



# SATAN'S WAR ON MARRIAGE

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Supreme Court decisions to legalize same-sex unions are the latest salvo in Satan's long battle against the institution of marriage. Satan is "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4) who blinds and deceives the whole world (2 Cor 4:4; Rev 12:9). He is the head of a vast, powerful, organized, and malicious army arrayed against Christ and the human race. Christ's redemptive work on the cross and his resurrection decisively defeated Satan and his domain (Eph 1:19–20; Col 2:15) yet those united with Christ are still engaged in spiritual warfare.

Satan hates marriage. He hates *Christian* marriages in particular for believers dramatizing Christ and the church powerfully display the gospel in their marriage (Eph 5:32–33). Satan thus aims to destroy *Christian* marriages because such opposition hinders the witness of Christ to the world. To counter Satan's attack we must understand God's design for marriage, Satan's strategy against it, and how to stand firm in our marriages. In this article I will argue these points by showing how Satan fractured the first marriage. Next, I will survey the biblical evidence of Satan's explicit attacks against marriage. And last, I will lay out the divine resources given to Christian marriages to stand firm against the schemes of the devil (Eph 6:10–20).

As Andreas Köstenberger has observed, most marriage books fail to consider spiritual warfare. He writes, "Regularly, the focus [in marriage books] is on fulfilling one's partner's needs in marriage, improving one's communication skills, or resolving marital conflict. From reading any of these books, one would never know that spiritual warfare is a vital issue in marriage and the family. Yet, in fact, spiritual warfare is an all-encompassing reality."<sup>1</sup> What follows will begin to fill this lacuna and help

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1. Andreas J. Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, 2nd ed (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 157.

Christians fight for their marriages.

## SATAN'S WAR ON THE FIRST MARRIAGE

The trinitarian design to create humanity “in his own image” (Gen 1:27) as male and female revealed a significant purpose of marriage. The meaning of the “image of God” (*imago dei*) has been variously explained in terms of intellectual ability, moral decision-making, the ability to make willful choices, moral purity, or ruling as God’s representative vice-regents. David Clines’ research uncovered that ancient kings believed they alone were created in the image of their gods to be the representative rulers of the gods.<sup>2</sup> God’s first words to humanity were in terms of rulership (v. 28). The divine mandate to the first couple was not simply to produce babies but a directive to subdue the earth by spreading God’s glory over the earth through their godly progeny.<sup>3</sup> The divine mandate for marriage has not changed. Christian marriages are to produce godly offspring who will spread the gospel of Christ and God’s glorious presence throughout the earth.<sup>4</sup>

The creation account gives evidence of the ontological equality of men and women as both were created in the *imago dei*. The first chapters of Genesis also reveal God’s normative expectations for marriage: (1) Marriage is a heterosexual, (2) monogamous, (3) sexual, (4) and patricentric relationship. Patricentrism, though esoteric, is a helpful description of a family where the husband serves as the leading, protecting, and providing center of the marriage and family.<sup>5</sup> Marriage is also (5) permanent relationship. The phrase used by Adam to describe Eve (“bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh”) was used elsewhere in the OT to convey permanent blood/family relationships that could not be broken (Gen 29:14; Judg 9:2; 2 Sam 5:1; 19:12, 13; 1 Chr 11:1. Last, marriage is (6) one flesh, covenantal relationship that creates a “corporate personality” through the sexual union of two unified spouses.<sup>6</sup> As the creation account closed, the portrait of marriage is that it was and is a good institution blessed by God. Adam and Eve are poised to carry out the divine mandate to reproduce and extend the kingdom of God so that it will eventually fill the earth.

Tragically, this ideal was overturned before the first child was ever born. In Genesis 3, Satan enters the Garden of God to oppose his creator and deceive the pinnacle of creation. Scripture describes Satan as “crafty” (Gen 3:1), a subtle foe who is full of “malevolent brilliance.”<sup>7</sup> His devious wooing of Eve and Adam’s subsequent rebellion brought discord to the cosmic order and to the marital union. Eve became the matriarch as she usurped Adam’s patricentric authority. Adam broke the covenant with God (Hos 6:7; cf. Rom 5:12–21) and fractured his marriage when he, respectively, disobeyed God and blamed Eve (and God) for his rebellion (Gen 3:12). Marriage would now be characterized by disharmony as two sinner’s fight for the domination of the relationship (v. 16). Rather than spreading the garden over

2. David J.A. Clines, “The Image of God in Man,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968), 85.

3. T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic and Professional, 2009), 20–31.

4. On the Great Commission focus of marriage, see Christopher Ash, *Married for God: Making Your Marriage the Best It Can Be* (Nottingham: InterVarsity, 2007).

