

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-9

“And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. 2 You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. 6 Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ 7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? 8 And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today? 9 “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children.

4:1 *O Israel listen.* God’s call to his people to hear and obey is a frequent theme in Deuteronomy (see, e.g., 5:1; 6:3–4; 9:1; 20:3) and elsewhere in the OT. (CSB)

This is an imperative that serves as an attention-grabbing summons when he wants Israel to receive in faith the Word that will establish, commission, and empower them as his covenant people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

statues and rules – These are virtually synonymous in the OT, with little distinction in meaning. Through many of these decrees in the Torah God calls not just for certain outward behaviors and observances from his people but also for faith in his promises to love, bless and forgive them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

God’s promise of blessing was subject to Israel’s response to His laws and decrees. Israel’s obedience here should be understood in the broad sense as obedience that results from God’s gift of faith. (TLSB)

chuyim and *mishpatim* are translated “statutes” and “rules,” respectively. This is a common construction for the instructions given from God to the Israelites. This is not an instance of redundancy, but rather these two words are specific in their references. Luther comments in his lectures on Deuteronomy: (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Yes, if we consider carefully, only two or three words will properly signify law, namely, *choq* and *mishpat*, statute and law, of which the one, namely, *choq*, means that by which we are set in order toward God; the other, namely, *mishpat*, that by which we are set in order toward men. These two are enough, and this contrast seems to me to be valid and consistent. For so also Moses begins in this chapter: “Hear the statutes and laws which I teach,” as though he were gathering together everything in these two words, as if he said: “I shall teach you how to live properly before God and men.” (LW 9:49–50) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Mishpat denotes the kingdom of the left and *choq* the kingdom of the right. The two tables of the law (First through Third and Fourth through Tenth Commandments) readily fall into these distinctions. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Command given 70 times in Dt. However, as Israel transitions from the nomadic to the settled life, God’s relationship with them will not change. (TLSB)

I am teaching you – Note the Gospel action, his initiative-taking, and his covenant faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. The Promised Land is not earned or deserved; it is given as a gift. Thus it is a type of the ultimate Promised Land, heaven, which is opened to sinners only through Christ's atoning work and entered via God-given faith. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

4:2 Several places in Scripture repeat this theme. God's Word, with its promises of the Messiah and their fulfillment in Jesus Christ, is sacred, and mankind cannot change it. Luther: "But you will say: 'Then why have so many additional books of the prophets been added? And David decided that a temple should be built when the tabernacle of Moses had been done away with, and he arranged the orders of the Levites. And Joshua did many things and commanded the people. So it can be said about many other things.' I answer: It does not take away from or add to the word of Moses when someone teaches the same thing in other words or in more words. Thus the prophets taught and explained Moses, not themselves, and they judged according to his Law and reprov'd kings and people. Moreover, what Moses says here applies not to God but to the people: 'Do not add, etc.' For who doubts that as the time requires God Himself can add or subtract something? Whether He adds or subtracts, He Himself always remains true; His Word is always true and leads and preserves us faithfully" (AE 9:51–52). (TLSB)

shakk not add...nor take away.† The revelation the Lord gives is sufficient. All of it must be accepted, and anything that adulterates or contradicts it cannot be tolerated (see 12:32; Pr 30:6; Gal 3:15; Rev 22:18–19). (CSB)

To enhance or increase. To shave, trim, take away from or diminish. Both approaches, when unaccompanied by repentance, lead only to death. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Moses' powerful charge that Israel neither add nor subtraction from His words is repeated throughout Scripture. Agur son of Jakeh wrote, "Every word of God is flawless; He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar" (Proverbs 30:5, 6). The Apostle John concluded the Revelation, "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, I will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes towards away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book" (Revelation 22:18,19) (PBC)

Jesus criticized the Pharisees for adding a burdensome body of rules and regulations to the Scriptures: "Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition" (Matthew 15:6). One of the great blessings we inherited from the Reformation is the ability to distinguish between what's God's Word and what's man'. We may be attempted to elevate our own pious notions or pet tradition to the level of the Scripture, but he have no business binding another person's heart or life unless we can demonstrate "This is what the Lord says." The OT prophets condemned their generation of ignoring God's Word when it spoke to their sinful sexual habits, their hollow worship practices, or their corrupt business tactics. The Lord spoke through Hosea; "There is no faithfulness, no love, no acknowledgment of God in the land. There is only cursing, lying, and murder, stealing and adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed... Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I will ignore your children." (Hosea 4:1, 2, 6) (PBC)

We may be tempted to subtract from the Word of God whatever makes us uncomfortable or unpopular. But what do we stand to lose? Moses said God gives people His word and commands "so that you may live." The pathway to the only life worth living leads to God. "I have come," Jesus said, "that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). (PBC)

Those hearing the statutes and rules are warned not to add to or take from these commands. St. John provides a similar warning at the end of the Book of Revelation:

I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. (Rev 22:18–19)

God does not want his Word to be adulterated by human wisdom or skirted over in the interest of social harmony. Yet the Church in both Old and New Testament times (and even today) has suffered from groups and individuals who sought to add to, and take from, God’s Word. This happens when legalistic prescriptions bind people’s consciences where God has not, and also when that which God calls sin is not condemned but embraced as good and right. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Revelation 22:18-19, “¹⁸I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. ¹⁹And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”

