

What to Wear to War
An Exposition of God's Armor
(Ephesians 6:10-18)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

I have many good memories when visiting my in-laws in the state of Michigan. My wife and I used to take our children to a particular place in Michigan where there was a giant playground. They would run around on the playground and have a lot of fun as all children do. There were many different objects to climb on and tunnels to crawl through. It was a kid's paradise. As I think of this playground, I'm reminded of something that I read from Warren Wiersbe.

Dr. Wiersbe commented:

"Sooner or later every believer discovers that the Christian life is a battleground, not a playground, and that he faces an enemy who is much stronger than he is—apart from the Lord."

Ephesians 6:12 speaks of this battleground and war:

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Adrian Rogers put it like this:

"We are at spiritual war! Therefore, the church is not a cruise ship with the pastor as the master of ceremonies. Indeed, it is not a showboat, but a battleship."

Erwin Lutzer remarked:

"We're in a war. We can't plead pacifism. We can't run from the bullets. We can't hide from the bombs. We can't plead medical deferment."

In other words, God's children need to understand that they are in a war. It's a spiritual war against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The word "wrestle" (Eph. 6:12) pictures a hand-to-hand combat



between wrestling athletes, which was a combat in the ancient world characterized by trickery, cunning and deception. Yes, we are in a war. It's actually an invisible war with invisible enemies (Satan and demons).

Here is spiritual warfare in a nutshell. The enemy is Satan, the battleground is our mind, and the issue at hand is our Christian and spiritual walk. We do not live in a neutral world. You cannot be neutral in this battle! You cannot have victories without war! There are no victories without battle.

Mark Hitchcock states:

"Spiritual warfare is the invisible war waged in the spiritual realm but fleshed out in the visible, physical realm."

We are in a war zone. But how do we win the war? What do we wear to war to assure our spiritual victory over all of our enemies? The Bible gives us this answer in Ephesians 6:10-18. Paul uses the illustration of Roman armor and applies it to the way we are to have victory within our Christian life. In order to have victory we must "put on" (Eph. 6:11) and "take" (Eph. 6:13, 17) the armor, which means to apply this spiritual armor to our lives and use it in the time of temptation. The Roman armor in Paul's day was used for physical warfare, but the armor for the Christian life is to be used for spiritual warfare against Satan and his demonic followers (fallen angels).

Dr. Walter Martin said:

"When you enlist in the army of God (the moment you are born again you are in His army forever), you personally become a target! No more mister nice guy. You are on the satanic hit list and if you really are a Christian living and walking with Jesus Christ, they're coming after you!"

You are in the army now! For this reason, Satan has consistently aimed his personal attacks at getting Christians to doubt, to deny, to disregard, and to disobey the revealed will of God (Gen. 3; Matt. 4). The Devil, who has billions of demonic followers, is always seeking to bring spiritual defeat into our lives. We live in a visual society that is becoming increasingly open and explicit in its mannerisms and lifestyle. Have you walked through a mall lately or turned on the TV? Between cell phones and all the other internet

or cyber media that is so prevalent today, we see the importance and need for wearing this spiritual armor!

The world, the flesh, and the Devil is the evil trio that is constantly seeking to defeat our Christian lives. Of course, Satan uses the world to appeal to our flesh (sinful nature) during his temptations and allurements. We are called upon to resist the Devil (1 Peter 5:8–9), flee the temptations of the world system (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - 1 John 2:15–17; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22), and deny the flesh (Rom. 6:12–13; 7:18–24; 8:13). One way we do this is to experience the Lord’s mighty power as we apply God’s armor to our daily lives.

Many years ago, Dr. Andrew Telford wrote a letter of encouragement to me as a younger pastor. At the close of the letter he wrote: “The world, the flesh, and the devil are out to get us. We must turn our back on all three of them and go on.” Of course, in order to do this, we need this Christian armor which is mentioned in Ephesians chapter six. What do we wear to war? God has given us a protective, spiritual armor for our Christian lives.

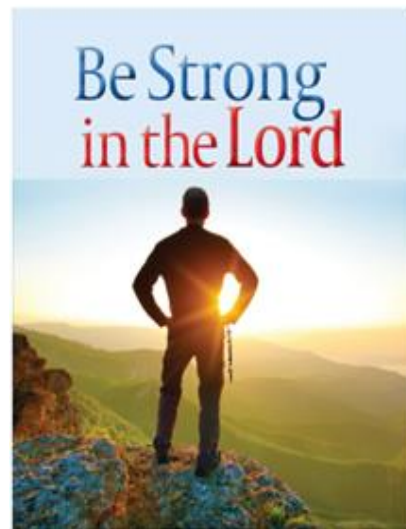
The armor is explained in 4 ways.

1. The power behind the armor (10)

Ephesians 6:10

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”

Ultimately, victory comes through the power of Jesus Christ and more specifically our victory is based upon our glorious position in Christ (Eph. 1-3). The strength of the Lord’s power is experienced when we apply this armor to our Christian lives. Without God’s power operating in our lives, we will live in defeat and despair. We are powerless in and of ourselves. It takes the Lord’s power operating through us to grant us victory in life. Victory is in a Person. It’s not found in a program or the pop-psychology teaching that is so prevalent today in the Church. The prepositional phrase “in the Lord”



speaks of our union and position in Christ which is the basis for our power and victory over the enemy. I like the story of the little girl who said that when the devil came knocking at her door with a temptation, she just sent Jesus to the door! Believers do not need to tremble at the power of Satan because demons tremble at the power of God.

“Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armor on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror.”

It’s not our perseverance, biting the bullet, and trusting in our own strength that promises us the victory. It’s the power of Jesus Christ working through us. Be strong in the Lord! We have been “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). At the same time, we also know that Christ does “dwell in our hearts by faith” (Eph. 3:17), which means that we have His indwelling life and power to grant us victory as we experientially walk by faith in His power (Gal. 2:20). One way to experience Christ’s power is to apply the spiritual armor to our lives. This is what Paul is teaching Ephesians 6:10-18.

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the Gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.”

2 Chronicles 20:15 teaches this important victory principle:

“Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.”

The victory comes through God’s power! Although we are involved in the battle, it is God working through us, His power, which grants us the victory over the Devil “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

Romans 8:37 reminds us of this also:

“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

“Does all the world seem against you
And you're in the battle alone?
It's often when you are most helpless
That God's mighty power is known.”

Philippians 4:13

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

The victory comes through the Lord's enabling power as we actively and aggressively apply the armor to our daily living. There is no other way to spiritually survive Satan's temptations and strongholds upon our lives. If we want to take maximum advantage of the strength of the Lord's mighty power, we need to put on the total armor that he has graciously provided for us.

“That soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes.
That soul though all hell should endeavor to shake;
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.”

2. The purpose for the armor (11-13a)

General Dwight Eisenhower once said:

“War is a terrible thing. But if you're going to get into it, you've got to get into it all the way.”

I sense that many Christians are defeated in their Christian lives because they are not seriously engaged in the warfare to which we are called. J. C. Ryle saw this in the 19th century. He wrote: “The saddest symptom about many so-called Christians is the utter absence of anything like conflict and fight in their Christianity.” He went on to say that they go through the motions of attending religious services each week. Then he added, “But of the great spiritual warfare,--its watchings and strugglings, its agonies and anxieties, its battles and contests,--of all this they appear to know nothing at all.”

Ephesians 6:11-13 informs us why we need the armor:

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world (*age*), against spiritual wickedness in high *places*. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

The purpose of the Christian armor is so we can enter into spiritual warfare with Satan, overcome his scheming tricks against us, and claim our victory in Christ. The Bible repeatedly says that we are to put on the “whole armour” (vv. 11 and 13). This means we can’t afford to forget any piece of this armor. The Devil knows where to shoot his fiery arrows. If one piece is missing, we are vulnerable. We become an open target to Satan’s temptations.

Homer’s great hero, Achilles, was assumed to be invincible, that was, until one fateful day dawned. That was the day Paris discovered his heel was not protected! So what did he do? Like any good marksman, Paris aimed his arrow at that single defenseless spot. As they say, the rest is history! Thankfully, God’s armor does not leave us with an Achilles’ heel. When we wear the entire armor every area is protected, and we are safe. But if we don’t wear all the armor (applying the total victory we have in Christ) we can become vulnerable in one area. Satan knows the areas that are exposed in our lives and that is where he attacks! Remember that in spiritual warfare there is no middle ground and no neutrality. Keep yourself fully covered with God’s armor.

“Leave no unguarded place,
No weakness of the soul
Take every virtue, every grace,
And fortify the whole.”

The story is told of a soldier who learned a valuable lesson the hard way. In 1586 a British soldier, Sir Philip Sidney, was fighting in the Netherlands. He saw one of his friends fighting in the battle without his leg armor on, so he figured he could take his off. But he was soon hit in the leg and died as a

result. The enemy was able to find one small spot that was left unprotected, and he attacked that area. This is what happens when we don't wear all of God's armor. Satan knows where our weak spots are and if we are not careful we give up territory to him which the Lord should have in our lives.

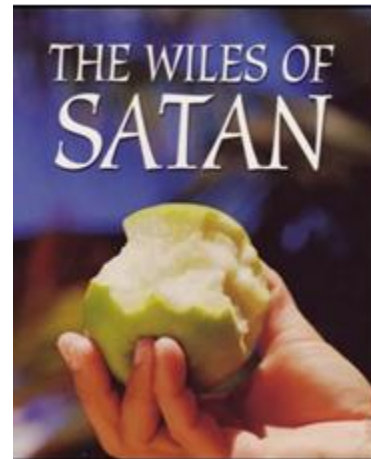
Sam Gordon gives this warning:

"The danger is that we can become far too comfortable in our Christianity—cozy, cushioned, and complacent—that we become oblivious to the seriousness of the battle raging all around us."

There is a twofold purpose for wearing the armor.

a. Because of the Devil's tricks (11)

Why do we need the armor of God? This is the six-million-dollar question. It is needed to repel what Paul calls the devil's "wiles" (schemes or methods). The Greek word for "wiles" speaks of the Devil's modus operandi – the methods and ways the Devil seeks to deceive us and overtake our spiritual lives.



We need to be clothed in the entire armor of God since the Devil and demons are out get us! They want to defeat our spiritual living and bring us under bondage. The conjunction "that" (indicates a purpose clause) and reminds us that we are to apply this spiritual armor to our lives so we can have victory over the "wiles" (tricks, strategies, and schemes) of the Evil One. The Devil has a bag full of tricks that he is constantly using to bring us down.

J. Sidlow Baxter says:

"Satan uses all manner of stratagems to turn souls from the truth: a sieve to 'sift' them (Luke 22:31), 'devices' to trick (2 Cor. 2:11), 'weeds' to 'choke' (Matt. 13:22), 'wiles' to intrigue (Eph. 6:11), the roaring of a lion to terrify (1 Pet. 5:8), the disguise of an angel to deceive (2 Cor. 11:14) and 'snares' to entangle them" (2 Tim. 2:26).

The term “wiles” (Eph. 6:11) speaks of the Devil’s modus operandi – the methods and ways the Devil seeks to deceive us and overtake our spiritual lives. His “devices” (2 Cor. 11:14) portray the Evil One’s scheming plans or how he thinks and operates to take us down spiritually. His “snares” or stratagems (2 Tim. 2:26) speaks of the Devils traps that are designed to trick and deceive us, to outwit us as his opponent.

It’s true. Sometimes the devil comes to us as a roaring lion (1 Pet. 5:8) while at other times he comes to us as a messenger of light (2 Cor. 11:14). He tries to get us to doubt God’s word, His goodness, and puts lies and false messages in our minds. He seeks to lure us away into the night of sin through fueling lusts and evil cravings in our hearts. He tries to confuse us and gets us to think wrong and unbiblical thoughts. He clouds our judgment and get us to question God’s will. At times, Satan through his demonic cohorts, attempts to harass us about our past, and intimidate us with the result of bringing depression and discouragement into our lives.

Someone said:

“The tactics of intimidation and insinuation alternate in Satan’s plan of campaign. He plays both the bully and the beguiler. Force and fraud form his chief offensive against the camp of the saints.”

In her autobiography, Agatha Christie described a trip she made in northern Iraq where she came across some conclusive evidence of the Yezidee people. She described them as a people who worshipped the ‘peacock angel Lucifer’. That is a good descriptive name for him because it emphasizes the Devil’s strutting arrogance and theatrical attractiveness with which he has deceived so many. That is how he often comes to us today – with breathtaking beauty and charm which is one of his techniques of deception. Satan paints sin in the colors of the rainbow. He makes it enticing and attractive to us through His temptation and deception.

As we grow older in the Lord, we should be able to recognize these schemes better and realize they always pertain to the realm of the “the lust of the flesh (evil passions from within), and the lust of the eyes (visual perception from without), and the pride of life (ego or pride from within) ... (1 John 2:16).

“The devil's tactic is surprise,
He'll stop you in your tracks;
So keep on guard and trust God's Word,
Resist his strong attacks.”

There was an old TV show that my children used to watch when they were very young. In the show there was a bad guy that was called Schemer who in the end was always defeated. Well, the Devil is a schemer and we must realize this. For this reason, he should not give in to his tricks and realize that God has already signaled Satan’s defeat (John 16:11; Col. 2:15). This means we don’t have to allow him to rule over our lives.

Someone has said:

“The first step on the way to victory is to recognize the enemy.”

b. Because of the demonic war (12)

The conjunction “For” explains how the Devil implements his schemes and plans. He does this through fallen angels or demons who are his helpers. There is a hierarchy of demons that move about the atmospheric heaven and exist in the spiritual dimension. They seek to defeat our lives. The fact that our real battle is not against flesh and blood (human beings) is forgotten by many Christians, who put all their efforts in combatting man but not the real enemy which is Satan.

Paul used a variety of terms (principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness, spiritual wickedness) to refer to our spiritual enemies. They are descriptive terms of a hierarchy of fallen angels (demons) that move about in the heavenlies. In other words, we should regard these fallen angels as being on many different levels and of possessing many different ranks, yet they all have one goal: to knock the Christian down from their place of standing. These fallen angels are all part of a spiritual army that is organized and established into ranks and is under the headship of Satan who comes against us. The Bible reveals that the forces of hell arrayed against us are highly organized and superbly structured so that their impact can be devastating and deadly. These wicked spirits are described as spiritual

forces (not physical beings), they are scheming and deceptive, they are systemized, they are strong and often successful.

Pastor Steven Cole states:

“Don’t trifle with Satan! Don’t play around with sin and think that you will come away unscathed. Don’t see how much like the world you can be without compromising your testimony. Distance yourself from the adversary. Respect his power. You cannot defeat him if you flirt with evil.”

Beloved, you are in a spiritual battle with spiritual beings. If you are ignorant or ignore that fact, you probably aren’t winning the battle.