5. Daniel I. Block, “Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel,” in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 33–102.

6. Sang-Won Son, “Implications of Paul’s ‘One Flesh’ Concept for His Understanding of the Nature of Man,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 11, no. 1 (2001): 119.

7. R. Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Dictionary of the OT* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), s.v. “*ārūm*,” by Ronald B. Allen.

the earth, they were cast out of it and cursed (v. 24).

This exile from Eden secured the reign of death among humanity. Life, children, and marriage would continue but would be characterized by enmity between Eve's progeny and Satan's offspring (the evil spiritual entities, v. 15). Still, in the midst of God's judgment, there is also hope.

God promised this conflict would end when his messiah would crush Satan's head and forever rendered him powerless (v. 15). The rest of the Bible tells this account and leads us to the person and work of Jesus Christ. On the other side of the Christ's death and resurrection, we know he has already defeated Satan through his cross (Col 2:15). Yet, Satan and his demonic forces are not yet totally subdued so that Satan still "prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5:8). Though he rages against all humanity, he targets marriages as a survey of biblical history demonstrates.

## A BIBLICAL SURVEY OF SATAN'S WAR ON MARRIAGE

The consequences of sin on marriage have been seen in every generation since the fall. Lamech shattered monogamy (Gen 4:19). In time, heterosexuality was abandoned for homosexuality (18:16–19:28). The one flesh, permanent nature of marriage was ripped apart with divorce (Deut 24:1–4), and the natural boundaries were erased with perverted, unnatural sexual liaisons (Exod 22:19). Since space prevents us from considering every deviation from marriage in the Bible, this section will focus on biblical examples of marriage that have clearly been influenced by Satan's lies and stand in opposition to God's glory.

### *Unnatural Marriages (Gen 6:1–4)*

The first post-Fall sin recorded in Scripture *with explicit satanic influence* was within the context of marriage. Genesis 6:1–4 is a difficult passage that has generated numerous interpretations.<sup>8</sup> The identity of the "daughters of man" is fairly straight-forward as a description of human females who were "attractive" (v. 2). The crux of the exegetical quandary is the identity of the "sons of God" who intermarry with the "the daughters of man" and produced "Nephilim" ("giants," v. 4) as offspring. These "sons of God" have been identified as apostates from the godly line of Seth who intermarried with the depraved line of Cain, polygamous despotic rulers from Cain's genealogy, demon possessed men from Cain's line, or evil angelic beings who intermarried with human women. All these interpretive positions have their strengths and difficulties but the angelic view best fits the text as explained by Willem Van Gemeren: "the variants of the 'human marriage' view have thus far not proved to be satisfactory. The linguistic, semantic, and literary considerations adduced to establish each one of these variants fail in one aspect or another to be compellingly attractive."<sup>9</sup>

God established a natural boundary of marriage as heterosexual human-human. These unnatural marriages from Satan's realm, apparently entered into willfully and voluntarily by human women, breached and rejected God's natural order. Ronald Hendel recounts the devastating effects of this

8. In addition to original study, information for this passage was gleaned from Ronald S. Hendel, "Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106, no. 1 (March 1987): 13–26; Sydney H. T. Page, *Powers of Evil: A Biblical Study of Satan and Demons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 43–54; and Willem A. VanGemeren, "The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4 (An Example of Evangelical Demythologization?)," *Westminster Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1981): 320–348.

9. VanGemeren, "The Sons of God in Genesis 6," 343.

satanic ploy: “The sexual mingling of the Sons of God and the daughters of men creates an imbalance and a confusion in the cosmic order. The birth of the demigods threatens the fabric of the cosmos.”<sup>10</sup> These angelic/human liaisons brought societal havoc in their wake (v. 5). Sinful humanity, rather than spreading God’s glory and holiness, advanced satanic wickedness over the earth.