4:6 *keep them and do them* – Along with a knowledge of what the Lord wanted, the Spirit of God also gave His people willing hearts to respond to His commands. (PBC)

wisdom and understanding – Wisdom in this sense is “prudence, shrewdness, and insight in the whole gamut of human experience, derived from the revelation of God. Likewise, “understanding” refers to more than natural intelligence or problem-solving skills. It is spiritual insight into God’s ways and his plan of salvation. While God’s understanding is unfathomable even to the most intelligent humans, if they are left to themselves, God grants each believer (no matter how “simple” by the world’s reckoning) through the revealed Word, the portion needed for salvation and godly living. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Nations passing along Israel’s trade route will see God reflected in the lives of His people. (TLSB)

peoples...they hear – The Israelites could observe them and follow them, and the nations around would see and be drawn to their God through them. Jesus taught the same thing: “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ... Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16). (PBC)

A fulfillment of God’s promise to Abram (Gn 12:2). (TLSB)

4:7 *what great nation* - Neighboring pagan nations would look to Israel and see that the true God is not silent or inanimate but rather living and active. YHWH is not distant from Israel, far removed in the heavens. He is near to them, and in their time of troubles—which will certainly come—they may call upon him and he will answer them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

near to it...whenever call on him. The Israelites always had access to the Lord in prayer. His presence was symbolized by the tabernacle in the center of the camp, and by the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle (see Ex 40:34–38; Nu 23:21). (CSB)

God will make His dwelling among the Israelites, who faithfully keep God’s laws and decrees (Lv 26:11–12). (TLSB)

This implies not just close proximity spatially, but nearness in relationship, affection, and commitment. He is near especially in the Word he has given to them, in which he dwells. This is the unchanging foundation and continuing lifeblood of God's covenant with his people and the source and power for them to receive it, cling to it, and live it out. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3) - His presence was symbolized by the tabernacle in the center of the camp, and by the pillar of cloud over the tabernacle. (PBC)

This is synonymous with “to call out.” To call on God is to summon his aid. Calling in this sense constitutes a prayer prompted by recognized need and directed to the One who is able and willing to respond. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

If we were asked to list the great spiritual advantages the Savior has given us, what would our list include? For many of us, a godly mother and father who told us about Jesus, prayed for us, and set an example of the faith-full life. For many of us, a community of believers who provided opportunities for worship, education, and encouragement in the faith. For many of us, the privilege of growing up in a country where religious beliefs were neither legislated nor forbidden, but where we could believe and live our faith as we wished. Those are giant blessings. (PBC)

4:8 *that has statutes and rules* – The “greatness” of Israel consists not in any inherent admirable qualities or behaviors but in the “body of laws” that the one, living God, Yahweh, has bestowed on them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

4:9 *lest you forget* – The first generation of Israelites quickly forgot God's powerful Sinai sermon. Moses urges them to learn this lesson from their parents and pass it on to the next generation. (PBC)

The Israelites should be alert for deceptions that would turn their hearts away from God. (TLSB)

hishamer laka, literally, “take heed unto yourself.” These statues and rules are not simply show pieces but are a daily part of the life of Israel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

make them known to your children. Parents have a covenant responsibility to train their children in obedience to God (Pr 22:6). This command extends into the NT (Mt 19:14; Ac 2:39). (TLSB)

“Make them known to your children and your children's children.” This remains as important today as it was then. The people of Israel would have instructed their children both in these commands of God and in the promise of a Messiah. Today the Church must continue to teach children both Law and Gospel, the full counsel of God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 6:10-20

After stressing God's grace in providing our salvation in our Savior in chapters 1–3, the apostle lays out a blueprint for good works in chapters 4–6. He now summarizes and concludes that discussion, as indicated by *Touloipou*, “As for the rest,” or “Finally.” He gathers the do's and don'ts of the sanctified life under an umbrella. He vividly depicts the formidable forces of evil, and the protection and power Christ provides for the redeemed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

6:10-17 This famous picture sums up the Letter. The armor represents both a promise of divine protection and an exhortation to battle. Like a general encouraging his troops, Paul tells us that the victory is certain because Christ has already won the war, and He has made us well-prepared to stand with Him to face any last-ditch assaults. In ancient legends, the weapons and armor of a hero could give certain victory to anyone who wore them (cf 1 Sam. 17:38). The armor Paul describes is not simply from God; it is God's own armor, what He Himself wore in battle. Dressed in Christ's armor, we look remarkably like Christ (Is. 49:2; 59:17; Rev. 1:13-16), for through Baptism we are clothed with Him (Eph. 4:24; Rom. 13:12-14; Gal. 3:27). (TLSB)

6:10 *finally* – The apostle has now reached his last message, and by this word quickens the attention of his readers and prepares them for a counsel eminently weighty in itself, and gathering up the pith and marrow, as it were, of what goes before. (PC)

"Finally" introduces the final admonition. (Buls)

Kretzmann: This closing admonition of the letter has rightly been called the Lord's great call to arms. (Buls)

Paul often alerts us that he is coming to the close of a letter by introducing his concluding section with the adverb "finally." We have that signal here. (PBC)

my brethren – KJV – The Majority text reads "my brothers" at this point and thus KJV and NKJV translate. The other versions do not read these words here. (Buls)

Bengel: He addresses them thus in this passage of the epistle alone. Nowhere do soldiers call each other 'brethren' more than in battle. (Buls)

strong. Implies that human effort is inadequate but God's power is invincible. (CSB)

Do not rely on your own strength (cf 1:19; Joshua 1:9; Ps. 7; Col. 1:11). (TLSB)

The verb is better taken as a passive: "be made powerful." The means of this strengthening are to be found in the vital energy which comes from union with Christ. (IB)

We consider "be strong" middle voice, "strengthen yourselves." How? "In communion with the Lord and in communion with the power of His might." On these two nouns look at Ephesians 1:19. (Buls)