Colossians 2:15 reminds us:

“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

The Bible reveals that Jesus disarmed these principalities and powers (the hierarchy of fallen angels) at the cross. This means that our victory is rooted in what Jesus did, not in what we do. All we can do is appropriate what Jesus did for us and apply the armor to our lives so that we can have victory in our daily lives. It does not have to end with us licking our wounds and feeling sorry for ourselves! We can live on the victory side.

The expression “high places” (heavenlies) in Ephesians 6:12 not only refers to the location of demons within the first and second heavens (where demons move about) but also their realm of existence as spirit beings. They live within the “heavenlies” (invisible or unseen world) and they are said to be “spiritual wickedness” (vs. 12) which dwell “in heavenly places” (Eph. 3:10), the sphere and domain of the incorporeal or unseen world of spiritual beings. We are being stalked by Satan and his followers as they move about in the unseen atmosphere and the invisible world that surrounds us.



There is a whole other world that surrounds us. It's a spirit world and spiritual dimension. Demons live in the unseen world (spiritual realm) and our battle is really with these spirit beings that swoop down from their heavenly location to tempt us and lead us astray by their unseen seduction. They are invisible enemies that are all around us. We are involved in an invisible war since "we wrestle not against flesh and blood..."

Our war is essentially warfare on the spiritual level with an enemy that we cannot see. Behind every person who seek to harm, injure, and deceive us is a spiritual enemy. Although we don't war against flesh and blood, people are often the pawns that Satan uses to come against us. But behind our visible enemy is the invisible enemy. In other words, our battle is ultimately a spiritual battle and invisible war with Satan and demons.

In one sense, a Christian's human spirit is an immaterial entity that is tied to a different world. I know this sounds like science fiction, but it really is true. Our inward human spirits are connected to the world of the unseen where spiritual forces and battles are raging. The struggle is not physical (against flesh and blood); it is a spiritual conflict against the spiritual "Mafia" of the demonic world which surrounds us in the heavenlies. I don't have to be charismatic to believe in demons! Demons are real. Thank God for His victory over them. At one point in my life, I realized how ignorant I had been about the spirit world and its attempts to take me down spiritually. When I realized this, I began to do battle like never before and gained new victories and headway in my Christian and spiritual life.

You will notice that we are to stand "against" the world of fallen angels. The word is used five times in two verses to make the important point that we must oppose fallen angels through spiritual warfare for they are against us (Eph. 6:11-12). This means that our spiritual opponents are seeking to take us down and we must take our stand against them by wearing the armor, claiming God's power, and experiencing the victory we have over them.

"Sound the battle cry!
See, the foe is nigh;
Raise the standard high
For the Lord;

Gird your armor on,
Stand firm ev'ry one,
Rest your cause upon
His holy word."

3. The position when wearing the armor (13b)

Ephesians 6:13

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

The "evil day" is speaking about the time when the Devil tempts us, or when the enemy comes against us like a flood, as illustrated in Isaiah 59:19, which is the specific time of combat with spiritual forces. Satanic opposition seems to occur in waves, advancing and receding. Today may be the evil day for you. In fact, every day can quickly turn into an "evil day" when Satan and his emissaries tempt you to sin against God. Perhaps you have been feeling the pressure of satanic temptation. If so, you need to apply God's armor to your life right now. The day is evil, and the enemy is evil, but "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

When wearing the armor, applying it to our daily lives, we must stand in a *defensive* mode – not an offensive mode. Our spiritual posture is one of defense. The expression "withstand in the evil day (the day of temptation), and having done all, to stand" (vs. 13) indicates defense ("to be firm against someone else's onset"). This is also seen in vs. 11 ("stand") and verse 14 ("stand").

STAND, WITHSTAND,
RESIST



The meaning "to stand" is to literally stand against something or someone. It's a military term for holding on to a position that is under attack. It implies the courage to hold your ground because of your allegiance to the Lord, even when others may be fleeing from the battle because the enemy

seems so strong. Our position of victory is a defensive stand – standing on the victorious ground we already possess in Christ.

The fact that we must “stand” against the enemy means that we are going to be attacked. But our defensive stand means several things.

- ✓ It means that we must not be frightened.
- ✓ It means that we must not droop or slouch; nor be uncertain or half-hearted in the fight (no self-pity is allowed).
- ✓ It means that we are at our position and alert.
- ✓ It means that we do not give even a thought to retreat.

(David Guzik)

Our position of victory is a defensive stand – standing on the victorious ground we already possess in Christ. Wobbly Christians who do not have a firm foothold upon their victorious position in Christ are an easy target for the Devil. When Martin Luther stood before the Diet of Worms he was accused of heresy. After being condemned for declaring that men are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, he declared, “My conscience is captive to the Word of God. ... Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise.” Every believer who is faithful to God’s Word must do the same. We must stand firm on the truth of God’s unchanging Word or else we will give in to the temptations of Satan.

Standing connotes defense – not offense. This means we don’t go after the Devil to defeat him. The Devil comes after us “as a roaring lion ... seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). We are to “resist” (1 Pet. 5:9) the Devil’s attacks against us - not attack him. We are not commanded to run, but to resist—to stand our ground and fight rather than flee.

Some Christians think they can walk into the city of New York or Chicago and bind demons and dethrone demons (called territorial spirits) from their powerful rule and authority. This is nonsense. One charismatic ministry got a rally together to walk the streets of Washington and rid them of demonic activity. Now listen, I have enough problems with the demons of Ephrata, where I live, I don’t need to be concerned with the demons of Washington D.C. By the way, I’m sure there are many demons down in Washington! But

neither Jesus nor Paul cast out “so-called” territorial spirits. The point is this, nowhere in Scripture do we find Christians actually seeking out demons to defeat them. The Devil seeks us – we don’t have to seek him!

The old saying is true:

“Do not trouble, trouble – till trouble troubles you.”

In other words, stay away from the Devil as much as you can and be vigilant at all times, ready to do battle. The armor is given to the Christian to help him maintain the victorious ground that he already possesses. We are told to stand and protect our territory so that we do not lose ground to the enemy of our soul. The purpose for wearing this spiritual armor is not to gain new territory but to maintain the territory that is already ours in Christ.

A similar sentiment is echoed in the words of the glorified Christ which He gives to the church in Thyatira.

Revelation 2:25

“But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.”

Revelation 3:11

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

Hold on! Hold the fort! Keep the ground that you have and don’t surrender it to the devil. This is a defensive mode and stand and is how we do battle with the Evil One.

Ephesians 4:27 says: “Neither give place to the devil.” This means that we are to hold on (play defense) and not surrender territory to the Devil which is already ours through Christ.

Erwin Lutzer said:

“It’s always easier to defend territory than to win it back after it had been conceded to the enemy. “

This is very true. Evil has a fascination attached to it that can cause us to give up some ground or territory in our heart and soul. Even small steps, when we are going the wrong direction, can eventually lead into Satan's trap. Three men were interviewed for becoming a truck driver. The same question was asked each of them: How close could you come to the edge of a cliff while driving? One said, "I could come within six inches." Another said, "I could come as close as four inches." A third said, "I can only tell you I would stay as far away from the edge as possible." He got the job!

In a similar way, we should not be asking how close we can get to the edge of evil without giving Satan a right to our lives, but rather, how far we can stay away from the Devil's domain. That means we must band movies and books and other questionable activities that "mess with our mind" and which can lead us down the wrong path. We should not make provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14) and allow the Devil to overtake territory in our minds and hearts.

Some Christians need to take back the territory of their hearts and lives that they have surrendered to Satan and demons. Through our spiritual posture of defense, we must claim and hold on to the victory that was already won and provided for us through Jesus Christ. In Christ, we have already gained a great spiritual inheritance (Eph. 1:3). We must reclaim this inheritance if Satan has stolen God's rightful place in our hearts and lives. Remember that God wants all the keys to every room in our heart.



4. The pieces of the armor (14-18)

Ephesians 6:14-18

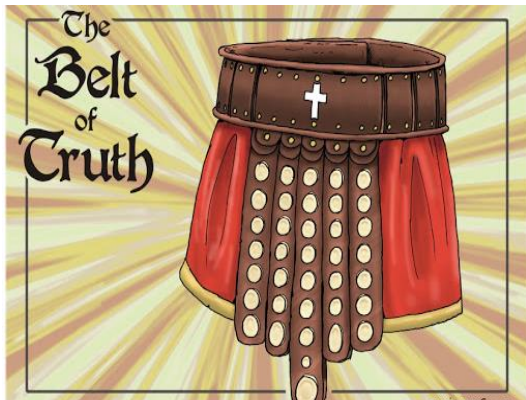
"Stand therefore, having your loins girt (buckled) about with truth, and having on (*put in place*) the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod (*bound*) with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts

of the wicked. And take 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, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

This is what we wear to war! Spiritual victory comes only to those who are prepared for battle. The pieces of the armor are now explained so we might understand how to apply victory to our daily lives. As a Christian, do you really know how to have victory? Here’s how! You must mentally and prayerfully put on the armor in the time of temptation and use it effectively against the enemy. This is because wearing the spiritual armor keeps us safe from Satan’s temptations and provides us with daily victory.

The pieces of God’s armor present seven life-changing truths.

A. SINCERITY - The belt of truth (Eph. 6:14a).



Paul is alluding to the belt of the Roman soldier which would hold his armor together. This piece of the Roman soldier’s armor was a thick leather belt. In Bible days, before a battle, a soldier would remove any hindrances. A Roman soldier wore a loose-fitting tunic or outer garment which covered most of his body. This would keep him cool in hot weather.

In battle, however, this clothing was a hindrance because it was not tight, it dangled. This is why he would gird or tuck this loose garment into a leather belt around his waist before he went into combat so that he would not become entangled in it.

The belt not only protected the abdomen but also held the sword in place which was an important instrument used in warfare (Eph. 6:17). With the sword in place and having his loins girt about (having a tunic tucked and fastened under one’s tightened belt on his waist) speaks of preparedness for the battle that is at hand. As a Christian, we must be ready to do battle

at a moment's notice. This is what Paul is teaching. Being girded with truth (to be filled with genuineness and sincerity in wanting to follow God and possess victory) shows an attitude of readiness, preparation, and genuine or sincere commitment. In other words, truth, as it relates to our character and commitment, our sincerity and singlemindedness to living victoriously, is to be girded or fastened to the belt of our Christian armor and Paul views this as being vital to our spiritual victory. We are to bind ourselves with truth in preparing for the battle and being able to pass through the battle victoriously.

1 Peter 1:13 says we are to "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober" which has the same idea of preparation for the battle. Essentially, we are to prepare our minds and lives for action and get ready for spiritual combat. We are to get focused on the battle and be prepared by making a total commitment to winning the battle and setting our mind on following truth at all costs.

Essentially, in girding up our loins we are to prepare our minds and lives for action and get ready for spiritual combat. In other words, we are to get focused on the battle and be prepared for combat by making a total commitment to winning the battle. This occurs by being truthful about wanting victory, possessing a sincere desire to possess victory while at the same time focusing on following truth at all costs.

So what is Paul talking about when he speaks of the belt of truth? Commentators line up on both sides of the question of whether truth here refers to God's truth as revealed in His Word or the truthfulness and integrity of the believer. I side with truth as relating to a person's sincerity in obeying God and desiring victory. This is because Paul will deal with the Word of God later (Eph. 6:17) and how that relates to a Christian's victory. However, our sincerity and commitment to living a victorious life is rooted in God's unchanging truth (the Word of God). So in some sense the belt of truth (an honest and pure desire to possess and live in victory) is related to following the truth so as to experience victory in our Christian life.

Truth can certainly speak of God's revealed standard of truth that the Christian has believed while at the same time it can have the connotation

of the Christian's own truthfulness, specifically a lifestyle that reflects integrity and honesty. The belt of truth (truth of heart) can refer to a lifestyle that is sincere and free from hypocrisy and double standards. Paul is not merely focusing on the standard of God's truth, as in verse 17, but one's commitment to this standard through sincere devotion ("thou desirest truth in the inward parts" – Ps. 51:6). This is a deep longing to follow it and adhere to it without hypocrisy or pretense.

The Greek scholar Thayer reminds us that truth is also understood "as a personal excellence: that candor of mind which is free from affection, pretense, simulation, falsehood, deceit." In other words, it's truth of heart (genuineness, sincerity, integrity) that we are to possess if we are going to have victory over temptation and Satan. It's a sincerity that is essentially rooted in our commitment to following God's standard of truth. Sincerity is not enough. Our sincerity must be rooted in the truth of Scripture.

The man of truth (truthfulness or integrity) is not a "double-minded" man (James 1:6-8) nor is he a double-hearted man (Matt. 6:19-21) trying to live in two different worlds (the spiritual and earthly) and seeking to serve two masters (Matt. 6:24). A man of integrity, with a clear conscience, who is sincere, can face the enemy without fear. His truth, open honesty before the Lord is a powerful deterrent to the enemy of his soul.

Again, the belt of truth holds all the armor together, which means it is vitally important. Paul seems to be highlighting the importance of a person's truthfulness or genuineness in wanting to follow and obey God's holy, perfect, and victorious standard. This means that our preparation for the battle (the girding up of our loins to move easily and swiftly) must be centered upon "truth" which in a general way refers to possessing a sincere or genuine desire to be victorious as we commit ourselves to the ultimate standard of truth – the Bible. There seems to be a strong emphasis here on possessing a sincere and strong desire to live in victory (truthfulness) as we apply ourselves to God's unchanging standard of truth (the Scriptures). The truth that is found in Scripture will not help us unless we are committed to following it. So, truthfulness (a sincere and intense desire to possess victory) must be the underlying premise for standing against Satan.

In our preparedness for victory, girding up our loins or tucking the truth under our belt, means there must be a sincere and honest desire to live in victory through our obedience to God's standard of truth, which Paul will specifically deal with later when describing another part of the armor (vs. 17). Our own truthfulness (sincerity) in wanting to follow God's golden standard of truth for victory is how we remain in the spiritual preparation mode for the battle. This kind of truth (truthfulness) which is an inner commitment to following God's way for victory is the only adequate basis for a defense against Satan.

Someone said:

"Most people who fly from temptation usually leave a forwarding address."

This is why we continue to get into trouble when it comes to temptation. We are not really desirous and serious about wanting to live in victory. We are not wearing the belt of truth.

Proverbs 1:10

"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

Proverbs 4:14–15

"Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away."

Romans 6:13

"Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin."

We need to wear the belt of truth and in wearing this belt (mentally and inwardly in our heart) we will be sincere in obeying God and wanting to possess victory in our daily lives.

Thomas Watson once said:

"Temptation is a trial of our sincerity."

Erwin W. Lutzer comments:

"Each temptation leaves us better or worse; neutrality is impossible. Our response to temptation is an accurate barometer of our love for God."