### ***Interreligious Marriages***

Satan and his demonic realm are the driving force of all false religions (Deut 32:16; Ps 106:37; 1 Cor 10:20). God forbid the people of Israel to marry outside the faith lest their hearts be turned away from Yahweh to demonic idols (Exod 34:11–16; Deut 7:3–4). Several examples from Israel’s history proved that marriage to idolatrous pagans brought spiritual ruin to the individual and/or the nation: Israel with the daughters of Moab (Numbers 25); Solomon and his pagan wives (1 Kings 11); and the exiles who intermarried with pagans (Ezra 9–10; Neh 13:23–31).

Christians are commanded, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers” (2 Cor 6:14) which “prohibits believers from joining in any activity that forms a covenantlike bond with pagans and their idols (either through literal-physical or metonymical idolatry) and seriously violates the believer’s existing covenant with God.”<sup>11</sup> While not exclusively about marriage, the prohibition in this passage would certainly include marriage. The imagery for this injunction was likely drawn from Deuteronomy 22:10 (“You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together”), which exhibited the fundamental incompatibility of a Christian willfully entering into a marriage relationship with someone outside of Christ. The covenantal, one flesh nature of marriage is incongruous between members of the different spiritual realms. Satan tempts Christians to marry unbelievers for his nefarious purposes to compromise the gospel, discredit the integrity of the faith, weaken the Church, and contribute to hindering the advancement of the glory of God in the earth.

### ***Unholy Marriages (Acts 5:1–11)***

The first mention of Satan after Pentecost was also within the context of marriage. Ananias and Sapphira failed to resist satanic temptation but gave him opportunity to exert his influence within their marriage. This husband and wife conspired together to deceive the church. Sydney Page notes that the integrity of the gospel was at stake with this sin: “It is appropriate that Satan should be mentioned as the instigator of the first serious failing within the early Christian community. This suggests that from the very beginning Satan sought to hinder the spread of the gospel by causing believers to stumble.”<sup>12</sup> Peter, unlike Adam, stood against Satan which resulted in the further progress of the gospel (Acts 5:22–26). The result was a broken marriage but a purified church.

### ***Celibate Marriages (1 Cor 7:1–5)***

Regular sexual intercourse between husband and wife is good, natural, and expected. Paul instructed this church that men and women should remain chaste prior to marriage (also 1 Thess 4:3) but some in the Corinthian church demanded celibacy for all men, regardless of marital status. Some, as a result,

10. Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 23.

11. William J. Webb, “Unequally Yoked Together with Unbelievers,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149 (1992): 179.

12. Page, *Powers of Evil*, 133.

practiced marital celibacy as an application of a false asceticism.

Very clearly Paul instructed that a husband and his wife are to have regular, normal sexual intercourse. Neither spouse has unilateral authority to cease sexual activity (vv. 3-4). Paul commanded: “Do not deprive one another” (v. 5). The verb *apostereō* was used to describe withholding that which was due to a person (Exod 21:10; Mal 3:5; Jas 5:4) and defrauding or stealing from another (Mark 10:19; 1 Cor 6:7, 8). Sexual intercourse is the due a husband and wife owe one another.

And what is the reason for this instruction? “So that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control” (v. 5). Satan knows how to exploit sexuality. Christians who have celibate or near celibate marriages are inviting Satan into their marriage. A safeguard against Satan’s temptations is for spouses to engage in regular, joyful sex. Otherwise, satanic sexual temptation looms which, if successful, damages the marriage, gives the enemies of Christ an opportunity to blaspheme (2 Sam 12:14), and sullies the gospel of Jesus Christ so that the spread of God’s glory over the earth is hindered.

### ***Forbidden marriages (1 Tim 4:1-3)***

Paul warned pastor Timothy that some departed from the faith because they had listened “to deceitful spirits and the teaching of demons” (v. 1). These satanic teachings did not attack the cardinal doctrines of the faith like denying the Trinity, or the deity of Christ, or salvation by grace alone. Rather, these satanically-inspired false teachers attacked the institution of marriage by forbidding it.

Evidently, some were teaching that singleness was an essential element of salvation. The false teachers in Corinth allowed marriage but not sex, the false teachers in Ephesus denied the goodness of marriage altogether and forbid it. No Christian marriages means no display of the gospel in the world.