As Luther sang: "With might of ours can naught be done, Soon were our loss effected; But for us fights the Valiant One, etc." *The Lutheran Hymnal* 262. (LSB – 656) The power of the Lord's might comes to us only through the means of grace. The preacher must preach the Gospel. The hearer must listen to it. (Buls)

The might is Christ's but by faith it becomes our strength. (PC)

Such growing strong occurs in the Lord, in the life of fellowship with the Lord Christ, and in the power of His might. A convert, it is true, possesses new life, new spiritual powers. Nevertheless, the new man lives and moves only in the Lord and only has power and stability through the Lord's power. Were the new man left to himself he would immediately perish. The apostle's exhortation implies that the Christian should remain close to the Lord. He should continually request strength and power from Him. He should diligently use Christ's Word, which continually supplies him with new powers. (Stoekhardt)

Notes from Matthew 6:33 The reign is already present in Jesus himself. This means that “one should make it his first concern to belong to it in the here and now, to come into its sphere of working. (CC)

Barnes (*Notes on the New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949] p. 124) comments that Paul knew the Ephesians “had great and mighty foes, and that to meet them they needed to be clothed in the panoply of the Christian soldier. He closes, therefore, by exhorting them to put on all the strength which they could to meet the enemies . . . he reminds them that it was only by the strength of the Lord that they could hope for victory.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

The Christian life will always be a struggle. Attacks on the faith will take the form of temptations and moral lapses. There will be temptations to yield on points of doctrine. There will be temptations to formalize religion and reduce it to an external thing, a mere shell. There will be temptations of lovelessness toward fellow believers and hatred toward those who are not believers. The list could go on, but the point is clear: we need to be strong against temptations. (PBC)

Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Romans 6:3-4, “³Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”

6:11 *put on* – Baptismal language (4:24). (TLSB)

put on full armor – The complete outfit of a heavily armed soldier. The image may have occurred to Paul in prison by looking at his Roman guard, though the details are closer to OT models (the typical shin armor and spear of a Roman soldier do not appear in the list). (TLSB)

"Full armor," the metaphor is that of the Greek hoplite, the heavy-armed soldier who puts on his full armor. This consisted of shield, sword, lance, helmet, greaves (leg armor worn below the knee) and breastplate. (Buls)

Kretzmann: A Christian must be encased in the armor of God from his head to his feet. (Buls)

The picture of warfare is familiar with the apostle: (Stoekhardt)

2 Corinthians 10:4: The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

1 Timothy 6:12: Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Romans 6:13: Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

1 Thessalonians 5:8: But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

Reinecker (*A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980] p.195) identifies *tou Theou* as the “genitive of source or origin, indicating that God provides the armor.” He says

palē “refers particularly to a hand-to-hand fight . . . Wrestling was a fight characterized by trickery, cunningness and strategy.” *The Expositors Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951) notes that *panoplia*, the “full armor,” is the emphatic thing . . . the idea being that we need not only a divine equipment, but that equipment in its completeness, without the lack of any single part . . . we need to take to ourselves all that God provides.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

stand against – The picture is defensive; Christ defends us against the devil on our behalf. (TLSB)

schemes of the devil – Particularly false doctrine, designed to lead us away from God. (TLSB)

The final four words mean: "The tricky methods of the devil." We are reminded of Luther's words: "Deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight; On earth is not his equal." *The Lutheran Hymnal* 262. (Buls)

Our chief enemy does not engage us in open warfare, but deals in wile (cleverness and subtlety) and stratagems. (PC)

This is, or is almost the last hour. The enemy is making a particular severe attack. (Kretzmann)

Methodeias refers to Satan’s wiles. Cf. Eph 4:14 and Luther’s “Deep guile and great might are his best arms in fight. On earth is not his equal!” Barnes (p. 124): “Satan does not carry on an open warfare . . . He approaches us not in repulsive forms, but comes to recommend some plausible doctrine, to lay before us some temptation that shall not immediately repel us . . . invites us to pleasures that seem to be harmless, and leads us in indulgences until we have gone so far that we cannot retreat.” Luther says furthermore, “The wickedness of the devil is so great that no man can grasp it . . . to be so wicked as to find one’s . . . delight only in the misfortune of other people . . . this is the hellish and insatiable rage and fury of the wretched devil” (Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1959] p. 394). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

6:12 *wrestle* – To wrestle. For the Christian this warfare has an eschatological dimension. His wrestling is part of the great final battle which has already begun and is intensifying. (Kretzmann)

Struggle" come from a wrestling match. It was a fight characterized by trickery, cunningness and strategy. This struggle is no mere sport. (Buls)

not against flesh and blood. A caution against lashing out against human opponents as though they were the real enemy and also against assuming that the battle can be fought using merely human resources. (CSB)

rulers . . . authorities. Cf. Paul’s earlier allusions to powerful beings in the unseen world. (CSB)

darkness – Darkness more closely characterizes these hostile powers. The realm in which the demons rule and exercise lordship over the world, is the darkness that surrounds us, the world of sin steeled against God. (Stoeckhardt)

"Our struggle." It is "our" match, but first we are told what it is not. "Flesh and blood" denote that which is human. Our match is not with mere humans. It may look like it but the real enemy lurks behind the human opponents. (Buls)

heavenly places. Behind the Church's earthly opponents stand demonic forces; therefore, the Church should not try to fight with worldly tools (2 Cor. 10:3-4). "All our shelter and protections rest in prayer alone" (LC III 30). (TLSB)

Paul is not giving us different ranks of Satanic forces. He gives us a number of nouns which describe the formidable nature of our real enemies. They stand in apposition to each other. "Rulers, authorities, cosmic tyrants." (Buls)