Doug Barnett

“If you don’t want the devil to tempt you with forbidden fruit, you had better keep out of his orchard.”

Along those same lines, Matthew Henry once remarked:

“Those that would be kept from harm must keep out of harm’s way.”

This makes a lot of sense. Beloved, we must make the sincere commitment to live victoriously. We must be truthful about steering away from sin and living on the victory side of life.

Roman soldiers made a living from the bounty of the battles they fought. Half of the bounty was given at the time of victory and the rest was put into a savings bank and managed by a special officer. This was paid to the soldier when he was discharged after 25 years of service. If a man deserted, he forfeited his accumulations. The practical application of this to Christians is that we can lose our rewards and blessings when we retreat from living for the Lord and follow the Devil’s path and way for our lives.

2 John 1:8

“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”

Being a man or woman who wears the belt of truth is vitally important if you want to win the battle. Again, it seems that this belt (“your loins girt about with truth” - Eph. 6:14) speaks primarily of the believer’s truthfulness or sincerity of living, a state that is free from hypocrisy and deceit, a genuine desire to possess victory over sin. A Christian who is filled with integrity, who possesses a clear conscience and desire to live in victory, can face the enemy without fear. As a Christian, we will live in defeat if we do not possess a deep longing to win the battle. Truth or truthfulness is a transparent, practical honesty, an earnest desire to live victoriously, which gives us a sharp cutting edge on overcoming Satan’s temptations.

General Douglas MacArthur once said:

“It is fatal to enter any war without the will to win it.”

God wants us to be honest and open with him. Our attitude is to be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Psalm 139:23). David also said, "Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (Psalm 26:2). This is sincerity, it's being true and possessing an open heart before God. If you are going to be a victorious Christian, being honest with God is vital. The belt of truth speaks about this.

What is it that protects me from the enemy and grants me victory? It begins with my attitude of obedience. "God, I am going to obey You regardless of what comes at me." When this is our attitude, we are ready to experience victory. My faith is activated and expressed when I am willing to obey. We must earnestly desire victory and have no seed thoughts or second thoughts in the back of our mind about sinning against God. We must wear the belt of truthfulness or sincerity if we are going to be victorious. 2 Corinthians 11:3 calls this our "simplicity in Christ" or singleness and simplicity, a heart that is free from all hypocrisy and deceit.

Do you really want victory? Do you want to give up your sin and live for God? If we know we are going to sin but deep down in our hearts still want to sin, then we are not going to have the victory. If you don't want it, then you won't have it! The belt of truthfulness, sincerity, or integrity holds everything together in the armor. The Scripture says that "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself" (Dan. 1:8) and we should have this same fixed purpose in our own hearts to desire and possess victory. The belt of truth, being open, honest, and sincere about wanting to live victoriously, is an integral part of the armor.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe commented on truthfulness in this way:

"A man of integrity, with a clear conscience, can face the enemy without fear. The girdle also held the sword. Unless we practice the truth, we cannot use the Word of truth. Once a lie gets into the life of a believer, everything begins to fall apart. For over a year, King David lied about his sin with Bathsheba, and nothing went right."

Philippians 1:10 speaks of this truthfulness or sincerity:

"That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

The word “sincere” means to literally “be judged by the sunlight” and figuratively suggests being tested and found genuine or pure in our heart. God knows our hearts. If we are truthful, filled with integrity, and really want to possess victory, then we will have it. Otherwise, we are just playing a game. We need to be thoroughly courageous, genuine, and sincere, filled with honesty, when we are involved in spiritual battle or warfare. We should possess an overwhelming desire to win the war. We must be filled with truth or sincerity, free of deceit and falsehood, as we face the Tempter.

If you are not truthful or honest with yourself, fully committed to following God’s standard of truth, then you have not prepared yourself or girded up your loins for the battle. People say, “It’s the fault of my past environment.” Psychology says, “We are victims.” Others say, “God made me this way.” The fact is this. We must push the blame for our sinful actions squarely upon ourselves.

James 1:14 reminds us:

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”

Our “own lust” means that we desire and ultimately choose to push the sin button and give in to our base desires. This brings us back to the question: Do we really want victory or not? Are we sincerely and truthfully seeking to live a victorious Christian life? Are we willing and ready to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1) by adhering to God’s truth? We cleanse ourselves by loving God more than our sin, taking the initiative to separate from sin, as outlined in 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, and apply God’s victory to our lives.

Jerry Bridges wrote:

"It is time for us Christians to face up to our responsibility for holiness. Too often we say we are defeated by this or that sin. No, we are not defeated; we are simply disobedient! It might be well if we stopped using the terms victory and defeat to describe our progress. Rather, we should use the terms obedience and disobedience. When I say I am defeated by something, I am unconsciously slipping out from under my responsibility. I am saying something outside of me has defeated me. But when I say I am

disobedient, that places the responsibility for my sin squarely on me. We may, in fact, be defeated, but the reason we are defeated is because we have chosen to disobey. We have chosen to entertain lustful thoughts, or to harbor resentment, or to shade the truth a little."

What this writer says is absolutely true. In essence, we lose the battle because we really don't want to win the battle! We enjoy our sin too much. We want to enjoy "the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25). If we are not filled with truth (an inner genuineness, sincerity, integrity), through possessing a deep and profound commitment to victory through obedience to God's word and ways, then we will lose the rest of our spiritual garments! Everything stands or falls in relation to the belt of truth which is our sincere devotion to follow God's way versus our own way. It's the belt of truth, a truthfulness that relates to our character and genuine commitment to follow God's Word and possess victory, that prepares us for the battle that lies before us, and which becomes the underlying premise for standing against Satan.

In a 1921 interview, Edison described his persistence this way: "After we had conducted thousands of experiments on a certain project without solving the problem, one of my associates, after we had conducted the crowning experiment and it had proved a failure, expressed discouragement and disgust over our having failed to find out anything. I cheerily assured him that we had learned something. For we had learned for a certainty that the thing couldn't be done our way, and that we would have to try some other way."

This is true when it comes to victory. We cannot possess victory in our way. We must follow God's way if we are truly going to be victorious. And God's way for victory begins with the belt of truth, which is an inner commitment to obey God's truth, possessing a genuine desire to engage in the battle and win. There can be no second guessing. We must be truthful with God and ourselves if we are going to live in victory. Being doubleminded and doubting that we can prevail will not grant us the victory we need. The belt of truth means that we will have uncompromising allegiance to a specific purpose in life which in this case is to possess victory and live on the victory side.

Psalm 119:10

“With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.”

This is a good explanation of the belt of truth. When preaching on this subject, a Christian lady came up to me after the service and summed up in simple terms what the “belt of truth” means. She said, “It means that you must have the will to win!” I told her that I could not have said it any better. If we don’t possess the drive and determination to see the fight through, then the rest of the armor will do us no good. We need to be completely devoted to winning the battle.

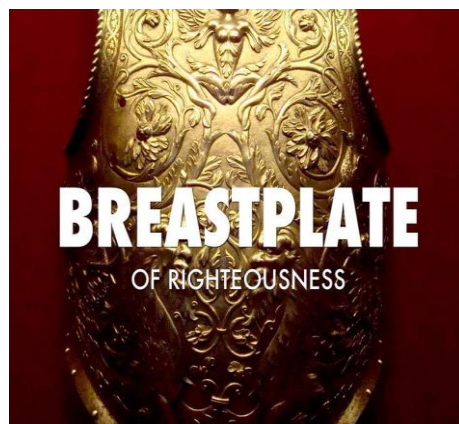
Geoffery Wilson once remarked:

“The finest armor is wasted on the soldier who has no will to fight.”

In the time of temptation (“the evil day”), and even before temptation comes (Matt. 6:13), we must make a clear commitment (mentally and prayerfully) to follow God’s will over the Devil’s way by wearing the belt of truth, possessing genuineness, sincerity, and truthfulness of heart to live in victory and not defeat.

B. SPIRITUALITY – The breastplate of righteousness (Eph. 6:14b).

This piece of armor covered the torso area and protected the vital organs of the Roman soldier. As we live a righteous life, or an active spiritual life, this will keep us from being overcome by the attacks of the enemy. We know that we have a positional standing of righteousness before God through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1; 8:30, 33-34) but Paul will deal with this positional righteousness in the next



piece of the armor when he talks about the Gospel of peace, which refers to possessing a peaceful standing before God through the imputed righteousness of Christ (Eph. 6:15). I’m convinced that here Paul seems to be stressing practical righteousness in our everyday living (1 Jn. 3:7; Prov. 11:30).

Even though we have positional righteousness before God's throne in Christ, without practical righteousness in our daily life Satan (our adversary) will find opportunities to attack us. Here, it seems likely that Paul is referring to a practical and daily righteous lifestyle (spiritual living) or uprightness of life. We need to be dedicated to living a spiritual life that manifests itself in righteous deeds and actions. In order to maintain and possess our victory in Christ, we should be practicing daily righteousness.

1 Timothy 6:11 says:

"But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness..."

Of course, living a righteous life is an important step to maintain our victory. If we are not centering our life on doing what is right, we become vulnerable to temptation and defeat. To know that something is right but then refuse to do it leaves a gaping hole in our armor.

2 Corinthians 2:10-11 reminds us of this:

"To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."

Satan gets "advantage" of us (2 Cor. 2:11), or a starting point to work with, a beachhead, when we are already harboring sin in our hearts and lives, such as an unforgiving spirit toward someone. This, in return, allows Satan to get a greater portion of our lives and brings more sin, confusion, and defeat into our Christian experience. We need to live our lives on a higher, spiritual plain which consists of living a righteous life for the glory of God. Staying right (maintaining spirituality) will keep us from falling into the traps of the Devil.

As a soldier's breastplate protected his chest from an enemy's attacks, so living a righteous and holy life guards our own heart against the assaults of the devil.

Romans 6:13

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

We must remember that we do not experience victory by trying to excuse our sin or overlook the things that we are doing wrong. You must face your sins head on and quickly confess them as they invade your life (1 John 1:9). Then and only then can you live righteously and victoriously over Satan. To hang on to various sins in your life is the sure way for continual defeat and downfall. The only way to combat evil is by doing good or living a righteous and holy life.

The “armor of righteousness” is also described in 2 Corinthians 6:7 where Paul is explaining how to overcome the enemy’s accusations against his ministry. “By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left” (*holding on to a sword with one hand and a shield with another hand*). The emphasis of the armor in this context is a giving us a summary of the importance of living an upright lifestyle that is consistent in character and righteous conduct.

Romans 13:12-14 also brings out the armor imagery:

“The night is far spent (*the night of sin*), the day is at hand (*of Christ’s appearing in the Rapture*): let us therefore cast off the works of darkness (*the sins that are part of our lives and which are defeating us*), and let us put on the armour of light (*holy and righteous living which acts as an armor or defense against the enemy*). Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting (*carousing or revelry*) and drunkenness, not in chambering (*forbidden sexual relations*) and wantonness (*unbridled lust, licentiousness*), not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ (*in a practical way allow Christ’s life and power to work through our lives while adopting His whole lifestyle, accepting Him as our Guide and Example, allowing Christ to shine through us*), and make not provision for the flesh (the old corrupt, human nature), to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

When speaking of the armor imagery, we discover that Paul repeatedly identifies righteous living as a way to combat sin and the enemy. Spiritual

living (the breastplate of righteousness) is an important part of the armor. It enables us to maintain victory and ward off Satan's attacks against us. Living a spiritual and healthy life of practical righteousness is a powerful deterrent to Satan's onslaughts against us.

Someone said:

"When a man is clothed in practical righteousness, he is impregnable. Words are no defense against accusation, but a good life is. If our conscience is void of offense toward God and man, the devil has nothing to shoot at."

Staying spiritual or living the Spirit-filled or Spirit-controlled life keeps us from failing and straying during demonic temptation.

Ephesians 5:18

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled (controlled) with the Spirit."

In other words, we need to keep a spiritual edge! Spirituality is an important part of God's armor that will help us to live victoriously. If we maintain spirituality or righteous living, we won't become accessible to Satan's schemes and sidetracked into sinful living.

Philippians 1:11 reminds us of this:

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

Paul is talking about the spiritual fruit or righteous living and actions that stem from our Christian life. Jesus repeatedly spoke to His disciples about the need to keep bearing the fruit of righteous living "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8). "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain ... (John 15:16).

The Christian soldier needs to put on the breastplate of righteousness by living a fruitfully productive and holy lifestyle. How can a Christian stand true and remain spiritual in an increasingly pagan and godless environment? He must wear the protective garment of righteous living. We become careless when we begin to make provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). When we lay down our guard and veer away from righteous living, we are setting ourselves up for defeat. God wants us to be living on higher ground instead of the sinking sand of defeat and spiritual failure.

“I’m pressing on the upward way,
New heights I’m gaining every day;
Still praying as I onward bound,
“Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”

I recall a fellowship time in one of our church gatherings. A young man was standing among other young men and was explaining (bragging) how he had never really had a disagreement or fight with his wife in the all the years of their marriage. After he was done talking an elderly lady who was sitting there listening to him made this remark: “Will the next liar please stand up!”

As I think back upon this incident, I am reminded that we can sometimes fool ourselves (but not others!) when it comes to living a righteous, spiritual, and holy lifestyle. We must remember that we are all capable of becoming spiritually feeble or weak in relation to our Christian living (Heb. 12:12). Therefore, we must concentrate on maintaining a spiritual edge in our marriages, home life, personal life, and in everything that we do. We must wear the breastplate of righteousness by remaining committed to living a righteous and spiritual life. Why? So we might not become an easy target and overtaken by the Devil’s traps and demonic temptations.

Maintaining a spiritual life through righteous living is vitally important to remain victorious in our Christian life. Stay on the straight and narrow way and you will not be easily overcome by Satan’s foolish tactics. So, “having on the breastplate of righteousness” means to keep your spiritual life tuned up and functioning. This means we are to “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25) and live on higher ground.

Frank Retief said:

“Resisting the devil does not mean rebuking him by shouting at him. It refers to a godly lifestyle of submission to God, a break with the friendship of the world, and a spirit of personal humility.”

It is vital that we walk with God, living out a righteous life, if we are going to resist Satan. It’s good to change the oil, put new spark plugs, and change the air filters in your mower every year. Why? Well, it keeps the mower tuned up and running the way it is supposed to run. In a similar way, we should keep our spiritual lives tuned up by maintaining a committed and righteous walk before God.

P. T. Forsyth said:

“Unless there is within us (*our hearts*) that which is above us (*our righteous living*), we shall soon yield to that which is about us” (*our sinful nature*).

This reminds us that we need to keep wearing the breastplate of righteousness!

