So, to pray, when to pray, and next, what to pray.

Our text tells us all prayers and supplications. All prayers. Prayers of thanksgiving, prayers of adoration, prayers of confession of sin, prayers of petitions, intercession and imprecation.

And all prayers are urgent requests, which are made to God. And, petitioning for good things, and supplication, supplication for the deprecation of evil.

[14:25] So, it's quite broad. What to pray? All prayers and supplications. And next, how to pray. Saints are, believers are to pray. They are to pray always.

They are to pray all prayers and supplications. And next is how to pray. So, as we pray, how do we pray? Our text says, in the spirit. This means that our prayers are not mere lip service.

It's not praying in such a way to gain attention or externals, but, not having our hearts far from him, but praying in the spirit.

What in the spirit does not mean, is that it does not mean spirited or charismatic, but praying in the spirit, Romans 8, 26 helps explain.

Likewise, the spirit also helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought. But the spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings, which cannot be uttered.

[15 : 28] Now, he who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the spirit is, because he makes intercession for the saints, according to the will of God. And then also, 1 Peter 4, 7, but the end of all things is at hand.

Therefore, be serious and watchful in your prayers. Our prayers also ought to be in spirit and in truth. And that is, we would not want to offer up prayers, which are, which are false or which are, which are ungodly, nor would we want to pray to the God, or to God, without the assistance of the spirit of God.

Furthermore, how to pray watchfulness. That is not being worldly or slothful in our prayers. Matthew 26, 41 says, watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. How to pray in the spirit, watchfulness, and next, perseverance. Perseverance in prayer, persevering prayer.

That's vigilance, patience, and persistence in our prayer. And then, after how to pray, we see for whom to pray.

[16 : 41] And we are to pray for all the saints. Notice, it's not pray to the saints, but it's praying to God. It is only to God whom we pray, to the triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

But we are to pray for all the saints. And the love of Christ, which is in his people, overflows towards Christ, and Christ's body.

So the body of Christ, believers, ought to pray for all the saints, whom are the body of Christ. And then he also says, pray for me. The Apostle Paul asks the church of Ephesians, in that time, to pray for him, for both the faculty of speaking, and the words of speaking.

So, the faculty of speaking, is clear articulation, for open mouth, for utterance, for clear articulation, and for the words, for faithful articulation.

The Apostle Paul, who is an apostle, inspired by the Spirit of God, his request, for the Ephesians, to pray for him, is for clear articulation, and faithful articulation.

[17 : 53] That is, for the content, and the delivery, of preaching. That is, Bible believing, spirit illuminating, heart piercing, soul penetrating, Christ exalting words.

Paul says, pray for me, for clear articulation, and faithful articulation, and that he may speak boldly, that he might preach, unashamed, and free of fear.

This is quite interesting, because if you, if you recall, all of the Ephesians, and the context of, Paul's writing of this letter, to the Ephesians, what is the state, in which he is in, as he writes?

He is in chains. He is imprisoned. And his request, his priority, his main concern, in which he is asking prayer for, from the saints, is not in regards to imprisonment.

It is not to his chains, it is not to his bonds. Rather, his priority, is the preaching of the word. Bible believing, spirit illuminating, heart piercing, soul penetrating, Christ exalting words.

[18 : 56] Freely, and confidently, openly, and plainly, unashamed, and free of fear, preaching of the gospel. And he goes on to say, to proclaim, the mystery of the gospel.

Again, his request, is not about, his personal condition, of being in chains. His request, his priority, his main concern, is the proclamation, of the glorious gospel of grace.

Which brings us now, to our second point. Our second point, is, strengthened in the Lord, donned in spiritual battle, and persistent in prayer, ground is gained, by faithful ministers, wielding the word of God, for the edification, of the saints, and the salvation, of the lost.

So again, standing firm, and gaining ground, how is ground gained? Strengthened in the Lord, donned for spiritual battle, and persistent in prayer, ground is gained, by faithful ministers, wielding the word of God, for the edification, of the saints, and the salvation, of the lost.

Our second point, is, a mentionable minister. Paul, in our text, goes on, to talk about, a mentionable ministry. Tychicus.