"Darkness" means "of this darkness which opposes Jesus, the Light." (Buls)

Finally, they are described as "spiritual, wicked, transcendental beings." (Buls)

"Against," meaning "face to face" occurs four times. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: These demons are spirit, spirits only, without flesh and blood, conscious beings, endowed with reason and will, but spirits of wickedness, whose entire thought, effort and seeking is pure wickedness, whose sole purpose is to destroy the works of God. And because they are spirits, they are members of a supernatural, super sensible, transcendental world. (Buls)

They are actively evil. Think of what Satan did to our first parents, King Saul, Solomon, Judas, Peter and countless others who began so well but who were trapped so miserably. Never say: "It won't happen to me." We are reminded of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10:12. (Buls)

6:13 *therefore* – "There." Because Satan is so powerful and we are so weak. Christians have a sinful flesh. This constantly tempts them to think that they can stand in their own strength. They cannot. And so they must be reminded again and again as in verses 11 and 13 to take up the "whole armor of God." (Buls)

the evil day – There are days that are especially full of difficulty and temptation, for which full concentration of the battle and the use of armor are especially necessary. To be sure, as long as the Christian lives in this evil world, there are for him many such days. The Christian's life goes from battle to victory, from victory to new, and ever more furious battle. (Stoekhardt)

Next we have "on the day, the evil one." Satan and his forces were described with "evil power" in verse 12. Here Paul speaks of the evil day. In what sense is a day evil? It denotes an occasion when Satan strikes with fury in his attempt to overcome us with evil. The "evil day" differs from Christian to Christian. Some have more, some less. For some the attack is more severe than for others. (Buls)

Think of Satan's attacks on Job. He used the weather, his wife, diseases, his friends, to make his life very miserable. Some people suffer from physical ills. Some from mental ills. Some from emotional problems. Some suffer innocently because of terrible diseases and calamities. (Buls)

The question is not whether these things will come. The question is "Am I prepared to withstand the evil day?" The text stresses "having made all necessary preparation." (Buls)

And then we should not forget that at all times the Christian must fight his own sinful flesh, 4:22, though that is not stressed in our text. But, even when there might be relief from "the evil day" the Christian is never without a struggle with sin and evil. (Buls)

stand your ground ... Stand firm. In this context the imagery is not that of a massive invasion of the domain of evil, but of individual soldiers withstanding assault. (CSB)

Fully equipped and defended by God, our mandate is to trust what He has given us for the battle (Ex. 14:13-14; 1 Cor. 15:1-2; 2 Thess. 2:15). (TLSB)

This is followed by a purpose clause. As in verse 11, here we have a form of "to stand." Note that in verses 11, 13 and 14 we have "to stand, to withstand, to stand, stand." How does a hoplite fight? He stands. He withstands. That takes constant effort. (Buls)

The believer must take full advantage of God's help. "Having done everything": i.e., not neglecting any available instrument or avenue of spiritual fortifying. The evil day is the day of temptation. The verb *antistēnai* carries the connotation of successful withstanding. God's Word to the Nations translates, "Resist when things are at their worst." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

To be sure, as long as the Christian lives in this evil world, there are for him many such evil days. The enemy who once conquered always raises himself again. The Christian life goes from battle to victory, from victory to new, ever more furious battle. However, also in the final battle Christians, who are equipped with the Lord's power will come out on top and hold the battlefield. (Stoeckhardt)

Oratio – Meditatio – Tenatio – Luther

The military items Paul enumerates were the standard equipment of an infantryman in the Roman army. He mentions five pieces of defensive armor and one offensive weapon. The five defensive pieces combined make up the "full armor" that Paul uses as his picture of the spiritual protection God provides for the believer. (PBC)

6:14-17 This fascinating section describes the pieces of armor. To do justice to the whole text, however, the preacher should limit his discussion of the various pieces and what they symbolize. The girdle was a belt wrapped snugly around the loose flowing robes so they would not impede during battle. Reinecker (p. 19) says *thureon* "refers to the large door-shaped shield . . . the Roman *scutum* which had an iron frame and sometimes a metal boss in the center of the front. Often the several layers of leather were soaked in water before the battle in order to put out the incendiary missiles of the enemy." Barnes (p. 130) says "faith here is made to occupy a more important place than either of the other Christian graces. It protects all, and is indispensable to the security of all, as is the case with the shield. The shield . . . could be made to protect the head, or the heart, or thrown behind to meet an attack there. As long as the soldier had his shield, he felt secure; and as long as a Christian has faith, he is safe." Luther comments, "Do not think that the devil is in hell, or beyond Babylon, or only in Turkey, or at Rome . . . here among us he is struggling and striving to turn us out of the heaven in which we are through Christ" (Plass, p. 399). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Kretzmann (*Popular Commentary of the Bible* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1922] NT vol. 2, p. 292) quotes Luther "Here it is not enough that we defend ourselves against the devil with faith and hope as our shield and helmet, but we must also draw the sword and go for him with such insistence that he must fall back and flee, and we thus obtain the victory over him . . . the Word of God is this weapon." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

6:14 *stand therefore* – Here the description of the Christian's armor begins. Stoeckhardt points out that here in verse 14 "stand" has a different means than at the end of verse 13. There it meant that the

Christian must fight in such a way that he is still standing when the battle is over. But here it means that he must stand up against the enemy. On this verse compare Isaiah 11:5 and 59:17. (Buls)

belt of truth. Cf. the symbolic clothing of the Messiah in Isa 11:5. Character, not brute force, wins the battle, just as in the case of the Messiah. (CSB)