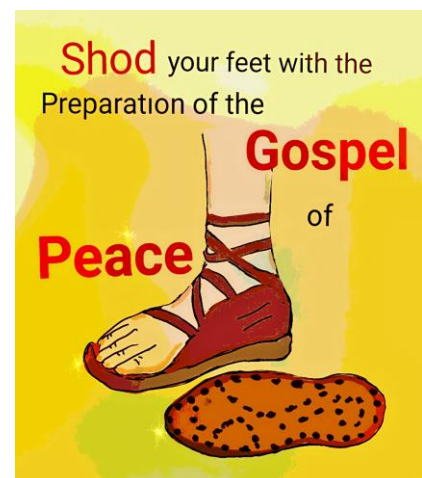
In the time of temptation (“the evil day”), and even before temptation comes (Matt. 6:13), we must make a clear commitment (mentally and prayerfully) to put on the breastplate of righteousness, which means we must remain determined and possess a dogged persistence to live a righteous and spiritual life. Without this commitment we cannot maintain our victory.

C. SERENITY – The Gospel of peace – Eph. 6:15).

Ephesians 6:15

“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

We discover next that we need boots for the battle! I recall an incident that occurred many years ago while I was dating my fiancé and attending the Grand Rapids School of Bible and Music. Since I was the man and leader, my fiancé



was holding on to my arm and we were walking across a thin layer of snow and ice on the lawn as we made our way to class. Well, I began to lose my balance. As a result, the feet of both of us went out from underneath us and we made a nice pinpoint landing on our bottom sides. Yes, I showed my fiancé that I was a real man!

Here is the moral to the story. Proper footwear can make a huge difference. We must have a good footwear and firm footing if we are going to fight well in our spiritual warfare. A soldier fighting for his life does not want to be slipping and sliding all over the place. He needs the right shoes and footing while in the battle. The Roman soldier wore sandals with hobnails in the soles to give him better footing for the battle. If we are going to “stand” (vv. 11, 13, 14) against Satan we will need the shoes of the Gospel.

The word “shod” means to have your feet bound in shoes or wearing shoes. The Bible says our feet are to be “shod with the preparation of the gospel.” These are Gospel shoes! Are you wearing the Gospel shoes? The message of the “gospel of peace” (a peace that we have through the Gospel) declares that we have a peaceful standing before God through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ. The word “imputed” comes from the Bible word “reckon” (Rom. 4:1-10) which means that God’s righteousness is credited to our legal account in Heaven, and we are given a peaceful stand before God.

Romans 5:1 declares:

“Therefore being justified by faith (declared legally righteous before God’s throne through faith in Christ), we have peace with God (a peaceful standing before God and relationship with God – no more wrath, condemnation, judgment) through our Lord Jesus Christ (His death, resurrection, and imputed righteousness which is credited to our legal record). By whom also we have access by faith (access into God’s presence – the very throne room of Heaven!) into this grace wherein we stand (our positional standing of acceptance before God the Father in Christ’s perfect righteousness), and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (we joyfully look forward to when we will gaze upon His glory and in some small way share His glory in a redemptive body).

God has accepted each Christian “in the beloved” – God’s beloved Son (Eph. 1:6). Through the saving Gospel of Christ’s work (His death and resurrection), every Gospel believer has full access and acceptance into the very throne room of God and therefore acquires a peaceful standing and relationship before God (Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 1:3). This means that I am loved unconditionally and eternally accepted in the very presence of God, through the acquittal granted to us through Christ’s redemptive work and the righteousness of Jesus Christ credited our account (Rom. 4:6). It means that I now possess a peaceful relationship with God for “the chastisement of our peace was upon him” (Isa. 53:5).

God is no longer angry with me, and I am no longer God’s enemy. God accepts me, assures me that I am His forever, and that nothing can separate us from His love in Christ (Rom. 8:33-39). All of this is ours because of the Gospel! It is the “gospel of peace” because through the Gospel (Christ’s death and resurrection) I receive total forgiveness and I am also credited with perfect righteousness before God’s throne, which results in a peaceful relationship of acceptance and access in the presence of God forever (Heb. 4:16).

Imputed righteousness (Rom. 4:5-8; Gal. 3:6), which God gives to us out of His grace, means that God puts His Son’s righteousness on our legal account in Heaven. God goes to the record book where all our sins have been recorded and erases all our past sins and equally provides acquittal for all our future sins. He then makes certain that nothing else (no other sin) is written on that page in the future by filling it with the perfect righteousness of His own Son!

This means that when you turn to the page in the legal records and entry book in Heaven where your name is written, you will find only two words written down. They are the words “forgiven” and “righteous!” Once the entry of righteousness is placed on your spiritual record in Heaven, then the matter is settled once for all! We are acquitted of all our sins forever, declared legally righteous in the presence of God forever, and are given a peaceful standing of acceptance before God forever. No more condemnation, no more anger, no more separation, no more fear of God’s

judgment. It's all passed forever! Jesus has become our righteousness and peace before God!

2 Corinthians 5:21

“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

Because of our acquittal and righteous standing through the Gospel (Christ's death and resurrection) we possess this peaceful standing before God. It's this message, the Gospel of peace, that grants us victory in the time of temptation.

How does this Gospel truth (peace before God) apply to victory? We must be ready to use the message of peace (positional acceptance before God) to stand against Satan. In other words, we need to be ready to do battle (spiritual warfare) with the Gospel of peace. This seems to be the primary emphasis of Paul when he speaks of the Gospel of peace. Day to day practical righteousness is important (the breastplate of righteousness), but so is the perfect righteousness that God has given to us, which provides us with a peaceful standing before His throne and a peaceful relationship with the Lord.

The word “preparation” (readiness) is likely understood as the believer being ready to stand against Satan's temptations. In other words, what the Gospel message of peace declares (the acquittal, acceptance, and access that we have before God) reminds us that God is not against His people but for them – and if God be for us who can be against us! The “gospel of peace” primarily deals with the defense of the biblical truth of the believer's acceptance before God (a peaceful standing before God) through the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

I think this is the underlying thrust of what Paul is teaching here. This is a theological battle that has practical implications regarding our victory. We have a positional peace and acceptance before God which is expressed in God's unbroken love for His saints (Romans 8:38-39). We must use this truth when entering spiritual warfare with Satan. God accepts and loves His saints unconditionally because of the imputed, legal, or credited righteousness we have in Christ.

“O Love, that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee;
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in Thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.”

Yes, God always loves and accepts His people unconditionally through the saving provision of the Gospel of peace! But how does this Gospel of peace apply to us when we are struggling with temptation and sin? Satan tempts us and works us over in various ways. This is why we need to be ready to do battle with the Gospel of peace. How does the Gospel of peace relate to living the victorious Christian life?

First, the Gospel of peace protects us from the Devil’s harassment of our past. We can claim our positional standing of acceptance before God when the Devil (our accuser) heckles, hounds, and harasses us (Luke 22:31) by reminding us of our sinful failures and fallacies of the past. We have plenty of them! But knowing the truth of our positional standing of peace before God through the Gospel, helps us to be prepared and ready to do battle with Satan’s attempts to drown and defeat us in our past failures. We can throw the “gospel of peace” in the face of Satan and declare: “God has forgiven me of all my sins, and He makes sure that none will be added to my legal record in Heaven again by declaring every Gospel believer legally righteous in the perfect righteousness of His own Son!

In the classic “Pilgrim’s Progress,” we find the important lesson on imputed righteousness. The main character called “Christian” meets Apollyon or Satan. And Satan begins to do his work of accusing Christian of his past. Satan reminded the main character of his past sins. But Christian then answered Satan with these words: “All this is true, and much more which thou hast left out; but the Prince whom I serve and honour is merciful and ready to forgive; but besides, these infirmities possesses me in thy country... and I have groaned under them, been sorry for them, and have obtained the pardon of my Prince.”

The promise of our righteous and peaceful standing before God is important because it protects us from feelings of guilt and condemnation

before God. Satan will try and defeat our lives by bringing personal accusations against us of our past. However, when we flee to God's throne, we know that the Gospel of peace means that the Heavenly Father always accepts us in the finished work of Christ (Rom. 5:1-2). Don't let the enemy convince you to pick up the invoice for your past sinful mistakes. You owe nothing. Jesus already paid the bill through His sacrifice on the cross (1 Cor. 15:3).

Luther said that when the devil came knocking on the door of his heart, he would send the Lord Jesus to the door. Christ would say: 'Martin Luther used to live here but has moved out ... I now live here.' 'Then,' said Luther, 'when the devil would see the nail prints on the hands of Christ and his pierced side, he would take flight immediately.'

We must remember that Satan is the accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10). But Satan not only accuses us before God but also tries to accuse us from within through the realm of our own conscience and heart. And what he accuses us of is our past sins and failures (Phil. 3:13). We must learn to defend ourselves against the accusations of the Evil One when he tries to defeat us with our past failures and sins. Satan torments our minds with our past sins and failures. He tries to make us feel that we are unworthy to serve the Lord. But we can pray to God and claim the complete forgiveness and righteous standing we have in Christ and have victory over the devil's temptations. The protection that God has given us to overcome the devil is the Gospel of peace. We can know that God has accepted us and given us a completely forgiven and righteous standing in Christ despite our past sins.

Warren Wiersbe has said:

"God convicts us in love; Satan accuses us in hatred. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to convict us. Satan uses feelings and memories to accuse us. When God convicts us, it draws us closer to Him, but when Satan accuses us, it pulls us away from the Lord. When God convicts, it is so we might look ahead and have hope. When Satan accuses, he wants us to look back and to give up."

The Gospel of peace reassures us that God has accepted us through the provision of Christ's forgiveness and perfect righteousness which we have before God's throne.

Second, the Gospel of peace provides us with the assurance of our salvation. The doctrine of eternal security is directly related to the "gospel of peace." The Devil tries to get us to doubt our salvation. Haunting us about our past and present sins can result in the believer doubting God's positional forgiveness that He has granted each believer before His throne. The Gospel of peace, "having made peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20), reassures us of our eternal security in Christ before the throne of God. Salvation's security is based upon our peaceful standing of acceptance in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3) and reassures us that we are safe and secure because our life is "hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). The doctrine of eternal security is certainly important to the believer's life and victory.

Satan will often try and tempt God's people in this specific area. He will send beguiling messages to our minds: "You cannot be sure that God accepts you. You can never know for certain that you are saved. In fact, you might be going to hell after all." Satan is a master artist when it comes to tempting us about our salvation before God's throne. The answer to this specific temptation (doubting your security in Christ) is the "gospel of peace" which declares our complete acquittal and righteous standing before the presence of God based upon the shed blood of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 5:9).

It's within the throne room of Heaven where God accepts the sacrifice and perfect righteousness of God's son as sufficient to save our souls forever. We are clothed in the robe of Christ's righteousness and reckoned righteous in God's sight. Let me tell you something – we have nothing to do with what's going on in Heaven! And the Bible says in Hebrews 7:25: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost (completely and totally) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Our salvation is of the Lord and is completely in the hands of our Savior! It's ours eternally through the Gospel of peace! Don't allow Satan, the old Serpent, to slither into your life and bring doubt

regarding your peaceful standing before God through Christ's credited righteousness.

The message of the "gospel of peace" keeps us secure in the area of our salvation when we constantly remember that it is based on the perfect acquittal and righteousness of God's dear Son. There is a certain and sure defeat (emotionally and doctrinally) that comes into our hearts and lives when we doubt the sufficiency of Christ's total forgiveness and imputed righteousness that He gives to us before God's throne. When we question the salvation provided to us by Christ, the devil has plenty of footage to tempt us, get at us, and defeat us in this specific area, by causing us to lose the hope we can have in the Gospel of peace.

Third, the Gospel of peace reminds us that God will always forgive and restore our fellowship with Him (1 John 1:7-9). The Devil will try and get us to believe God will not forgive us. Satan places another message in our mind after we have sinned and desire to restore our fellowship with God. He often says, "You have sinned away God's forgiveness and the day of His grace. The blood of Jesus will not forgive your sin. God won't take you back into fellowship with Himself. You might as well face it – God is finished with you."

In the midst of all the mindboggling and beguiling messages of Satan, I can know that I have peace and loving acceptance before God, which enables me to possess victory during the time of temptation and battle with Satan ("the evil day" – Eph. 6:13). If we claim this truth of our Gospel peace before God, Satan's accusations and harassments against us will have no weight and steal away our victory. Our grip on the Gospel will enable us to hold our ground against Satan.

Many times we suffer defeat or remain in the defeat mode because we have listened to the Devil's lies! We were not prepared with the Gospel of peace to counter these lies. Allow me to play the Devil's advocate one more time. The Devil comes to us and says that "God doesn't love you anymore. God won't accept you anymore. You have blown it too many times. You are a loser and God knows it. God is finished with you. You might as well face it; you are going to hell."

Folks, these accusations are a pack of lies. Don't allow Satan to steal away the message of the Gospel of peace from your heart. You must always be ready or prepared to do battle with Satan with this Gospel message ("the preparation of the gospel of peace"). Thankfully, the blood of Jesus will always provide cleansing for sins and restore your fellowship with God (1 John 1:7). The blood of Jesus will never lose its power! This is because our forgiveness and righteous standing before God is based upon the shed blood and sacrificial death of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; Rom. 5:9).

Here is the good news! Because of the Gospel of peace, God will always accept and keep His children, and therefore He always desires their restored fellowship (1 John 1:9; Rev. 3:20). God is for us – not against us! God desires our fellowship – He does not detest it! This is because the blood of Jesus Christ avails for us in Heaven. It writes me down as forgiven and righteous! And it's on this basis that we can have our fellowship restored with God.

"Jesus, thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head."

The imputed righteousness and peace that we have before God (the Gospel of peace) can provide us with security in the time of temptation or the "evil day." Our standing of full and final acceptance before God can be a strength builder in the time of temptation. Knowing that God has accepted us can provide us with the assurance that He will not give up on us nor fail to provide us with assistance. God has accepted me as His own child and will certainly be with me to provide all the necessary power that I need to counteract the devil.

Let us be prepared with the message of Gospel peace (our peaceful standing of acquittal, justification, and acceptance before God) through the blood of Jesus Christ for this message will not only maintain our victory, but also bring us out of the gloom and doom of defeat and into the heights of newfound victory! "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb" (Rev. 12:11). The blood of Jesus Christ is the ground or basis for our victory.

The shedding of His blood on the cross has defeated Satan and reminds us of our peaceful standing and complete acceptance before God. If we hide the message of Gospel peace in our hearts we are going to be victorious over the Devil and his demonic cohorts.

Romans 8:31 triumphantly declares in the context of imputed righteousness: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” Beloved, we are at peace before God’s holy presence. The war with God is over. We are no longer God’s enemy. This means that God will not let us down in the time of battle. The Gospel of peace provides sure footing and stability in our Christian life in the time of temptation. How wonderful it is to know that God is on our side! This provides us with those hobnailed shoes or surefootedness in the time of temptation. I am at peace with God! God is on my side! Therefore, I can be a winner! It’s important to prepare ourselves with the Gospel of peace for Satan will try and defeat us by hurling accusations against us and alluring us into many different sins. But we must also be ready or prepared to share the Gospel message of peace with others.