### ***Christian Marriages Under Satanic Attack (Eph 5:22-33)***

In summary, all of God’s declarations and normative expectations about marriage found in Genesis 1-2 have been attacked by Satan as indicated in the chart below.

<b>GOD’S NORMATIVE EXPECTATIONS FOR MARRIAGE</b>	<b>SATAN’S ATTACK ON MARRIAGE</b>
ontologically equality	spouse as property
good	forbidden
sexual	celibate
human/human	spectrophilia; bestiality
heterosexual	homosexual
monogamous	polygamy; polyamory
patricentric	egalitarian; matricentric
permanent	divorce; annulment
one flesh	adultery; open marriages
covenantal	interreligious; unholy; contractual

Christian marriages are not immune from any of these satanic attacks and may fall into any one of these grievous sins.

Paul's quote of Genesis 1:24 in Ephesian 5:31 reinforces the one flesh relationship between husband and wife as an unbreakable, unified, corporate personality but also carries the one flesh idea to greater depths. "Mystery" in Ephesians consistently refers to the unfolding of God's once hidden plans in Christ (1:9; 3:3, 4, 6, 9; 6:19). The profound mystery is that from the beginning "when God designed the original marriage he already had Christ and the church in mind."<sup>13</sup> Christian marriage "reproduces in miniature the beauty shared between the Bridegroom and his Bride. And through it all, the mystery of the gospel is unveiled."<sup>14</sup>

The Ephesian marriage passage was preceded by the sober warning not to give Satan an opportunity to exert his influence (4:27). Significantly, the Ephesian household codes (5:22–6:9), not individual Christ-followers or the Church, is the conceptual segue into the Ephesian spiritual warfare passage (6:10–20). Christian marriage is "the context in which the battle order is to be set up, in which the troops are mustered, and where or from where the battle is fought."<sup>15</sup>

### CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES WAGING WAR AGAINST SATAN (EPH 6:10–20)

No other NT book focuses more on the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan than Ephesians. The spiritual warfare passage is arguably the culminating zenith of the book. The defeated-but-not-yet-subdued Satan and his forces are powerful foes arrayed against Christian marriages. But God has not left his people defenseless. When we apply the spiritual armor to our marriages, we find ample defenses to withstand the devil's attacks.

The opening verse commands: "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might" (v. 10) which is achieved when husbands and wives "put on the whole armor of God" (v. 11), the divinely-forged spiritual weapons God provides for his people in Christ. The purpose and goal of taking up the divine armor is for Christian marriages to "be able to stand against the schemes of the devil" (v. 11). The plural "schemes" (also 4:4) suggests marriages may expect a variety of satanic temptations and attacks. Satan's war against Christian marriages is intimate. We are in a wrestling match with Satan (v. 12). "Wrestle" refers to both close contact wrestling and conflict in general.<sup>16</sup> Satan's wrestling match with Christian families attempts to pit wife against husband and children against parents. The nature of the battle is spiritually intense so Paul repeats his urgent call: "Take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day" (v. 13). "The armor of God," a metonymy for Christ himself, provides Christian marriages with everything necessary to resist and stand firm against Satan.

#### *The Belt of Truth*

Satan is resisted when spouses "stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth" (Eph 6:14). The verb "fastened" was used to describe ensuing battle or hard work (Pss 65:6; 18:32, 39; Luke 12:35, 37;

13. George Knight, III, "Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21–33 and Colossians 3:18–19" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 176.

14. Peter O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 434.

15. Thomas R. Neufeld, "Put on the Armour of God": *The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament 140 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 108.

16. Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), s.v. "palé," by H. Reeves.

17:8). Charles Hodge shows the need for gospel truth in the life of a marriage:

Let not any one imagine that he is prepared to withstand the assaults of the powers of darkness, if his mind is stored with his own theories, or with the speculations of other men. Nothing but the truth of God, clearly understood and clearly embraced, will enable him to keep his feet for a moment, before these celestial potentates. Reason, tradition, speculative conviction, dead orthodoxy, are a [belt] of spider-webs. They give way at the onset. Truth alone, as abiding in the mind in the form of divine knowledge, can give strength or confidence even in the ordinary conflicts of the Christian life, much more in any really 'evil day.'"<sup>17</sup>

Putting on the belt of truth means to believe and embrace the truths of Scripture.