A belt holds loose clothing in preparation for moving quickly (Ex. 12:11; cf. Heb. 12:1). God's truth alone can counter the devil's lies Eph. 4:14-15. (TLSB)

Truth, here is used in a comprehensive sense, denoting honesty; sincerity of profession in opposition to all sham, levity, hypocrisy; and likewise the element of "truth" in Jesus (5:21), the substance of the gospel revelation. We are to wrap it around us. (PC)

Just as the ancient soldier held his clothes together about his loins with a girdle, in order to prevent their hindering his free use of his limbs, so the Christian, the soldier of God, puts on the girdle of truth, of moral purity, of the righteousness of life. Only he that is a Christian in deed and in truth will engage in the battle with all seriousness; only he will gather matters of every-day life and hold them together without hypocrisy, lest he be hindered in the great battle. (Kretzmann)

Isaiah 11:5, "Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist."

breastplate of righteousness. Here again, the warrior's character is his defense. God himself is symbolically described as putting on a breastplate of righteousness when he goes forth to bring about justice. (CSB)

The metal piece of protecting the chest's vital organs, here represents Christ's righteousness with which God clothes us. (TLSB)

This is the righteousness of Christ put on by faith. No righteousness of our own could be proof against Satan. The breastplate covers the vital organs, especially the heart. Righteousness is the central part of all saving truth. The heart of the Word makes our heart invulnerable against the devil. (Lenski)

Isaiah 59:17, "He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak."

6:15 shoes for your feet...the readiness. Whereas the description of the messenger's feet in Isa 52:7 reflects the custom of running barefooted, here the message of the gospel is picturesquely connected with the protective and supportive footgear of the Roman soldier. (CSB)

A Roman soldier wore half boots studded with nails, to help him stand firm. The preaching of the Gospel of peace has ironically, prepared us for battle. (TLSB)

The Roman sandal was furnished with nails that gripped the ground firmly; even when it was sloping or slippery; so the good news of peace keeps us upright and firm. (PC)

As the military sandal protected the feet of the soldier against the rough spots in the road and made it possible for him to move forward with a quick and certain step, so the Christians should always be ready and prepared to proclaim the Gospel of salvation in Christ. In the midst of the fierce battle in which he is engaged, the Christian has peace with God and is able to impart this peace to others as well. (Kretzmann)

The Gospel contains the peace of God. The Christian must be quick and ready to disseminate the peace of God in Christ. This is quite paradoxical. A soldier disseminates peace! This is a battle for the Lord against the devil. The Gospel is a very important weapon, in fact, the only one. (Buls)

By the way, in this passage Stoeckhardt and Kretzmann follow Luther who says that in this passage Paul is urging the Christian to strive for blameless living, a life which before all men is recognized as blameless. Stoeckhardt invokes Ephesians 2:20 which tells us that God has prepared good works that we should walk in them and Philippians 2:13 where we are told that God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. (Buls)

Both Stoeckhardt and Kretzmann see the words of Isaiah 52:7 alluded to here. (Buls)

Isaiah 52:7, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"

1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

6:16 IN ADDITION – "In addition to all this" is also translated as "at all times, above all, in addition to everything else." (Buls)

shield of faith ... extinguish ... flaming arrows. Describes the large Roman shield covered with leather, which could be soaked in water and used to put out flame-tipped arrows. (CSB)

Arrows were dipped in pitch and set alight. In defense, Roman soldiers soaked their full-length, leather-covered wooden shield in water before battle – an allusion to our baptismal refuge. LC – V 82: "If you could see how many knives, darts, and arrows are every moment aimed at you (Eph. 6:16), you would be glad to come to the Sacrament as often as possible." (TLSB)

We agree with Kretzmann and Stoeckhardt. The Christian is in dire need of saving faith to quench the fiery darts of Satan. Paul is going beyond the point of comparison when he says that faith quenches Satan's fiery darts. A hoplite's shield did not extinguish fiery arrows. It kept them from harming the hoplite. But saving faith does more to counter Satan's arrows than a hoplite's shield did in battle. We think here of passage such as 1 Peter 5:9 and James 4:7. (Buls)

A Christian armed with faith, can overcome Satan. The fiery darts here represent the doubts, lusts, temptations, fears, etc. which Satan uses against us. Sooner or later every Christian understands what is meant by these words of Paul. Fiery arrows are destructive, a frightening prospect. With Christian faith we can quench them. (Buls)

This shield is long and covers the entire body. When the apostle stresses that we with the shield of faith can and should extinguish the fiery darts of the evil one, he goes beyond the point of comparison. The warrior's shield serves only to intercept the darts of the enemy, so that they do not strike the body, but it cannot quench the fire. In spiritual battle the warrior is struck by the fiery darts. They would wound his heart. They burn the conscience. Nevertheless, faith has the power to extinguish the fire. Faith grasps and holds Christ, who offered himself up unto God for us. Christ's blood extinguishes the fiery darts. Christ's blood heals the wounded heart and conscience. (Stoeckhardt)

Ancients sometimes made use of arrows and small spears that were impregnated with pitch or some other inflammatory material, set on fire before they were discharged and inflicting ugly wounds. Thus the temptations of Satan will greatly harm the Christian in his faith and spiritual life, unless he meets them with the calm assurance of the forgiveness of sins through the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. (Kretzmann)

1 John 3:19-20: ¹⁹This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.

Psalm 91:4, “He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.”