In the time of temptation (“the evil day”), and even before temptation comes (Matt. 6:13), we must make a clear commitment (mentally and prayerfully) to prepare ourselves for battle with the Gospel of peace, knowing and accepting our total forgiveness, righteousness, and peaceful standing before God, who loves us unconditionally through the perfect sacrifice and righteousness of His Son. It is the defense of this positional truth that enables us to ward off the accusations hurled against us by Satan, and to free us from the allurements of the Devil’s emissaries, who are seeking to keep us bound to our sinful inclinations of the past and which cause us to doubt the sufficiency of Christ’s perfect salvation.

D. SHIELD – The shield of faith (Eph. 6:16).

“Above all, taking the shield of faith.” The shield was a very important part of the armor. It protected the soldier against fiery arrows which were designed to kill and defeat the soldier. The enemy would frequently shoot arrows with flaming tips at



the soldiers in the opposing army. But hiding behind the shield, the soldier had nothing to fear from these burning missiles. The shield protects the heart and this signifies protecting our hearts from Satan's attacks against us (1 John 5:4).

The large Roman shield was made of wood, covered with leather, and bound with iron. The soldiers would stand shield to shield, forming a wall of protection against the enemy's flaming arrows. As long as they were behind their shields, they were protected. If they moved out from behind the shield, they could suffer painful or fatal wounds. One soldier reported having over 200 enemy arrows in his shield after an intense battle! So the shield was essential for survival!

Paul pictures the believer in the heat of battle. The air is thick with flaming arrows that had been dipped in pitch and set on fire. It's a life and death situation. How will he survive? By faith! The analogy of the shield of faith provides believers with the protection we need against the "fiery darts of the wicked" (wicked is describing Satan and his temptations). His temptations are described as "fiery darts" that he shoots at us, such as thoughts of doubts, fears, worries, lust, greed, anger, pride, gossip. The flaming arrows include all forms of temptation such as discouragement, despair, or doubting God.

In addition to all these flaming arrows, there is also evil thoughts or images that suddenly pop into our minds. Maybe they occur when you are praying or reading the Bible or worshiping God with the saints on the Lord's Day. Suddenly, you get a blasphemous thought, or you picture in your mind an image that seems to come out of nowhere. A horrible and evil thought suddenly comes into your mind, right as you are seeking the Lord. These are the flaming arrows of the evil one. Satan will normally follow up with the accusation, "Ha! You call yourself a Christian. But look at how you're thinking! You're just fooling yourself! You aren't following Christ, or you wouldn't have thoughts like this!"

Satan's temptations are viewed or personified as flaming arrows which are trying to ignite the passions inside of our hearts. If the Devil can get you to dwell upon a certain suggestion long enough, his fiery arrow will give you

the burning desire to sin. But faith shields our lives from Satan's fiery temptations. How do you deal with the fiery arrows? You take up the shield of faith!

The spiritual application from the Roman soldier to the Christian soldier is easy to see. The Devil can do nothing against us when we possess faith. His worst attacks are frustrated by our faith. Faith involves a *renunciation* of our own self effort and human power, *relying* upon the Lord for victory, and *reapplying* God's truth to our lives during the time of battle.

"Strong to meet the foe,
Marching on we go,
While our cause we know
Must prevail;
Shield and banner bright
Gleaming in the light,
Batt'ling for the right,
We ne'er can fail."

Our faith acts as a shield to ward off Satan's temptations and put out the fire that is trying to be ignited in our souls.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says:

"Faith here means the ability to apply quickly what we believe so as to repel everything the devil does or attempts to do to us."

Paul says that we must "take up" this shield. It's not automatic. Rather, you must actively trust in God when the enemy's arrows fly. Actively trusting God involves looking at your circumstances and at God's promises and deciding to rely on God.

Daniel 3:17-18 describes the faith of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This is an Old Testament illustration of what it means to stand behind the shield of faith, trusting in God's provision and power for deliverance. "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace (comparable to the fiery arrows of Satan), and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

What is the content of our faith? We must have confidence or faith in God's promises, providence, provision, and power. We must believe that God in His *providence* will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). We must believe that the *promises* of His Word are always true (Ps. 119:160; 2 Tim. 2:15). We must express faith in the spiritual provision of His *power* that is available to us on a constant basis. Right here in the context, we discover that we are to possess faith in God's power ("Be strong in the Lord" - Eph. 6:10) and in God's plan for victory when wearing the armor, which He has provided for us (Eph. 6:14-18). If we express faith in God's promises, power and plan for victory, we won't be overcome by Satan's fiery darts or suggestions. We must have faith in God, an enduring faith in who God is and what He has provided for us and promised us in Christ. Faith is the victory!

"Faith is the victory, Faith is the victory,
Oh glorious victory,
That overcomes the world."

It cannot be overstated that the believer's steadfast faith in God's personal power (Eph. 6:10; Gen. 15:1), God's providence (Rom. 8:28; Prov. 3:5-6; 1 Cor. 10:13) and God's promises (Rom. 10:17; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:20) brings faith into his heart. These things act as a pump to transport faith into our hearts so that we can overcome the devil. But also remember this. When we talk about trusting or having faith in God, we cannot divorce it from practical obedience. If your faith is truly in God, you will obey His commandments.

The important thing is to quench the fiery dart immediately by acting in faith. Instantly look to Christ by faith, recall some promise of the Word, and believe it. If you don't the fire will start to spread, and if you add fuel to the fire, it will burn beyond your control. Your feelings will get aroused and upset, and before long Satan will be in control. So, faith is the victory – the shield of faith.

1 John 5:4 triumphantly declares:

"For whatsoever is born of God (*referencing our born-again human spirit*) overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

This verse is declaring that every Christian has overcome the world by his or her initial faith in Jesus Christ. We have through the new birth positionally overcome spiritual death, spiritual blindness, and the spiritual enslavement to sin and Satan. But it's equally true that we must continue to express faith in a practical way through our entire Christian life by applying this positional victory to overcome Satan's temptations and efforts to defeat us.

A Christian psychologist on the radio once declared that to tell hurting people to "trust God" is useless advice. What terrible advice! If he was right, I wonder how the many generations of saints through the centuries before the advent of modern psychotherapy managed to deal with life's overwhelming problems? I don't find psychology in the listing of God's armor! The Bible teaches that trust is to triumph! Faith believes that God can provide the Christian with victory over any sin and in every situation. Faith says, "No matter what happens God will give the victory." We must have faith and believe that "nothing is impossible with God" (Luke 1:37). When we pray in doubt we do without (James 1:6-7).

David declared in Psalm 31:13-15:

"For I have heard the slander of many: fear *was* on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God. My times *are* in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me."

Trust or faith is utter dependence on God's presence, promises, power, providence, and provision. Faith puts God between the believer and the enemy. A believer is a world-conqueror by means of his faith in Christ. Spiritual erosion occurs in our life when our confidence or faith is shifted to our own resources and abilities, instead of toward God. It takes faith in the Lord, a lot of faith, to live the Christian life (Prov. 3:5-6).

It's important to remember that Satan wants to weaken our faith in the truth of God's Word during the struggles and hardships of life.

1 Thessalonians 3:4-5

“For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.”

We discover by these verses that the Tempter (the Devil) is seeking to deflate our faith in the Lord. Paul wanted to know their state of faith in the heat of the battle of persecution to make sure the Devil was not destroying the effectiveness of their fruitful living, Christian life, and ministry. Paul knew that the Evil One is always seeking to weaken and destroy our faith by undermining our confidence in God’s truth and unchanging character.

When Satan tempted Eve, he began by weakening her faith in God. He questioned God’s Word (“Yea, hath God said?” – Gen. 3:1) and God’s goodness (“every tree of the garden” – Gen. 3:1). We must never forget that Satan’s number one goal is to weaken our faith in God, the truth of God’s Word, His righteous standard, and that we are victors in Christ. When our faith is weakened, we are vulnerable to Satan’s fiery darts. The shield of faith is an absolute necessity in the time of battle. We must keep it ever before us or we will be wounded by Satan’s fiery suggestions.

Hebrews 11:33-34 speaks about believers who possessed great faith in the time of the devil’s persecution and suffering - “Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.”

Pastor Cole comments:

“The Bible is full of stories of believers who were in overwhelming circumstances, where they despaired of life itself. What did they do? They couldn’t get an appointment with their psychotherapist. He didn’t do battlefield calls. So they cried out to God and trusted in Him. In many cases, He delivered them from death. In other cases, He sustained them as they died in faith. You can read a summary of these stories in Hebrews 11, which makes the point that whether they were delivered or whether they

died, they believed God and His sure Word. Faith in God is the essential shield that quenches the arrows of the evil one.”

Now reflect on this. One of the greatest temptations that we face in our Christian lives is to stop being dependent upon God and instead rely on our own intellect and resources. As long as we think we can live the Christian life by ourselves, we will fail miserably. The spiritual erosion occurs when our confidence of faith is shifted to our own resources and abilities instead of directing our faith toward God – His power, provision, promises, and providence. Someone created an acrostic of what true victorious faith stands for and what faith must claim during the Christian battle.

F – Forgiveness of sin
A – Assurance of salvation
I – Identification with Christ
T – Triumph over Satan
H – Hope of deliverance

D.L. Moody said that for many years he struggled to have faith, but it alluded him. Then he read, “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Romans 10:17). He stopped praying for faith and spent more time in the Scriptures. The more time he spent in the Word of God, the greater his faith became and the same will be true for us. The more faith that we place in the promises and truth of Scripture, the greater our victory will be, as we ward off the fiery darts of the Devil.

David Moss remarked:

“The essential element of faith, however, is believing that God is right about everything.”

- ✓ Faith is believing what God has said,
- ✓ Faith is taking God at His word,
- ✓ Faith is accepting His teaching,
- ✓ Faith is obeying His commands,
- ✓ Faith is heeding His thoughts,
- ✓ Faith is laying hold of His many promises.

1 Peter 5:8-9

“Be sober, be vigilant (*stay on guard*); because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, (*his fierce and determined activity against God’s children*) walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (*destroy and defeat us spiritually*): Whom resist (*defend yourself*) stedfast in the faith (*what we believe - the truth of God’s Word, the truth about God, and specifically our faith in the Gospel and the cross where Satan was defeated – Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14; 1 Jn. 3:8*), knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (*possess victory in times of persecution and suffering*).

Scripture urges Christians to flee from various evils (1 Cor. 6:18; 10:14; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22), but nowhere are we advised to flee from the devil. This would be a futile effort. James, while giving the same command to resist the devil as Peter does, adds the assuring promise, "and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). In other words, we don’t run away from the Devil, the Devil runs away from us, when we take the defensive stand and resist Him with our faith.

The story is told of the Scottish pioneer missionary John G Paton (1824–1907) who was translating the Bible for a South Seas Island tribe. In the course of his exhaustive work, he discovered that they had no word for trust or faith. One day a native who had been running hard came into the missionary’s house, flopped himself in a large chair and said in his own dialect: ‘Phew! It’s good to rest my whole weight on this chair!’ ‘That’s it,’ said the alert John Paton, ‘I’ll translate faith as “someone resting their whole weight on God.”’

When we rest our whole weight on God and His Word, our faith will shield us from Satan’s temptations and provide us with victory. As Christians, we are not victims - we are victors in Christ! We must by faith act upon the truth of God’s enduring Word and rely on His available power for victory.

“Encamped upon the hills of light, Ye Christian soldiers rise,
And press the battle ere the night Shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below, Let all our strength be hurled;
Faith is the victory we know, That overcomes the world.”

Once again, the promises and provisions found in God's word act as a pump, which transport faith into our hearts, so that we can overcome the Devil. The heart is the control center where all our decisions take place (Prov. 4:23).

Psalm 119:11

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

One Christian lady told me that "It didn't work." She was conveying to me that the victorious plan of deliverance, which I shared with her from God's Word, did not work. It was a failure and flop. Apparently she gave in to the Devil's temptations and allowed him to win the battle and then, like Adam, blamed God (Gen. 3:12). Well, we know that God's plan for victory really does work. But it's our faith that puts God's victorious plan into operation and makes it become applicable, activated, alive, and the answer to living victoriously. This woman's faith was a flop – not God's plan and way for victory.

"My shield of faith was all intact--His fiery darts bounced back.
I called on God in Jesus' name, I pled the precious blood--
While Satan sneaked away in shame, I met and talked with God!"

Maybe you're thinking, "But I struggle with having faith in God in my trials. How do I get the faith that I need to shield my soul in times of temptation?"

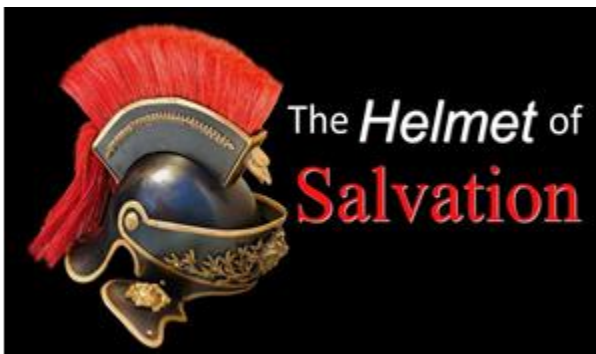
- ✓ Recognize that your lack of faith in God constitutes a relational problem with Him. You are in one sense calling God a liar. You are saying that His Word and power are not enough to deliver you!
- ✓ Confess your unbelief as sin and ask God's forgiveness (1 John 1:9).
- ✓ Ask God to give you faith to trust Him fully (Mark 9:24).
- ✓ Don't try to work up faith. Look to the Lord Himself. He can be trusted and will not fail you.
- ✓ The world says, "It can't be wrong if it feels so right!" That is a lie. Don't believe it! God's Word is the compass to guide you when you're lost in the fog of temptation and trials. Follow the truth - not your feelings!

Has your faith been fickle? Has your faith been faltering? Hold up the shield! Keep it up or you will surely be hit by the flaming arrows of Satan and His spiritual army of wicked spirits!

In the time of temptation (“the evil day”), and even before temptation comes (Matt. 6:13), we must make a clear commitment (mentally and prayerfully) to take up the shield of faith, to actively trust God, His Word, faithfulness, and spiritual provision for our lives, declaring our victory over the enemy. Faith is still the victory that overcomes the world!

Faith is still the victory that overcomes the world!

E. SALVATION – The helmet of salvation (deliverance – Eph. 6:17a).



Salvation is used in the sense of being delivered from Satan’s power in the Christian life. We have already experienced salvation in the past from the PENALTY of sin but now we need salvation (deliverance) from the POWER of sin and the Devil.