[20 : 09] Who is, Tychicus? Tychicus is Paul's, valued colleague, with reliable service. Tychicus is, trusted, he's faithful, he's proven, and he's beloved.

Now, I, there's a couple, I used to be friends with, I still am friends, but I don't live near them anymore, but I was, a couple I was friends with, the wife, whenever I saw her, she would always say, how's it going?

And I'd say, yeah, it's going good. She'd say, how's it going? I'm like, it's good, things are good. And she'd say again, how's it going? You see, she wasn't merely, satisfied, or interested, in courtesy, or formalities, she actually cared.

She cared about, how I was doing, and what was happening. And that's what's going on here. The Ephesians, care about, the apostle Paul, and they care about, knowing the details, of how he's doing, and of what's happening.

Tychicus, brings news. He brings news of, Paul says, my affairs, and how I am doing. News, on Paul's condition, which as it says, is in chains.

[21 : 12] This isn't gold chains, around his neck, of course, it's bonds, it's imprisonment. So, bringing news of his chains, for what purpose? That they may have comfort.

And 313 says, that you do not lose heart, at my tribulations. So, his news is that, he is in tribulations, he is in chains, but, that they would, have comfort, and not lose heart.

He sends Tychicus, with news, on his conditions, on his affairs, and how he's doing. And also, on Paul's service, in Acts 28, 31, says, proclaiming the kingdom, of God.

Bringing news of his, proclaiming the kingdom, of God, despite his condition, of being in chains. So, Tychicus is sent, for their comfort, of, news of Paul's liberty, to preach, and teach, despite the fact, that he is in chains.

So, who is Tychicus? Tychicus is, a beloved brother. Our text tells us, he is a beloved brother. And, Colossians 4, 7, describes Tychicus, as a fellow servant, in the Lord.

[22 : 20] So, he is a brother, a believer, a fellow servant, in the Lord. Also, Tychicus is a minister. Our text says, he is a faithful minister, in the Lord. And, as a minister, he is set apart, for the ministry, for the ministry of the word.

He will make all things, known to you, a faithful minister, in the Lord, that he may, comfort their hearts. Paul, is not only a minister, set apart, for the word, but he is also sent.

He is a minister, set apart, for the ministry, of the word, and he is sent. Our text says, whom I have sent, to you, for this very purpose. And, what is the purpose, of which he is sent?

The purpose is to instruct, and to encourage. If you keep reading, that you may know, and, that he may comfort, your hearts. So, there is a purpose, for which, this minister, of the word, is sent to them.

Tychicus, is also sent, later on, to Timothy, in Ephesus, in 2 Timothy 4, and, Tychicus, is also sent, to Titus, in Crete, in Titus 3.12.

[23 : 30] Tychicus, is a faithful minister, who is set apart, for the ministry, of the word, and he is sent. He is sent, here, to Ephesus, he is sent, later, in Ephesus, to help Timothy, and, later again, to Crete, to help Titus.

And, also, Tychicus, is beloved, and faithful. These, are two marks, or two qualities, that must mark, a gospel minister. It's not enough, for somebody, to be a, to be set apart, for the ministry, of the word, if they are, merely beloved.

Sometimes, you'll see that, where somebody is, is a preacher, but doesn't know, the word well, and they say, well, he's nice, he loves the people. Being beloved, and faithful.

A person, who loves the people, whose love for Christ, overflows to the body of Christ, and the body of Christ, loves him, and faithful. Now, what we see, going on here, is apostolic, commendation, of a faithful minister.

As, Tychicus, is sent, to Ephesus, Paul sends, with him, his, commendation, of Tychicus, as a faithful minister.

[24 : 41] Now, today, in today's age, there are, no more apostles. So, how are, faithful ministers, commended, as, have, have accommodation, without there being, apostles?

First of all, we have, 1st Timothy 3. A faithful minister, is a 1st Timothy 3, faithful man. Faithful in ministering, the apostles doctrine, which is, the teaching of Christ.

Christ. So, our present day, apostolic commendation, is by the faithful, handling, of the apostles' teaching, which is, the words of Christ, taught by Christ, and inspired by the spirit, written down, by the apostles.