The belt of gospel truth is worn when Christian spouses have an open, honest, truthful relationship. Sometimes the truth will be painful to tell or difficult to receive. Truth telling is necessary, however, to have a one flesh union where husband and wife may stand naked and unashamed before each other. The alternative is to harbor lies and give opportunity to “the father of lies” (John 8:44) to exert his influence in the marriage. Truth-tellers are solid, dependable, trustworthy, commendable, and their marriages will “endure forever” (Prov 12:19).

### ***The Breastplate of Righteousness***

The second protection against satanic influence in marriage is to “put on the breastplate of righteousness” (Eph 6:14). Christ’s imputed righteousness is at the heart of the gospel so that both spouses know that they do not have “a righteousness of [their] own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith” (Phil 3:8–9). The righteousness of Christ clothes the sinner so that spouses are confident in their standing before God.

Putting on the breastplate of righteous necessarily requires putting on righteous living. Christ’s righteousness creates a new self that is “created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:24). Because of this new righteous self, Christian spouses grow in living worthy of the gospel—maturing in Christ, speaking the truth, controlling anger, working hard, being pure in speech, forgiving one another, living lives of love and purity, where righteousness impels wives to submit to husbands and husbands to love their wives. Satan takes advantage of the hypocritical, unrighteous marriage but a marriage that wears the breastplate of righteousness resists Satan and is strong in the Lord.

### ***The Shoes of the Readiness of the Gospel***

Paul describes the third piece of God’s armor as “shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace” (v. 15). Believing and receiving the gospel brings the Christian marriage into conflict with Satan’s kingdom and the same gospel serves as the foundation which prepares the couple to resist the devil and stand firm in spiritual warfare. The shoes of the gospel are put on when the biblical gospel serves as the foundation of the marriage. The gospel gives the marriage firm footing before God so that Satan’s insidious charges are rejected. The gospel is the ground and impetus for mutual

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17. Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, The Geneva Series of Commentaries (Carlisle: Banner Of Truth, 1991), 282–83.

forgiveness (4:32), the husband's sacrificial love, and the wife's godly submission.

In light of the gospel of peace, Christian spouses are exhorted to be "eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3). Satan is a murderer (John 8:28) and his desire in his war against Christian marriages is to create chaos, dissention, hatred, adultery, and divorce. He hates Christian marriages and he actively opposes it to hinder the spread of the gospel. Disputes and disagreements are a part of every Christian marriage but the godly husband guards his marriage from allowing anger to fester giving Satan an opportunity (Eph 4:26). Satan takes full advantage of false gospels and marital discord but the marriage that puts on the shoes of the gospel will resist the demonic realm and be strong in the Lord.

### ***The Shield of Faith***

Christian marriages are exhorted to take up the fourth piece of the divine armor: "In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one" (v. 16). "Faith" is both objective and subjective. Objective faith refers to the doctrines and theology that make up the Christian faith. Marital unity is maintained by embracing the "one faith" (4:5). Putting on the shield of faith means to clothe the marriage with biblical theology so that the great truths of the Christian faith are known, believed, understood, embraced, and applied in the marriage. Christian marriages are not to be "carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes" (Eph 4:14). Satan ravages Christian marriages through false teaching. Couples resist demonic forces when they hold fast to the faith.

Taking up the shield of faith also means to have a subjective Christ-directed faith. Every marriage will face times of trial, difficulty, disappointment, and sorrow. Satan will exploit these situations and attempt to persuade the spouses to doubt or mistrust Christ's care and kindness. The shield of faith gives the husband and wife an adamant resolve to trust the Savior, no matter what woes may come into the life of the marriage. Faith resists Satan, makes him flee (Jas 4:7), and makes the marriage strong in the Lord.