The helmet protects the head signifying that our minds need to be delivered from defeating and devilish thoughts as we apply God’s truth to our lives. The way the “helmet of salvation” or deliverance functions to help us is by applying “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17b) to our minds and hearts.

In war, the two most vulnerable spots are the heart and the head. When a person is wounded in these places, he will likely die. The enemy soldier wanted to give a vital blow to the physical brain. For this reason, a helmet has always been one of the most important parts of the soldier’s armor. The Roman soldier had a bronze helmet with a leather strap on it. This helmet was carried on his shoulder or his side so that he was always ready to wear it in the time of battle. The helmet never left the soldier’s side, and he never entered a battle without his helmet on.

In order to have victory in the Christian life something must happen to our minds. Our minds must be changed. The way we think must be changed. Victory does not come through our emotions or through feeling good. Some believers only emphasize the emotions, but God emphasizes the mind or the way that the believer thinks. So we must prepare our minds for the battle of life. And it is a battle! The mind that is established on truth becomes a protective piece of armor in the time of battle – the helmet of deliverance. As we think right thoughts and allow our minds to be filled with the truth of God’s Word we can overcome Satan. Again, this is why the Word of God is linked closely to the helmet of salvation (Eph. 6:17b).

The helmet refers to the mind controlled by God which provides a spiritual deliverance (salvation) for our lives on a daily basis. The salvation or deliverance that is in view here is the daily deliverance from the powerful suggestions of the enemy.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 gives a similar analogy:

“But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”

Withing this context, the “hope of salvation” is that blessed hope of the future, pretribulation Rapture. It deals with an eschatological hope. We are not looking to enter the Tribulation period of God’s wrath. When Paul speaks of the “helmet, the hope of salvation” he is saying that these believers could protect their minds from worry and despair. They could possess the certainty and assurance in their own minds that they will be delivered from the Day of the Lord (Tribulation Period). Their minds should not be tormented by uncertainty as to whether they will be overtaken by this coming judgment.

Using the figure of a helmet on a Roman soldier, the Bible teaches that we must protect our minds from worrying about any future involvement in the Tribulation period. No person should be able to steal the blessed hope from our hearts. The same analogy applies to all of God’s Word. It’s the helmet of our salvation or deliverance that gives us hope and confidence in the time of temptation. It gives us the promise that we can be delivered from

the temptations, attacks, and deception of the Evil One. The helmet becomes our hope in the time of temptation!

Someone has said:

“The mind is a battlefield where all the decisive battles of life are won or lost.”

The most powerful weapon in Satan’s arsenal is the power of suggestion. When God controls the mind, Satan cannot lead the believer astray. However, Satan, working in connection with the old nature sends sensual suggestions and thoughts into our minds or thought processes. Knowing our areas of weakness, Satan will work in concert with old nature to zero in on our weakness. He can inflame the temptations and make them very attractive to us as he sends thoughts and suggestions into our minds. Even the old nature itself can create suggestive suggestions in our minds (“the works of the flesh” – Galatians 5:19).

Many times, it is difficult to decipher between these two evil workers (the flesh and Satan). However, when you become intellectually controlled by evil thoughts, then you will be defeated in your Christian life. Intellectual defiance is the reason that you live in a defeat. We must simply understand that Satan is out to control our mind. Satan’s goal is to control our thinking process.

The mind itself is actually a spiritual entity. The physical brain is simply the vehicle that the human body uses while it exists here upon earth. However, thoughts are really spiritual in nature, meaning that they come from the spiritual or unseen part of man’s existence and the control center of his inner being – the heart (Matt. 15:19). Our mind or thinking capacities exists in the same realm of existence as the Holy Spirit, Satan and demons. This means that our real sphere of existence is immaterial and is not bound to this physical world. In one sense, we are an immaterial entity tied to a different world. I know that sounds like science fiction, but it really is true. This is why Satan and demons influence and do battle with the spiritual part of our existence which is within us. It’s because they themselves are spiritual in nature and can easily identify with the spiritual part of man’s existence which exhibits will, thinking and emotions.

The good news is that during the spiritual battle the helmet, or mind controlled by God, will give believers victory over the satanic suggestions that are sent their way. We must remember that the devil defeated Eve by getting into her mind or thinking process.

2 Corinthians 11:3

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

The problem area is the mind which can become corrupted through satanic temptation. The word “simplicity” speaks of possessing a sincere devotion to Christ, singleness of mind (mental honesty), possessing a heart that is free from all hypocrisy and deceit. 1 Peter 1:13 says: “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.” This is a figure of speech (a metaphor) referring to the ancient Oriental custom of tying up one’s loose flowing robes. As previously mentioned in our study, the Roman soldier would pull his tunic through his belt so his garment wouldn’t be in his way when he was in battle. Our “girding” is not physical, it is mental, and it is spiritual. The apostle Peter is telling us that we must be spiritually prepared and committed for action. We must keep our thinking (perspective) biblical and accurate or else we will be led astray in the realm of our minds. If Satan gets our mind, then he has got us!

In essence, to “gird up the loins of your mind” means to prepare yourself for the battle over your mind. You must take on the “helmet of salvation” and win the battle over your mind. If you don’t, you will be full of “dead men’s bones” on the inside of your heart or be full of ugly wicked thoughts that are not holy and God honoring. We must protect the mind with the helmet of deliverance.

When a person girds up their mind, they are in a sense rolling their sleeves up from a mental perspective and are spiritually prepared to do battle with the Evil One. We are to possess a sober, cool, and composed mind that is ready for action. Only when our mind is filled with God’s truth (the Scriptures) can we keep our thought process from embracing Satan’s lies and following his mind-manipulating distractions that keep us from spiritual

living. It's our responsibility, through the provision of God's Word, to change the way that we think. God has given us the "helmet of salvation" or deliverance (Eph. 6:17) through His Word and we are responsible to prepare ourselves for the battle and do something about changing the way that we think.

Here is how Satan manipulates our thinking. Satan will fill our mind with false messages and false emotions. Satan will use the wicked world around us (1 John 2:15-17) and the fleshly lusts (1 Pet. 2:11) to tempt us. He will try and get us to think wrong thoughts and to follow our wrong emotions that have been generated from the world system and flesh. Satan will use confusion to warp our thinking and feelings. He gets us to love the wrong things, follow the wrong priorities, have the wrong goals in life, dedicate ourselves to the wrong loyalties, and to over commit ourselves to the wrong things.

It's very clear that Satan wants to strip the truth from our minds while filling it with his own perverted ideas. In doing this, Satan stops us from living holy lives by luring us toward envy, hatred, greed, jealousy, immorality, and every other human vice. In manipulating our minds, Satan wants us to make light of our sins. He doesn't want us to confess them and deal with them God's way (Prov. 28:13). He wants us to get desensitized to our sins so that we come to look at wickedness in a new light. He wants us to rationalize our sin and not seek the Lord for forgiveness (Psalm 51).

To accomplish these and other goals, Satan attacks us in the realm of our thinking and the way we feel. If he can cause us to think about things the wrong way and follow feelings that are not pleasing to the Lord, he can defeat us and drag us away from the Lord. He can get us out of the fight by changing how we think and feel.

Again, the helmet protected the head of the soldier and as a metaphor the imagery of the helmet refers to the mind being saved or delivered from evil, lustful, and devilish thoughts. We must keep our minds centered upon truth so we can be delivered from Satan's ideology.

Ephesians 4:23 says:

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.”

In this passage the word “spirit” takes on the meaning of possessing a proper outlook or orientation on life. The believer should have a different philosophy of life than unsaved people have. Instead of allowing the “spirit of this world” to permeate our thinking (1 Cor. 2:12), we must begin to allow truth to change our inward thinking, so that we can have a different spirit (outlook or philosophy) on life. In short, we must change the way that we think. To be renewed in the “spirit of our mind” means to change how we think, align our thoughts with God’s Word. We must take God’s perspectives on life and everything.

Romans 12:2 speaks about the daily mind renewal:

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing (renovation) of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

To be renewed or renovated in your thinking process is a command. The believer must work on this daily. Believers need to learn how to reprogram their minds to have victory over the world system (lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life) and the devil’s mental suggestions. Each believer must learn to clean house! Our minds need to go through a daily renovation process - the “renewing of our mind.” You cannot change the way you are living unless you change the way that you are thinking. We need to consciously put the bad out of our minds and bring the good into our thinking process. We need to renew or renovate our minds in a practical way as we go throughout life.

We cannot allow the old human nature to dominate our way of thinking. Therefore, we must reflect on what God’s Word commands us to do and the spiritual truths of the Bible that deal with victory, salvation, joy, and peace. We must meditate upon God’s love, grace, and companionship in our lives. These are some of the key factors to overcome the battle for our minds. Engaging our mind in spiritual activity, feeding our soul upon refreshing, spiritual food, will help us to overcome the power of suggestive

thinking habits and the patterns of wrong thinking. Purity of mind means purity of living.

The human brain is a fabulous computer. As a matter of fact, no person has been able to build an efficient and effective computer like the brain. The brain is capable of recording 800 memories per second for seventy-five years without ever getting tired. However, those who are in the computer business are familiar with an expression and understand the significance of it. It is called GIGO. GIGO may sound like a Greek verb or an Italian food. But GIGO is actually an acronym for that saying that we have all heard – “Garbage In, Garbage Out.”

We must remember that what is true about computers is also true about the computer of our own mind. “Garbage in, garbage out.” If you allow greed, jealousy, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness and sensual thoughts to begin to permeate your mind, then these thought patterns will eventually overtake you. If you allow God’s Word to permeate your mind and heart, then you will have victory over the garbage that Satan is trying dump into your mind. It’s amazing how much garbage some Christians will program into their brains as they sit for hours in front of the TV or their computer. The Bible teaches that what we purposely feed into our minds is what is going to come out in our personal lives.

One preacher recalled his days as a young boy. He wanted to memorize 80 or 90 verses in order to win a free trip to a summer Christian camp. He wanted to go to camp. They had everything at that camp that a boy could ever want. Well, the young boy started memorizing all the short verses that he could in the Bible. “Jesus wept.” He then moved on to “Rejoice evermore” then he tackled “Pray without ceasing.” That was three verses. But camp still seemed to be a long way off! Finally, the boy got around to Psalm 119:11. And we had better get around to this verse again in our daily living.

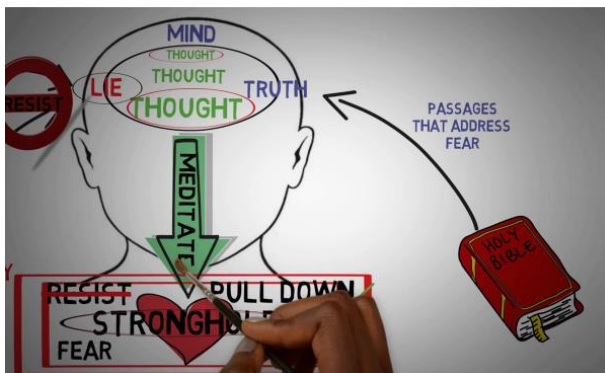
Psalm 119:11

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

Although we cannot escape evil thoughts from racing into our thinking process, we can rid ourselves of these thoughts and not be overcome by them. We do not have to allow these satanic suggestions to take root in our hearts and give birth to some form of lustful sin. The time we must choose to get rid of sin is when the thoughts of sin first enter our mind. If we entertain the thought of lust, rejecting our passion will be increasingly difficult.

Again, purity of mind means purity of living. The way that you think will determine the way that you act and live. When God controls our mind we will possess victory over those evil thoughts and suggestions that Satan sends into our thought processes. A pure mind results in a victorious life. This means that lustful, prideful, envious, covetousness, unforgiving, angry, and all sinful thoughts must be demolished and replaced with truthful thoughts that rest upon the foundation of God's Word.

“casting down imaginations”



2 Corinthians 10:5 says:

“Casting down (demolishing) imaginations (reasoning of the mind or intellect), and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

The concept behind “casting down” speaks of imploding or collapsing the thoughts that come racing into our minds in a sudden and dramatic fashion. In other words, any reasoning that is against God must be put out of our minds and all our thoughts must be placed under the lordship of Jesus Christ. In a general way, thoughts of defeat must be replaced with thoughts that promise victory. Thoughts of worry, despair, and discouragement must be replaced with thoughts of peace and joy. Thoughts of fear must be replaced with courage. More specifically, sinful thoughts must be exchanged for righteous thoughts.

Carnal and sinful patterns of living originate from anti-Christian philosophies and suggestions (temptations) that seek to invade our thinking process which are designed to destroy our concept about God. How we think about God has a profound effect on what we do. What we think about God affects our lives. We must remember that Satan attempts to destroy the true picture about God when He tempts our lives (“against the knowledge of God”). Satan loves to change our concept of God, His character, and His ways. This is his number one agenda. He wants to distract us from thinking properly about God, moving our thoughts away from the knowledge of God’s goodness, will, and purpose for our lives. This is exactly what he did to Eve when tempting her in the garden.

Genesis 3:1

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Many times we don’t know we are being played by Satan because we don’t know the truth about God and His Word. Satan attacked Eve’s concept of God in this verse. He questioned the Word of God and the goodness of God. The devil successfully got her thinking about God all twisted and distorted. The more she thought the devil’s thoughts the lower her estimation of God became. You see, the devil tries to destroy our right thinking about God. He tries to get our mind dwelling on a wrong or distorted concept of God. He tries to get our attention away from the knowledge of God’s will, goodness and plan for our lives. This is why the Scripture tells us to destroy these twisted and perverted thoughts about God before they overtake our lives.

Satan plants very subtle and improper thoughts about God in our thinking until he has us preconditioned for a fall. And when we are thinking wrong about God we are ready to take the bait and bite into the fruit. Sometimes the Devil sets us up for a fall through a process of days, weeks, months and even years! He comes to us and tries to germinate ideas in our mind through his subtle, subliminal,, and satanic stimuli. He influences our attitude and wins a minor victory but is actually setting us up for the “big fall.”

Dear Christian friend, don't think that you can outsmart the devil. The day that you think you can, you'll get the surprise of your life. He will knock you out of the contest in the first round. The only hope we have is to study the Bible and fill our minds with the true concept about God as the Scriptures portray Him. The truth about God's person, program and plan for our lives establishes a right perspective and straightens our course in life.

Earl Radmacher said it best:

"The truth of God establishes our vision, straightens our course, and resets our compass on the North Pole of accurate thought."

Until we understand who God is, our lives will not be much different than they are right now. We need to get a fresh glimpse of God's holiness and almighty power and His attributes. When we do, we will fall before His majesty and surrender to Him – not Satan. We need return to a serious pursuit of the person of God as revealed in Scripture. In short, right living begins with right thinking. And right thinking begins with thinking right about God.