What that means, is that, if ministers, are not faithful, to the apostles' teaching, then they are not faithful, in the words of Christ, and they therefore, are not ambassadors, of Christ. So, to be faithful ministers, to be ambassadors of Christ, they must be faithful, to the apostles' teaching.

Furthermore, prayer, for ministers. Paul asked for prayer, for an open mouth, which is, for clarity, correctness, and confidence.

[25 : 57] So, we should pray also, for clarity, correctness, and confidence, in gospel preaching, and, for the listening, for the listeners, that the listeners, would have open ears, open eyes, and

open hearts, for edification, and for salvation.

Pray for ministers, for words to speak, in boldness, for spirit-attended preaching, marked by the spirit, and power of God. And as, 1 Corinthians 2, 4-5, says, And my speech, and my message, were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power, so that your faith, might not rest, in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

And this is significant, when the greater context, of what we're looking at, in the spiritual, now the spiritual battle, the last thing we looked at, last week, was the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

And as, ground is gained, or the offensive, advancements, of the spiritual battle, is by, the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, the preaching of the words of Christ.

It is, very significant, that we be concerned, and praying, for, the preaching of the gospel, for the advancement, of the kingdom. So that brings us, to our third point.

[27 : 18] In verse, as we, as we read through, Ephesians, it comes, to, this last section, particularly in verses, 10, to 24, and 10 says, finally, so if you remember that, finally, it indicates, in light of all of these things.

So, in light of all of these things, finally, these things, all of these things, pertaining to faith, and obedience, chapters 1 to 3, faith, chapters 4 to 6, obedience, in light of all of these things, pertaining to faith, and obedience, Paul's letter, here comes to a close.

Our third point is, benediction, blessing. Now, the end, of the worship service, is a blessing. You might be scratching your ears, and rubbing your eyes, to determine, if you heard me correctly. So I'll say it again, the end of the service, is a blessing. Now, there may be wrong reasons, why you're assuming, I'm saying that. For example, maybe, you had to go to the bathroom, for the last hour, and you've been watching the clock, the seconds ticking, so you can finally, at the end of the service, go to the bathroom.

That is not what I'm getting at. Or maybe you're hungry, and your stomach's growling, and the bacon parodies, and the cheese biscuits, are calling your name at the back. This is not what I'm getting at.

[28 : 42] I'm not saying, that when the service is over, it's a blessing. What I am saying, is that the end of the service, is a blessing. This is what I mean. Stephen Baugh writes this.

See the concluding benediction, as the crown jewel, of our corporate worship, with the Lord's Day, every week. Its origin, at the end of worship service, is the apostolic benediction, at the end of the epistles.

Its meaning goes back, to the Israelite high priest's, solemn covenant function, to put God's name on his people, so that he can bless them. The benediction in our service, is not a pious wish, of the minister.

What makes it so special, is what God is doing. He puts his name on us, and blesses us, with his smile, and with his peace. The end of the service, is a blessing.

The benediction at the end of the service, is a blessing. It's not only a blessing, Paul's desire for the people, to be blessed, is not merely their salvation, but his desire, for them to be blessed, is the continuance, and increase, of faith, to the saints.

[29 : 55] So you'll notice, three things are stated, peace, love, and grace. Paul's desire for, the saints, to be blessed, with peace, love, and grace. Now peace, is not merely a wish, for a trouble free living.

In fact, we know that those, whom live for Christ, will be hated, by the world, which hates Christ. Rather, this peace, is a life overflowing, with the rich sense, of God's presence, unaltered, by the darkest, and most painful, of life's circumstances.

So it's not being free, of painful, and dark, life circumstances, but in these circumstances, in a sin cursed world, while we, long for a state, of grace, to have peace, in the sense, of a rich sense, of God's presence, in these times.

So peace, and then love. Love being God's, gracious, covenant, commitment, to redeem us, from the darkness, and death, to be his people.

Being redeemed, is not just being, freed from, death, and condemnation, but to be, God's people. To be his people, and he our God.