6:17 helmet of salvation. Isa 59:17 has similar language, along with the breastplate imagery (see note on v. 14). The helmet both protected the soldier and provided a striking symbol of military victory. (CSB)

A Roman helmet was made of bronze, with cheek pieces; cf Is 59:17; 1Th 5:8. (TLSB)

For variety's sake Paul switches from the participles to an imperative. All we have to do is to take it. It is ready for us. (Buls)

The helmet is very important. Think of how important a helmet is for motorcycle riding in our day. Many die because they do not wear a helmet. Likewise the helmet was very important for the hoplite. Injuries to the head can be fatal. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The Christian has received from God the helmet of salvation, the certainty of final deliverance. (Buls)

Luther: The helmet of salvation is the hope and expectation of another life, the life in heaven above, for the sake of which we believe in Christ and suffer all things, and without which we could not endure all the blows with which Christians are attacked by those who seek their very body and life. (Buls)

Future perfect, salvation is meant is meant here. The Christian, wearing future salvation as his helmet, can and should hold his head aloft cheerfully and confidentially. He can and should be completely sure of his salvation. This certainly guards and protects him against the head blows with which the evil foe seeks to strike him. All the evils, plagues and terrors the devil stirs up against us directly or through the wicked evil world we can well ward off and conquer because the final goal stands immovable, because we know in advance that we will eventually win out, retain the victory and receive the heavenly treasure and inheritance. (Stoekhardt)

Isaiah 59:17, ““He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak.”

sword of the spirit – We must also draw the sword and go for him with such insistence that he must fall back and flee and we thus obtain the victory over him. Since the Word of God is this weapon, it behooves us to make use of it at all times and to this end become acquainted with it both by means of worship, Bible study and personal study. (Kretzmann)

The term refers to the sharp, short sword for close combat. The Spirit gives the Gospel Word its effectiveness. Luther sang of the devil, “One little Word can fell him.” (TLSB)

Now comes the sword, the only offensive weapon in the list. The Holy Spirit owns and gives this sword to us. What is it? The Word of God. Paul is thinking of a variety of uses of the Word: preached, read, sung, spoken, meditated. The Christian meditates in the Word of God day and night. Where you have the Word, there you have God. Where you have God, there you have life and victory. (Buls)

God's Word originates from the Spirit. The Spirit works through the Word. For that reason God's Word is a victorious weapon. (Stoeckhardt)

Committing the Word of God to memory and having it ready for use places the Christian in an offensive mode. (LifeLight)

Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."

6:18 *praying at all times in the Spirit.* Reminders that the battle is spiritual and must be fought in God's strength, depending on the word and on God through prayer. (CSB)

supplication. Gk *deesis*, from the term for "need"; a specific request. (TLSB)

In this verse Paul uses forms of the word "all" four times. Here he returns to the use of the participle, two of them. "General prayer" and "particular supplication." (Buls)

Prayer is not part of the armor (which is entirely God's work), but a transition to Paul's concluding words. The Letter ends as it began – with prayer. In our weakness, the Spirit leads our prayer (Rm. 8:15-16, 26-27). (TLSB)

What he is advocating is not some dramatic or showy charismatic praying. Rather he is indicating that only through Christ can anyone properly approach the triune God. An essential feature of prayer is that it comes from a heart filled with faith (James 1:6, 7; Hebrews 11:6). (PBC)

keep alert – In using prayer watching's the word...Pay close attention to all circumstances so as not to let some occasion for prayer go by unnoticed. (Stoeckhardt)

Note the sweeping inclusiveness and four occurrences of *pas*: "all occasions with all kinds of prayers . . . always keep on praying for all the saints." God's people need to be in constant communication with their Commander-in-Chief! Barnes (p. 133): "To the Christian soldier . . . [prayer] is indispensable. No matter how complete the armor, no matter how skilled we may be in the science of war, no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayer we shall be defeated. God alone can give the victory; and when the Christian soldier goes forth armed completely for the spiritual conflict, if he looks to God by prayer, he may be sure of a triumph." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

LSB – Hymn 660 – *Stand up, Stand up for Jesus* Verse 3, line 3 "Put on the Gospel armor; Each piece put on with prayer."

for all the saints – Praying properly always leads finally to intercession. Christians should with all endurance, with all persistence pray and intercede for one another, for the entire congregation. (Stoeckhardt)

On every occasion the Christian is to use every kind of general and particular prayer, doing so in the Holy Spirit. And for this he must be alert with all kinds of perseverance and particular supplication for all Christians, not just some. (Buls)

This is prayer in the Biblical sense, answered prayer which brings to our aid the mighty help of God himself. This does not place prayer on a level with the Word, its righteousness and its salvation; the very wording with durative participles excludes such ideas. Prayer must be listed here because it brings our divine ally to our side in the battle on the wicked day. (Lenski)

Matthew 26:41, “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.”

6:19-20 Note Paul’s request for prayer on his behalf. No pastor should pass up this obvious opportunity to remind his parishioners of the value of their prayers for him. He should also, in turn, reiterate his commitment to pray faithfully for the flock God has entrusted to him! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

6:19 *words may be given.* Christ promised that the Spirit would direct and strengthen the apostles’ testimony before kings and councils (Mt 10:17–20; cf Ac 9:15). (TLSB)

also for me...boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel– Christ promised that the Spirit would direct and strengthen the apostles’ testimony before kings and councils (Mt. 10:17-20; cf Acts 9:15). (TLSB)

They may aid him in beseeching God to put the right words into his mouth so that he can reveal the mystery of the Gospel with all frankness, without fear and trembling, without any restraint. (Stoekhardt)

ambassador in chains - Here it becomes clear that Paul's request was not merely a personal one. It was for the sake of the Gospel. For this Gospel Paul was an ambassador in chains, a paradox. He is God's ambassador, God's messenger. But Rome considered him a prisoner. Usually ambassadors live in splendor and are treated royally. Not this ambassador. But it is all for the Lord and His Gospel. (Buls)