We know that the Bible portrays God as absolutely just in His ways and good in his dealings with mankind and our own personal lives (Rev. 15:3; Ps. 145:17). "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen. 18:25). God is always good, and He will never shortchange us in life. One of the main battles of the mind is to keep an accurate picture of who God is and what He expects of our lives. Satan will try and distort these things in our mind or thinking process. He wants to get us away from God's purity, holiness, goodness, purpose, and way for our lives. In doing this, he tries to warp our thinking about God.

The way that we think is really the beginning of victory or the start of our spiritual downfall and defeat. Unless we learn to change our thought patterns, our firmest resolutions to not sin, usually collapse under the awesome and dictatorial power of mental suggestion. When you start harboring thoughts in your mind too long, you are setting yourself up for a fire to ignite within your soul. Entertaining thoughts too long can easily ignite the passion fire. It's like someone waiting to throw a match into a can of gasoline!

Someone has said:

“The sex drive can make a man cheat, steal or kill, or make him throw away all his wealth or talent in order to pursue it.”

This is why we must practice casting out every evil thought that enters our mind (2 Cor. 10:5). We cannot allow it to fester in our mind. When we do, it will only be a matter of time until we sin. You may be thinking about how a certain person has ridiculed you or given you a real shaft in life, as we like to say. Because you are reflecting upon it, you are allowing the root of bitterness to spring up in your heart and create an unforgiving spirit of sin within your heart. Hebrews 12:15 gives us this timely reminder: “...lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.”

Remember this for now. Where you go and what you look at can easily erode your moral resistance within your mind or thinking process. When we make provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14) we are shooting ourselves in the foot. You will have little chance to overcome the powerful suggestions of the mind if you place yourself in the areas or vicinity that enhances those suggestions.

We must remember that our minds are not to be a garbage pit or refuge dump. The Bible teaches that my life is the temple or sanctuary of God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). God dwells within my life and wants to direct my life in holiness. God now owns my life. We are His real estate bought and purchased with His own blood (Ephesians 1:7, 14; 1 Cor. 6:19-20). Because God owns our body we must allow our bodies to obey His every wish and purpose. We must use our bodies for His holy purposes and not our own. God dwells within us in the person of the Holy Spirit to control our lives and to own our lives.

One man said to another Christian that he did not want to go into the church sanctuary until he finished his smoke. He said, “I’d like to finish this smoke first, you go in and I will be there in a minute or so.” The other Christian said, “Why don’t you take your cigarette with you and go in right now?” He gave the Christian a strange look and said: “Take the cigarette in there? Don’t you know that our church is the temple of God?” The other

believer then said, “Don’t you know that you have that thing sticking in the temple of God right now. You are the temple of God!”

1 Corinthians 6:19

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?*”

The point is this. A room or auditorium is not God’s real sanctuary. The real sanctuary in the New Testament is His people. God does not reside in a building; He resides in people. And because He lives within our lives we must keep them under His control and use them for His holy purposes. Our bodies belong to God and should always be used for His righteous purposes. But unless we keep our minds thinking right, our lives will not be right before God.

I need to repeat this. The power of suggestion is the most powerful weapon in Satan’s arsenal. This is why we need the helmet of salvation for protection. We must protect our thinking or mind from the fiery arrows of Satan. If the devil can get you to dwell upon a certain suggestion long enough, his fiery arrow will give you the burning desire to sin. You will then follow the lust created within your heart and sin. Satan’s subtle suggestions and the exciting potential that these suggestions offer can become the governing factors which control our mind and sweep us down under.

James 1:13-15 explains in this way:

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God (*temptation does not come from God*): for God cannot be tempted with evil (*God cannot associated Himself with evil nor has any dealings with evil*), neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted (*by the sin nature and Satan*), when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed (*sin comes from within us – Matt. 15:19*). Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (*looking back to the Genesis curse*).

James reminds us that when we are tempted to sin and do evil that it is always from the devil. God never tempts us to do evil. He will *test* us but not *tempt* us to do evil or wrong. He tested man in the Garden of Eden. The

tree served as a point of testing and not temptation. But God is never the instigator of evil. The Devil was the one who did the tempting.

This text in James reminds us that sin is not a sickness; it is a moral failure for which man must give account. We are drawn away by Satan's temptations. Like a fish lured from its place of safety we are drawn away from the realm of our restraints, ultimately because we want to sin ("drawn away if his own lust"). Yes we are drawn away by the old nature but in many cases behind the old nature is the devil. But behind all of this is your own love for sin! We love the lust and want to entertain it in our lives.



But you will notice that there is a time frame between the conception ("conceived") of sin and the actual birth ("bringeth forth") of sin in our lives. This is another way of saying that if we think about a forbidden act long enough, we will eventually do it. An example of this would be the whole process of lust conceiving and bringing forth sin as vividly illustrated in the incident of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:1–27).

Many times, there is this subtle stimulus to sin that is being placed in our thinking process by the Devil. This is the conception stage. But if we purposefully keep dwelling on a sinful idea or action too long, we will eventually begin to be overtaken by it. This is the state when sin is brought forth or given actual birth in our lives. We take the bait Satan offers and accept or respond to the lustful suggestions and thoughts, entertaining them in our minds. As a result, we give birth to sin in both our hearts and lives. The old adage is true: "Sow a thought and reap an action."

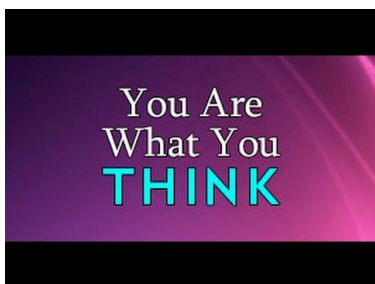
Proverbs 23:7 says: "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he ..."

A man who loved to study nature was strolling down a crowded city street with a friend. Stopping abruptly, he said, "Do you hear a cricket?" His friend responded, "A cricket? Not here in the center of the city with all this

noise!" But the naturalist reached down, turned over a stone, and there was the cricket. Puzzled, his friend asked, "Did you actually hear that cricket chirping?" "Certainly!" said the man. "I spend my time listening to nature, regardless of where I am. Everyone hears what he listens for."

This same kind of concentration can also be used to control what we think about. What we concentrate on controls our thinking. This means that we must learn to think upon those things that are wholesome and good for what we think about will have a great influence on what we do. If we concentrate on what is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, as Paul admonished in Philippians 4:8, we will set a positive pattern.

The things that we think about are the kinds of things that we will do. If we think upon righteous and pure things we will practice righteous and pure actions. On the other hand, if we entertain the thoughts of scandal, backbiting, bitterness, false reports, gossip, anger, jealousy, revenge, pride, covetousness, fornication or adultery in our hearts, we may soon find ourselves caught up in those activities. That's what Solomon meant when he said "as he (a man) thinketh in his heart, so is he " (Prov. 23:7).



It is true: "You are what you eat." But it's equally true that you are what you think. What you think, you become. What you feel, you follow. What you imagine, you create. What you sow, you reap (Gal. 6:7). Victory involves a mental choice. We choose truth over the lies and temptations of Satan.

The difficulty of controlling our inner mind is underscored by Lanny Bassham, an Olympic gold medalist in shooting the small-bore rifle. He wrote, "Our sport is controlled nonmovement. We are shooting from 50 meters--over half a football field--at a bull's eye three-quarters the size of a dime. If the angle of error at the point of the barrel is more than .005 of a millimeter (that is five one-thousandths), you drop into the next circle and lose a point. So, we have to learn how to make everything stop. I stop my breathing. I stop my digestion by not eating for 12 hours before the competition. I train by running to keep my pulse around 60, so I have a full

second between beats. You do all of this and you have the technical control. But you have to have some years of experience in reading conditions: the wind, the mirage. Then you have the other 80 percent of the problem--the mind!"

How often we fail in this vital part of life! Our thoughts begin to drift into forbidden areas, and we let them go. We are lustful. We think proudly. We give in to self-pity and discouragement.

Racecar driver Sterling Moss once said of driving at high speeds, "It's necessary to relax your muscles when you can. Relaxing your brain is fatal!" It's the same in the battle with Satan. We cannot relax our brain when it comes to staying in the fight against the world, the flesh, and the Devil. A relaxed mind can very easily become controlled by the sin nature and Satan.

Philippians 4:8 explains the thinking process like this:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

An unknown author said:

"I cannot keep the sparrows from flying about my head, but I can keep them from making a nest in my hair!"

Although we cannot escape evil thoughts from racing into our thinking process (this is part of the temptation process), we can rid ourselves of these thoughts and not be overcome by them. If we entertain the thought of lust, rejecting our passion will be increasingly difficult. If we allow sinful thoughts of rebellion to remain in our minds, then we will become vulnerable to acting upon them.

A man was about to go down a stairway that had a low entrance. Above it was a sign that read, "Mind Thy Head!" It meant, "Look out or you will hit your head!" As Christians, God wants us to mind our heads and keep them from improper thoughts that would take us out of God's will and cause us

to no longer live the victorious Christian life. Our head determines how we think and function in life. So we should mind our head!

Someone has said:

“What you think means more than anything else in your life. More than what you earn, more than where you live, more than your social position, and more than what anyone else may think about you.”

Satan, working in connection with the old nature and demonic hordes sends sensual suggestions, sinful thoughts, or beguiling messages into our minds or thought processes. Knowing our particular areas of weakness, Satan zeros in on our weakness. He can inflame the temptations and make them very attractive to us as he sends thoughts and suggestions into our minds. He makes sin appear as the colors of the rainbow. As previously mentioned, intellectual defiance is the reason that we live in a defeat.

Satan will bring thoughts into your mind like, “Go ahead and do it. It won’t hurt you. After all, everyone is doing it.” “Look at that picture, nobody will know about it.” He says, “Don’t be so critical about your TV and Internet habits. Lighten up. We live in a new world of technology. Enjoy it.” He sometimes says, “You can’t do anything right. You will never amount to anything for God. There is no hope for you. Give up.” He says, “You don’t have to go to church today. Skip prayer and devotions.” These kinds of thoughts do not originate from our own thinking, but from Satan’s own book of thoughts and lies.

Beloved, we must learn to take inventory of our thought life and possess a solid rock commitment to truth (John 8:32; 17:17). We must replace Satan’s thoughts with God’s thoughts and claim the victory through the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 12:11). We need to wear the helmet of salvation or deliverance so we can protect our minds from Satan’s lies and replace his temptations and lies with the truth. If I think right, I will live right! God commands you to put on the helmet of salvation to protect how you think about the many worldly, fleshly, and devilish ideas that bombard you daily.

In the time of temptation (“the evil day”), and even before temptation comes (Matt. 6:13), we must make a clear commitment (mentally and

prayerfully) to follow God's way over the Devil's way. We do this by putting on the helmet of salvation or deliverance from Satan's temptations and accusations against us as we activate and apply the truth of Scripture to our time of temptation.

I want to convey one more thought under this point that I believe may be very helpful. It is something that all believers who are involved in spiritual warfare should never forget. As remarkable as it may seem, our victory does not lie in having our minds occupied with the enemy – the Devil. Our victory lies in looking unto Jesus! The mind cannot have victory if it is constantly looking for a demon behind every bush and the Devil behind every other thought we might possess. Too much reflection upon the enemy will only bring discouragement and actually cause us to weaken our life from a spiritual standpoint.

There is too much hype over Satan and demons today and Satan loves it. Satan knows that when we get our eyes off Jesus Christ and place them on him, more than the Lord Jesus, that we will become unbalanced in life and defeated.

If a general only studies the enemy and fails to keep his own ranks in order, then there will be defeat when the enemy comes in like a raging storm. The home base must be kept strong and steady in order to overcome the enemy. Each believer must keep his home base strong by keeping his eyes and mind focused on Christ.

Hebrews 12:2

“Looking unto Jesus (*not the devil*) the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Only as we keep our eyes fixed on the person of Jesus Christ, who was victorious and who won the victory for us, can we expect to live a balanced victorious approach to the Christian life. We must place our faith in the power of the Son of God as our Commanding General. He will lead us in the way of victory. Far too often in this age of fascination with the supernatural

and underworld, the minds of Christians are caught up with the Devil more than Jesus Christ.

Years ago, J.B. Phillips wrote a book entitled, "Your God is too Small." Today another book should be written, "Your Devil is too Big" and be handed to many believers who are overly fascinated with the demonic world of evil. Your Devil is too big if you feel your future life is in his hands. Our minds must be occupied with Christ instead of demons and the Devil.

Erwin Lutzer has remarked:

"We must never see Satan without seeing God!"

Too many believers today are seeing Satan everywhere and centering their life and mind on the enemy. They are anointing their rooms with oil to keep demons away and are frightened over curses, which have been supposedly handed down through family generations and placed upon their lives. One man that I was talking with believed that there was a demonic curse inflicted upon his family line. I told him that he had nothing to fear as a believer because Satan cannot curse a believer without God's approval. God is all-powerful and Satan cannot do anything to us that God has not willed to be done (Job 1:11-12).

Martin Luther said:

"The devil is God's devil."

This means that God is all-powerful and has sovereign control of the Devil's plan of operations over our life. God is sovereign and the Superpower of the universe. Satan is always limited by the plans and program of God. As believers our lives are in God's hands, not the Devil's hands. Folks, we need to turn our eyes away from Satan and put them on Jesus! We need to be looking unto Jesus for victory!

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face:
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace."

F. SCRIPTURE – The sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17b).

Here is where Paul brings in the importance of God’s truth which is found in the Scriptures (“the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God”). God’s word is compared to a sword which is used in our time of spiritual battle.



The Bible acts as a protective sword over our lives during times of temptation. We can use the Scriptures as a sword to protect our lives from Satan’s temptations which are designed to defeat us spiritually. Of course, the other parts of the armor that we have studied about are absolutely necessary. However, if the believer has no weapon, then he will have nothing to defend himself. The enemy will come in like a raging storm and easily overcome us if we have no weapon.

The Roman soldier wore on his belt a short sword which was used for combat fighting. This sword was the only weapon that the Roman soldier had. In a similar fashion, believers are to use the only weapon that they have which is the Word of God. The Bible is likened to the Roman sword because it is an effective way to defeat the enemy during spiritual warfare. As the Roman soldier used his sword to defeat the enemy soldier, so each believer today uses the promises and truth of the Bible to defeat their enemy who is Satan.

Satan is not always satisfied with throwing fiery darts (Eph. 6:16). Sometimes the devil and his army move in on us and we are forced to do hand to hand combat with the sword. The only way that we can do battle with the devil is to resist him with the protection of this sword.

James 4:7

“Submit yourselves therefore to God (in humble repentance). Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

We must remember that doing battle with the devil is a truth encounter. Satan cannot be out-muscled or out-shouted, but he can be out-truthed! Truth is the liberating agent and way of victory!

There are those today who actually believe that speaking in what they call “tongues” or some unintelligible angelic language will help them to gain victory. Let me say right now that there is no other way for victory except through the “sword of the Spirit” – the Word of God. The way to have victory is not through subjective experiences of any kind; the way for victory is to encounter the devil with truth, the truth of the Word of God.