[31 : 02] That is, divine perfection, of love. And God's, divine perfection, of love, is the fountainhead, of the gospel. And then thirdly, grace.

Peace, love, and grace. Grace, being, God's, unmerited, favor. That is, undeserved, favor. Which is such a, wonderful thing, because, the gospel, the glorious gospel, of grace, is that we are saved, by grace.

It is not because of, a winning personality, or something within us, that, that moved God, to save us, but based on, the perfection, of God's love, is the fountainhead, of the gospel.

Grace, being God's, unmerited favor. God's merit, towards us, does not depend, on our perfection, or on our loveliness, or anything, what we do. It depends on, God's love. God's covenant, commitment, faithful, love.

So, grace, being God's, unmerited, undeserved favor. The gospel of grace, is entirely unmerited, and undeserved. By undeserved grace, God the Father, predestined us. Remember this, in Ephesians 1, 3, 4 to 6.

[32 : 10] And, by undeserved grace, God the Son, purchased our pardon, Ephesians 1, 7 to 10.

And, by undeserved grace, God the Holy Spirit, claims us, and perseveres us, Ephesians 1, 11, 1 to 14.

So, if you remember, at the very beginning, when we were going through, Ephesians 1, the first, the first half of Ephesians, chapters 1 to 3, is what you ought to believe, and we take that with us, when we understand that, what you ought to do.

So, right knowledge, right conduct, or faith and obedience. To understand right obedience, is a contemplation of, right faith, right belief. So, undeserved grace, God the Father, predestined us.

Undeserved grace, God the Son, purchased our pardon, and undeserved grace, God the Holy Spirit, claimed us, and perseveres us. And then, you notice, it says, grace be with all, who love our Lord, Jesus Christ, in sincerity.

Again, the whole body of Christ, all true believers, all true believers, and for those who, read this, particularly, the ones in which, you know, the ones in which, God, by his providence, has caused your paths, to cross, whether through being, in the same church, or the same community, or friendships.

[33 : 29] Desiring God's blessing, of grace, to all true believers, particularly, the ones in which, we know, where we have particular people, and names, and faces, in whom we can pray for. So, do you know, the peace, of God's presence?

Do you know, the love, of God's redemption, and covenant faithfulness? Do you know, the grace, of God's undeserved favor? The gospel, is so glorious, because it, shocks those, who are in this world, who are, who are dead, in trespasses, and sin, and who walk, according to the course, of the world, according to the course, of the prince, of the power of the air.

God's gospel, of grace, is so glorious, because it, it saves those, who are dead, and lost, and condemned, and relocates them, into God's kingdom, of light, and life, and righteousness, and where we have, a hope of, of God's kingdom, and the gospel, how it particularly, is applicable, as we saw, predestined by God, purchased, by God the Son, and claimed, by God the Holy Spirit, being purchased, by God the Son, purchasing, our pardon, is that, if you recall, back from, from the beginning, from Adam, from the fall, there is a problem, there is a sin problem, and because of sin, because of the fall, there is the misery of sin, and all, who are descendants, of Adam, are born, sinful, born sinners, and because being born, sinners, are sinful, and do actually sin, and so there is, a sin problem, and that sin problem, is that God's wrath, God's condemnation, is on, all who sin, and there is also, a second problem, and that, that which Adam, was called to do, he didn't do, and that remains, remained undone, and unfulfilled, so God the Son, the second person, of the Trinity, took to himself, a body, and in our nature, in the form, of a servant, he lived, the perfect righteous life, which was required, to merit salvation, and merit favor of God, and he also, suffered, and died, in our place, to fix the sin problem, that all who believe, in him, all who are united, to him, their sins, were nailed to the cross, paid in full, and that hymn, which we sung, that verses, that line, is one of my, probably one of my favorite lines, in a hymn, it's my sin, oh the bliss, of that glorious thought, my sin, not in part, but the whole, is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul, so if you do not know, the peace of God's presence, the love of God's redemption, and covenant faithfulness, and the grace of God,