### ***The Helmet of Salvation***

Christian spouses are encouraged to "take the helmet of salvation" (Eph 6:17). The gospel is the factual message, salvation occurs when the gospel is received and believed. The helmet of salvation resists Satan's schemes and fiery darts by reminding the Christian couple of four eternal truths. First, salvation means that sin is not the master of the marriage. The salvation Christ secured for Christian spouses set them free from the tyranny of sin so that sinful impulses no longer need be obeyed (Rom 6:8-14). Second, salvation encourages Christian marriages to remember that true satisfaction is found only in Christ. Creation is to be enjoyed but the pursuit of anything created for ultimate satisfaction is vanity (Ecc 1:17; 2:17) and becomes fodder for satanic influence. William Gurnall held that "nothing but a steadfast well-grounded hope of salvation can buy off the creature's worldly hopes."<sup>18</sup>

Third, salvation gives hope: "But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thess 5:18). "Hope" in Scripture refers to confident assurance and trust. Christian marriages, like all marriages in a fallen world,

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18. William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour*, vol. 2 (Carlisle: Banner Of Truth, 1995), 137.



will suffer sickness, financial woes, disobedient children coupled with the added pressures of living in a culture bold in its hatred of Christ and his people. The hope of salvation allows the Christian marriage to rise above the specter of despair and glorify Christ (Hab 3:17–19). Fourth, salvation points the Christian couple to the glorious future awaiting them in Christ. The helmet of salvation is a vital piece of the Christian armor until Christ replaces it with a crown. Christian spouses who remind one another of the weighty implications of salvation when Satan tempts are made strong in the Lord.

### *The Sword of the Word*

The last piece of divine armor is the need for Christian marriages to take up “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (6:17). Jesus gives the greatest example of taking up the sword of the Spirit as Satan tempted him (Matt 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13). Satan tempted Jesus but Jesus refused to argue with Satan, reason with him, or consider what he said. Jesus, the perfectly holy Son of God, resisted Satan by wielding Scripture (Matt 4:4, 7, 10) so that “the devil left him” (v. 11) which he will always do when the sword is unsheathed.

A Word-saturated marriage is of vital importance to combat Satan’s schemes as Hodge underscores:

In opposition to all error, to all false philosophy, to all false principles of morals, to all the sophistries of vice, to all the suggestions of the devil, the sole, simple, and sufficient answer is the Word of God. This puts to flight all the powers of darkness. The Christian finds this to be true in his individual experience. It dissipates his doubts; it drives away his fears; it delivers him from the powers of Satan. It is also the experience of the church collective. All her triumphs over sin and error have been effected by the Word of God. So long as she uses this and relies on it alone, she goes on conquering; but when anything else, be it reason, science, tradition, or the commandments of men, is allowed to take its place or to share its office, then the church, or the Christian, is at the mercy of the adversary.”<sup>19</sup>

The faithful husband and wife ought to unfurl the Word of God in all circumstances of marital life. The marriage that wields the sword of the Lord will resist satanic overtures and will be strong in the Lord.

### *Prayer*

Finally, the armor of the Lord is made active through prayer. Paul began Ephesians with a prayer (1:15–23), continues his prayer as he transitions from doctrine to application (3:14–21), and ends with a call to pray (6:18–20). Found in all three prayers is the request to know and understand the power Christ gives to his people (1:19; 3:16; 6:20).

The divine armor is appropriated through prayer. Since spiritual warfare is all-inclusive, the word “all” is prominent in the ending call for prayer. The Christian couple is to pray “at all times, in the Spirit” which suggests they “will be in constant prayer in preparation for the battle as well as in the engagement itself.”<sup>20</sup> Christian couples pray “in the Spirit” when their requests match the desires of

19. Hodge, *Ephesians*, 287.

20. A. Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and

the Spirit, such as putting on the divine armor. Christian couples ought to pray “with all prayer and supplication” which show the vital importance of prayer.

The never ending satanic war against marriage ought to impel Christian couples to “keep alert with all perseverance” in prayer. “Keep alert” means to never be lulled into complacency but to keep diligent watch for chinks in the armor. Prayer for “all the saints” reminds the Christian couple that they are not alone in their fight but are part of the larger church community. As the couple prays for themselves in their war against Satan, so they remind themselves to pray for other marriages to resist Satan and remain strong in the Lord.

In conclusion, Christian marriages are engaged in spiritual warfare. God, however, has provided his own mighty panoply so that Christian marriages may resist satanic onslaughts. The gospel with all its multifaceted beauties is to be lived out in marriage, the most intimate of human relationships, in order to be a witness of the gospel and, thus, glorify Christ in the world.

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Richard P. Polcyn (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 89.