"In proclaiming it, in speaking of it, as I ought to speak," means that he wants to do it exactly to the Lord's will. Not only the substance but also the manner of speaking is very important. (Buls)

GOSPEL – Mark 7:14-23

14 And he called the people to him again and said to them, “Hear me, all of you, and understand: **15** There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.” **17** And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. **18** And he said to them, “Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, **19** since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?” (Thus he declared all foods clean.) **20** And he said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. **21** For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, **22** coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. **23** All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

7:14-23 Jesus does not simply refute and criticize the Pharisees. He also teaches the people the correct understanding of God’s will and human nature. (TLSB)

7:14-15 After Jesus has rebuked the Pharisees through the Law, he “called the people to him again” to give a word of Gospel. He gives even more understanding to the disciples in the following verses. The Lord models preaching Law to those who need it (the Pharisees), Gospel to those who need it (those troubled by the binding traditions they were judged against), and then further Law and Gospel to his disciples (vv 17–23). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

In his ministry to this point, Jesus had already “defiled” himself in the eyes of the Pharisees by coming into contact with the dead, lepers, and demons (unclean spirits) and had given offense to the Pharisees about their Sabbath regulations and fasting. He even defended David and his companions eating the bread of the Presence (Mk 2:23–28). It seemed only a matter of time before more direct confrontation about uncleanness and food would erupt between Jesus and the Pharisees. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:14 *called the people* – This verse begins a paragraph, but not a different occasion. Jesus had likely been talking to the common people in verse 1, when interrupted by the delegation from Jerusalem. Likely at verse 14 the delegation left and Jesus again addressed the people who were misled by the authorities. (Buls)

NEB seems to translate wrongly: "On another occasion he called the people etc." (Buls)

"Called the crowd" is a tender word of invitation. The crowd, misled by the religious authorities, is treated with compassion. "He went on to say." (Buls)

Bengel: An admonition salutary to ALL, in opposition to the prejudice which is most hostile to true Divine worship. (Buls)

No one but God Himself could ever truly speak to men as Jesus did here. (Buls)

7:15 *things that come out* – Jesus’ expression did not abrogate the Mosaic laws on purification or erase distinctions between clean and unclean and declare them invalid. It rather attacked the delusion that sinful men can attain to true purity which is powerless to cleanse the defilement of the heart. (Lane)

Verses 17 to 20 make it clear that Jesus is here speaking an axiomatic truth which He then applies in verses 21 to 23 in the spiritual realm. The article appears three times with the word "man." This is called the generic use of the article. It is applicable to all human beings. We translate it with "man." (Buls)

Ylvisaker: No act as such will defile a person; the deed is, in itself, something detached, it is ethically inactive or indifferent. But the attitude of the heart or of the person toward the deed is the determining factor. . . It is the nature of the true morality which Jesus here portrays. The Pharisees made morality practical, a symposium of outward acts. Jesus teaches that it is personal . . . It is the quality of the tree which determines the character of the fruit, and not the fruit that determines the nature of the tree. (Buls)

Lenski: Defilement is not physical, but moral and spiritual. (Buls: And then he adds an important paragraph) Did not God in the Levitical law forbid certain kinds of food to the Jews, and would not eating such foods defile a man? The answer that Jesus is here abrogating the Levitical law is unwarranted; he himself fulfilled every requirement of it as a Jew, and maintained that law for his disciples until Pentecost (Acts 11:1 etc). The true answer is that it was not the food as food entering the mouth that made a man unclean, but the man's disregard of the Levitical law given him as a Jew by God, the disobedience he would be voicing in asking for such food and in justifying his eating thereof. (Buls)

7:16 Although this verse is present in the majority of the Greek manuscripts, it does not occur in the most ancient ones. It appears to be a scribal addition derived from either 4:9 or 4:23. (CSB)

“If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” The verse is not included in ESV and NIV but does not contradict Jesus’ point of basing trust in God’s Word (the incarnate Word who speaks to them) rather than in the teachings or word of men. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:17 As was often the case, the disciples dared ask afterward, “What does this mean?” Jesus gives further explanation to them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Jesus provided additional, private teaching for the disciples, away from the crowds (cf 4:10, 34). (TLSB)

7:17-20 – Jesus explains to the disciples in private. (CSB)

Their lack of understanding indicates that in spite of their privileged relationship to Jesus they are not fundamentally different from the crowd. The failure of the disciples to understand Jesus’ mighty acts and teaching is particularly emphasized in this section of the Gospel (6:52; 7:18; 8:14-21) and is traced to hardness of heart. (Lane)

7:18-19 Jesus makes the practical analogy of food eaten, digested, and expelled versus that which is a part of a person and stays with him. There is irony in the implication and impact of Jesus’ pronouncement being “incidental” and even parenthetical in the text (“Thus he declared all foods clean,” v 19b). The practical impact of this was sweeping and vast, but this was not as significant as the point Jesus made for individual followers to comprehend. (Perhaps an analogy is the 1966 statement by U.S. Catholic bishops that meatless Fridays were no longer mandated but encouraged. It moved from the realm of Law to what we might call “fasting and bodily preparation,” a “fine outward training,” which could be motivated by the Gospel. The practical impact for millions of Roman Catholics in planning their Friday meals was significant, but the principle was more significant.) (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:19 (*In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”*) Mark adds this parenthetical comment to help his readers see the significance of Jesus’ pronouncement for them (see Ac 10:9–16). (CSB)

into his heart – The new element in Jesus’ interpretation is the specific reference to “the heart.” In Semitic expression the heart is the center of human personality which determines man’s entire action and inaction. This key to the statement in verse 15 was already available in the citation of Is. 29:13: “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Jesus now makes this explicit when he traces the source of defilement to the heart, and shows that in an ultimate sense “food” and “the heart” have nothing to do with each other. (Lane)