God's undeserved favor, all that is required, is to receive Christ, to rest on the Lord Jesus Christ, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, we are not saved by works, we are not saved by winning personality, we are not saved by, anything that is lovely within us, we are saved by grace, because of the finished work, of Christ on the cross, once for all, so, a couple of

concluding uses, from our text, the first one, remember standing firm, and gaining ground, standing firm, more the defensive action, of the spiritual warfare, and gaining ground, is more the offensive, or the advancing, of the spiritual warfare, excuse me, spiritual battle, gaining ground, by the faithful ministry, of the sword, of the spirit, gaining ground, the advancement, of Christ, is not with edged weapons, if you recall, without going into detail, from last week's sermon, Israel, was by military conquest, with sword and spear, gaining ground, in this church age, is not with edged weapons, such as claymores, and karambits, but, by the words of Christ, ground is gained, by the words of Christ, if you recall, in Revelation 1, verses 13 and 16, it says, and in the midst, of the seven lampstands, so in the midst, of the churches, one, like the son of man, out of his mouth, went a sharp, two-edged sword, so what's, coming out of, the mouth of Christ, in the midst, of the churches, two-edged sword, which we understand, from our text, is, the word of God, the sword of the spirit, the kingdom of Christ, is not advanced, by edged weapons, but by, the words of Christ, which, brings us, to the absolute, necessity, of knowing God's word, and, wielding God's word, both to stand your ground, and, to gain ground, so knowing God's word, and wielding God's word, both to stand firm, and to gain ground, which is why, it's so important, to understand, the centrality, or the primacy, of preaching, preaching, preaching, is so important, in the service, of the church, it is primary, it is central, because, it is by the preaching, of the word, in which, the kingdom, is advanced, again, not by, edged weapons, faithful preaching, is the primary means, of spiritual growth, and salvation, this is important, to know, and understand, so we can both support it, and pray for it, as we are to, pray always, and, be watchful, so the centrality, and primacy, of preaching, and lastly, the mark, of a faithful minister, is not, whether or not, he's a nice guy, I mean, it's good to be a nice guy, but that is not, what is required, to be a faithful minister, that's not all, of the requirements, rather, a faithful minister, is a first Timothy, chapter three, proven man, who is, who faithfully expounds, the word of God, he is first Timothy, Timothy three, faithful, proven, and beloved, to gain ground, in spiritual battle, and this present evil age, requires faithful ministers, to rightly divide, the word of truth, to spread the gospel, advance the kingdom, and fill the earth, with the knowledge, of God's glory, as it fills the temple, which is, the churches, faithful churches, the glory, of the knowledge, of God's glory, filling the temple, faithful churches, with Christ in their midst, by his word, and spirit, watch therefore, and pray therefore, so a few things, for us, for the church, to watch and pray, pray, for faithful churches, what is a faithful church, a faithful church, is pure, has pure preaching, of the word, due administration, of the sacraments, and exercise, of church discipline, pray for faithful churches, pray for faithful ministers, pray for the congregation, for faithful hearing, pray for Christ's kingdom, to be advanced, through faithful preaching, in faithful churches, pray for the kingdom, of darkness, to be destroyed, pray for God's glory, to fill the earth, and pray, even so, come Lord Jesus, let's pray,

[40 : 45] Lord we thank you, for your word, and how your word, equips us, for life, and godliness, and Lord we, thank you for what we have, read in your word this morning, and I pray that you would indeed, continue to cause us, to think upon your word, that we would contemplate, these things, meditate these things, and as such, have our prayers, more rightly aligned, to who you are, your excellencies, and your wondrous works, I pray Lord, that you would help us, in our prayer, as we depend upon you, and that you would guide us, by your spirit, and we would pray, that we would pray rightly, I pray also Lord, for faithful ministers, I pray for faithful churches, we pray for faithful ministers, in faithful churches, we pray for the congregation, in faithful churches, for faithful hearing, we pray for Christ's kingdom, to be advanced, in these faithful churches, through faithful preaching, we pray for the kingdom, of darkness to be destroyed, we pray for God's glory, to fill the earth, and we pray even so, come Lord Jesus, we thank you, for the ways, in which you bless your people, through the ministry, of the word, we pray that you would indeed, you bless your people today, we pray these things, in Jesus name, amen, we will stand, and sing the doxology,