Cf. v. 15. Ritually impure food does not touch the heart and so cannot contaminate it. (TLSB)

declared all foods clean – Jesus’ teaching will affect the future Christian mission. Simply put, Gentiles will not need to observe Jewish dietary laws. The question of food laws caused much controversy in the first-century Church. (Cf. Acts 15:1-35; Rom. 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:7-13). (TLSB)

7:20-23 Jesus elaborates with a list of example sins that come from within, to illustrate the vastness and seriousness of such sins. The note on 7:21–22 in *The Lutheran Study Bible* is helpful in defining two categories of sins: “The first six are in the plural form and describe behaviors; the last six are in the singular and have more to do with attitudes” (*The Lutheran Study Bible* [St. Louis, Concordia Publishing

House, 2009], 1670). In fact, one could try to align these with the Ten Commandments and clearly find at least Commandments 5–10, as well as the first and greatest commandment (e.g. pride, foolishness: “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’” [Ps 14:1]). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

7:20 *defiles him*. Jesus replaced the normal Jewish understandings of defilement with the truth that defilement comes from an impure heart, not the violation of external rules. Fellowship with God is not interrupted by unclean hands or food, but by sin (see vv. 21–23). (CSB)

Jesus clarified that what does indeed defile is not what enters from the outside, but rather what lurks in the hearts of fallen people. (TLSB)

7:21-23 The list in these verses is a comprehensive one and is also an accurate picture of society’s actions in our own day. And since we have an old Adam, we too, need to take Jesus’ words to heart. They prove we cannot save ourselves; He alone can do that. In gratitude to Him we want to avoid these unclean acts, words, thoughts and desires that are a part of our inborn nature, and with His help fight against them. (PBC)

Beginning with sexual immorality, 12 kinds of evil thoughts and actions are combined in a dreadful list of vices. The first six are in the plural form and describe behaviors; the last six are in the singular and have more to do with attitudes. These 12 vices leave no doubt as the wretched impurity of the human spirit. (TLSB)

7:21 *evil thoughts* – This is an explanation. Again the generic "man" is used, the ultimate meaning is "of all people." (Buls)

All sins begin with evil thoughts. The word here denotes the carefully thought through reasonings of the mind. The twelve nouns which follow are examples of these. This is the classic doctrinal location for the total depravity of human nature. (Buls)

Bengel: O how impure is the fountain of our heart! (Buls)

sexual immorality – Fornication is a broad term covering all acts of sexual immorality; it is wider than adultery, which presupposes the breach of the marriage bond, and “licentiousness,” which carries the nuance of open immorality. (Lane)

7:22 "Adultery" includes sins against marriage in particular. "Greedy covetousness" is always wanted what belongs to another, compare 9th and 10th commandments. "Lewdness" is the inability to curb the flesh. "Slander" is that directed either against God or man. "Arrogance" is disregarding the first commandment. "Foolishness" includes everything that is the opposite of a sound clean mind. The foolishness of human nature is constantly observable and proceeds from the heart, depraved by nature. (Buls)

Bengel: This is the reason why foolishness is placed last of all, inasmuch as being that which renders even all the rest incurable. Human corruption has its seat not merely in the will but in the understanding also, look at verse 18. (Buls)

deceit – This implies the components of cunning and treachery. “An evil eye” is a Semitic expression for stinginess (Deut. 15:9; Eccl. 14:10; 31:13) or for that grudging jealousy with which a man looks upon the possession of another.

Lenski: Here Jesus reveals what a cesspool the human heart is. (Buls)

Hendriksen: The first six of the twelve items are in the plural, the second six retain the singular. The first six describe wicked actions; the second six the evil drives and words that are related to such and similar actions. (Buls)

7:23 *evil things* – The word for "evil" used in verse 21 usually denotes an evil condition. The word used for "evil" in this verse denotes something that is actively evil. All the items mentioned in verses 21-22 are called "active evils." It all begins in the heart. (Buls)

Verses 20-23 present a somber picture of mankind, Christians included. Christians still have a flesh. How often must not a Christian confess with Paul: "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing." (Buls)

There are those in our society who believe that the primary way to improve man is to cleanse his environment and the pollution which enters man. But Christianity teaches that God cleanses our hearts by faith (Acts 15:9) and the Christian must often pray: "Create in me a clean heart, Oh God." (Psalm 51:10) (Buls)

The final section is an obvious parallel to Galatians 5. The heart produces fruit that reveals a person's character. The point Jesus makes is completed in his discussion with Nicodemus in John 3, "You must be born again." Here our Lord simply diagnoses the human problem. If your heart is far from him (v 6), your deeds will be evil. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander."

Luke 6:43-45, "⁴³No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks."

7:14–23 Jesus teaches that people are not defiled by food or other things entering the body from the outside, but rather by their own evil inclinations and sinful behaviors. This teaching exposes the uselessness of our own excuse-making and dismisses our claims that other people and things are to blame for our shortcomings and failures. However, Jesus does not merely condemn; He also sets free. Through His promises we are liberated from sin and reconciled to God. • Lord, renew us each day with clean hearts. By Your Spirit, give us joyous words, generous spirits, and behaviors that reflect Your glory. Amen. (TLSB)