Victory is achieved through the objective facts of the Word of God and not through subjective feelings or experiences. I don’t need a cold chill to run up my back to possess victory. I need the Word of God! We must remember that our moods cannot form the basis of our decisions. Truth must be the basis of all our decisions. The Bible (truth) needs to become the center of our existence – not our emotions, feelings, and circumstances. Christian friend, we need to use truth, the Word of God, during the time of spiritual battle. A battle-seasoned Christian knows quickly what to do during the time of temptation because of his experience and familiarity with Scripture.

When Satan harasses us about our past sins we must get out our sword and remind ourselves that our sins are under the blood! When Satan tempts us to move away from God’s will and purpose we must get out our sword to engage the lies immediately in our minds and ward off the temptation.

The Bible is not only compared to a sword in Ephesians 6:17 but also in Hebrews 4:12.

Hebrews 4:12 declares:

“For the word of God is quick (living, alive), and powerful (energizing and active), and sharper than any twoedged sword (cutting away at our lives as explained in the next phrases), piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit (sorting out and distinguishing between the fleshly or soulish thoughts versus our spiritual thoughts), and of the joints and marrow (metaphor that explains how the Word of God impacts our invisible and inner most being – the Bible intricately distinguishes between our thoughts

even as the joints and marrow are interwoven together), and is a discerner (critic or judge) of the thoughts (what we think) and intents (what is our attitude) of the heart.”

It is the Word that judges us, not we who judge the Word (1 Cor. 4:5). The Bible informs us what is right with us and what is wrong with us. We need the critic to be at work in our lives. This is because the Bible acts as a spiritual sword that penetrates and discerns our true thoughts and intentions or our hearts, showing what is evil or bad within us. It exposes us for what we really are and then shows us the right direction to take. There are many Christians who want to keep up with the cutting edge of society (the newest electronics and gadgets, up to date cars, the cyber world, etc.) but fewer Christians want to keep the sword of God’s Word cutting away at their minds and hearts.

The absolute and unchanging standard of God’s Word tells us what is right and wrong with our lives (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17). It also provides us with many verses that promise us victory, and which counter the lies of Satan. God’s Word cuts through the culture, compromised Christianity, Satan’s lies, demonic deception, self-deception, and lays the truth before us. It rebukes us, confronts us, clears out the cobwebs in our thinking, and drives the skeletons out of our closet.

We can effectively counteract the devil’s fiery temptations by bringing Scripture into our mind and heart. When using the sword (the Bible) against Satan, we are out to give him a Bible blow that will stop him from tempting us and hindering our testimony and walk with God.

The emphasis on the “word (rhema) of God” in Ephesians 6:17 means that we can verbally say or quote portions of the Bible that help us in the battle that we are facing. Paul does not use the widely known word *logos* here, but *rhema*, meaning an expressed word or saying, here a specific “word” from God for a specific need. This word is very significant for it actually indicates the need to speak forth the Word of God in the time of battle.

This means we must use the Word of God dynamically, effectively, and practically in our combat with the Devil. We must speak it and pray through

it so we might believe it and apply it to our lives. We must use those portions of Scripture that apply to our sins and temptations and pray through them and allow the Word of God to change our minds and hearts.

Psalm 107:2

“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.”

When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Christ used the “sword of the Spirit” and defeated the enemy. Four times Jesus quoted specific portions of the Word of God to defeat Satan. He did not just use some random verses but the appropriate verses which the Holy Spirit gave Him for that occasion. Three times Jesus said, “It is written” and one time He states: “It is said.” We see in this wilderness encounter that Jesus used both the Spirit and Word of God to overcome Satan’s attack.

It should be noted that in this account of Christ’s temptation, Satan used his same old bag of tricks to try and defeat the Messiah (Christ). He used what John summarized as “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16). It’s the same tricks he used on Eve in the Garden. Of course, Eve took the bait, but Jesus did not! We must remember that the purpose of the temptation was not to see if He *would* sin but to prove that He *could* not sin.

Temptation one is found in Luke 4:1-4 and reveals Christ’s encounter with Satan and how He used the combination of the “sword and the spirit” to defeat Satan’s lies and temptations. “And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost (*Christ was living under the full power and influence of the Holy Spirit which parallels to Eph. 5:18 – “be filled with the Spirit”*) returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil (*the sovereignty of God over temptation*). And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread (temptation through the lust of the flesh – *a desire for physical appetite*). And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written (Deut. 8:13), That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God (*more*

important than the satisfaction of the physical appetite is obedience to God's word).

It was not the Father's plan for Christ to fulfill His hunger through turning a stone into bread. No, the Father had other plans in feeding His Son (Matt. 4:11 – "angels came and ministered unto him").

Temptation two is found in Luke 4:5-8:

"And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time (temptation through the lust of the eyes). And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them (*a desire for power and possession*): for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written (Deut. 8:3), Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Because of man's sin, Satan has become "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11, "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4), and "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2). Satan has usurped the authority of the earth from man back in Genesis and he could legitimately offer the kingdom of the world to Christ. Satan used this temptation to try and get Jesus to worship him. But once again Jesus countered this temptation with the written Word of God. Worship alone belongs to God!

Temptation three is found in Luke 4:9-13:

"And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: For it is written (Psalm 91:11-12), He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: And in *their* hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone (temptation through the pride of life – *a desire for public recognition*). And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said (Deut. 6:16), Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season."

In this final temptation the Devil obviously tried to get Jesus to perform some great miraculous feat to prove that He was the Messiah. But Jesus

knew what the Devil was up to. He was trying to bring out the ego and pride of life in this temptation, getting Jesus to do a sensational stunt to prove He was the Messiah. Of course, Jesus was the Messiah and did not have to “show off” before Satan in performing a miraculous feat to authenticate Himself. Again, Jesus repeatedly said, “It is written.” Praise God it’s still written today! God’s Word with its promises (2 Pet. 1:4), power (Heb. 4:12), and propositional truth (John 17:17) is our Book of victory. Victory is a truth encounter. It’s not a shouting encounter with Satan. It’s not some kind of emotional display where we fall backward and make unintelligent sounds.

Please note that Satan can also quote the Bible (Luke 4:10). The devil said, “For it is written” when quoting Psalm 91:10. The problem is that the devil does not quote Scripture completely and accurately for Psalm 91:10 states, “For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” This is the DSV version of the Bible, the Devil’s Standard Version. Why? It’s because Satan left out the last part of the verse “in all thy ways” which means in the ways of following the Father’s will and holy purpose for His life. Satan was deleting the Bible to distort and change its meaning and send confusion into the mind of Christ. News flash – it did not work!

This reminds us that Satan is clever enough to even use Word of God to confuse us. This means it’s very important we learn more about the Bible and know the Bible, interpreting it correctly, as we face the time of temptation (“evil day”), so that we can effectively use it against the Devil. Since your primary weapon against the devil is the Word of God, you must learn to aggressively quote and apply the Scriptures as Jesus did in the time of temptation.

Other verses that you can bring to your attention when the devil tempts you, would be verses that strike at the very core of the Devil’s defeat. In the time of temptation, you should emphasize those verses that bring victory to your attention (Colossians 2:15; Romans 6:6,13-14; 8:37; 1Cor.15:57; 2 Cor. 2:11,14; 1 John 2:13; 5:4). Beloved, we need to learn the Word of God and effectively use those portions of the Bible that will give you victory over worry (Phil. 4:6-7), stress (1 Peter 5:7), jealousy (Prov. 14:30), pride (Prov. 16:18, 1John 2:16), anger (Eph. 4:26), lying (Eph. 4:25), lust, pride, (1 John

2:16) fear (Psalms 34:4) and unforgiveness (Eph. 4:30- 32) in the time of battle.

As you prayerfully meditate on the victory of the cross and your triumph in Christ, using Bible verses, Satan will flee your presence as a defeated coward and whipped puppy. The Bible brought before your mind and heart will provide a means of escape from the devil's old temptations and bag of tricks (Psalms 119:11). The battle is not a power struggle. It is a truth struggle. We must face the truth and embrace the truth of God's Word for our own personal lives and hold up the truth before Satan if we are going to have victory over his temptations.

The best protection against Satan's lies is to know God's truth!

This means that purpose of every believer should be to prayerfully meditate on God's Word, memorize God's Word, and even speak forth the truth of God's Word so that the Spirit of God will enable our minds to be transformed through the Word of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:13 says:

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually (*energetically*) worketh also in you that believe."

Knowing the Word of God provides you with the energy and ammunition to overcome the lies and temptations that the devil brings your way. The devil will seek to confuse your mind concerning truth and attempt to cloud the truth in your thinking process. He will try to send beguiling messages to your mind concerning the truth and even distort the truth. The devil wants you to become lenient toward what the Bible says and begin to question the simplicity of the Bible and what it really says. The only way we can resist the devil or counteract his attacks is to practically and effectively use the Word of God to defeat him.

Bobby Leach, an Englishman, startled the world some years ago by his daring feat of going over Niagara Falls in a barrel. He came through the

experience miraculously unscratched. Sometime later, Leach was walking down the street and slipped on a small orange peel. He was rushed to the hospital with a badly fractured leg. This reminds us that believers are more frequently brought down by a minor skirmish than by a major battle. This occurs when we overlook the truth or sidetrack the truth in a small way. However, the end result of this can mean spiritual defeat and failure.

“The devil is subtle, deceptive, and sly
He's clever and tricks us to swallow his lie.
But his cunning methods we're sure to discern
By making God's warnings our daily concern.”

Let me at this point give each one of us a word of warning. We must be careful that we do not separate the Word of God from the Spirit of God for they work synergistically (harmoniously) together as “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17). This is because the Holy Spirit interacts with God’s Word, bringing important verses to our attention in the time of temptation, guiding and leading us in the way of truth, and at the same time infuses each Christian with the power and dynamic that is necessary to possess victory.

The author of Scripture is the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:21) and it’s the Spirit that uses the Scriptures to promote victory in our lives as He brings it to our remembrance (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit impresses the Scriptures upon our minds and hearts during the time of temptation. He guides us in the truth (John 16:13) for He is the Spirit of truth (1 John 4:6). So, our dependence upon the Scriptures and the Spirit’s work is vital to possessing victory and winning the war over Satan’s temptations.

The Spirit and the Word are the dynamic duo for New Testament Christianity!

Someone wrote:

“God expects us to use our God-given senses, led by the Spirit, so that we detect Satan when he is beginning to work.”

We should not regard the Bible as a book of magic charms or something that we tie around ones neck the way that garlic is said to drive away vampires. The Bible is not a book of magic but the “sword of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the true author behind it, and He also uses it as the means of victory and sanctification. If we are not confident in the inspiration of Scripture, that the sword really came from the Spirit, then we will not use it effectively at all. But if we believe the Holy Spirit is behind the Scripture, backing the truth, we will be able to move in a moment during the time of temptation and thrust the sword before our enemy.

But remember this. Knowledge of the Bible alone is not enough to defeat the Devil. We must depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to claim the promises of the Bible in the time of temptation. We must “walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:25) or moment-by-moment be relying upon the Spirit’s control and power for our daily lives.

The reason we don’t have victory is because we are not walking in the Spirit’s power and spiritual provision. Instead, we are walking in the flesh. This is the underlying cause of defeat in the Christian life. Trying to quote Bible verses for victory without the filling or control of the Spirit is like trying to run a marathon race without shoes. The sword always works in connection with the Spirit’s power. We cannot separate the sword from the Spirit’s ministry in our lives. We must be filled or controlled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18) so that we can use the tool of the Holy Spirit (Bible) effectively. Trying to use the Bible as a quick fix for victory without walking in the Spirit is a useless endeavor. However, the Spirit controlled believer can use the Scriptures effectively in the time of attack.

We can be sure of one thing. Satan wants to get your mind off the Bible and try to get you to focus on your own lusts, desires, goals, and selfish ambitions in life. Satan will try to steal the promises, personal commands, and principles of the Word of God from of your heart through his devilish tactics of temptation.

Luke 8:12 says: “...then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts...” Satan is a master at his trade! He has been doing it since Eden. He steels the Gospel seed from the hearts of the unsaved but by

application we also know that the Devil can steal the seed of God's Word from our own hearts when we allow His lies and deception to overtake the absolute standard and final authority of God's Word.

Psalm 119:9

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word."

"And though this world with devils filled
Should threaten to undo us;
We will not fear, for God has willed
His truth to triumph through us."

Someone remarked:

"A Bible that's falling apart probably belongs to someone who isn't."

A famous saying adopted by our world is this: "It can't be wrong if it feels so right." Oh yes, it can be wrong! God's inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word will inform us what is right and wrong. We must effectively use God's sword to slay the old serpent who is trying to make inroads into our lives.

Someone else remarked:

"The Christian who is real builds his life on truth, not superstition or lies. It is impossible to live a life that is truly spiritual by believing lies."

A friend of mine disappeared from his family, from my friendship, and from the truth. I talked with his son at Walmart. I asked him, "What happened?" His son replied, "I don't know but he dropped off the end of the world." How did this happen? My friend obviously substituted truth for experience (fantasy). Let's face it, we will either follow lies or we will follow the truth!

Psalm 119:105

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

We had better turn on the flashlight of God's Word today. We are living in a dark world during dark times. But here is the good news! The world is getting darker, but the word is shining brighter! We must turn on the lights

of truth or Satan will defeat us during these last days of compromise, confusion, carnality, and carelessness.

Psalm 119:11

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”

D.L. Moody used to say:

“Sin will keep you from this book and this book will keep you from sin.”

How very true this is! That is why we need to keep our mind and heart filled with the promises of Scripture and those portions of the Word of God, which will help us through our different battles we face in life with various sins. The Word of God will help us to overcome as we hide it within our heart. It will help us clean up our lives. The Bible is the spiritual Clorox or Ajax of the Christian life. It will help remove and keep out the spots or stains of sin, which soil our lives (James 1:27).

God wants us to be a Word-filled and Word-directed believer. The Bible always points the believer in the right direction.

“I have a companion, a dear, faithful friend,
A union of blessing that never shall end;
Till Jesus returns with His saints from on high
We'll travel together, my Bible and I.”

How do we resist the devil's temptations and tricks today? By becoming a Word-filled, Word-directed, and Spirit-filled individual. As Satan tempts us to do something contrary to God's will, we can have the Word hidden within our hearts and be able to quote the Scripture to him in the time of temptation. When the Devil tempts us to be angry or to be unforgiving, we should go to those Scriptures that pertain to these subjects and forbid such actions (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:31-32). In this way we know God's mind about our sinful actions. At the same time, we must memorize and apply those verses to our lives which pertain to our victory in Christ and the Devil's defeat (Ephesians 6:10-19; Col. 2:15; 1 John 2:14; 3:3; 4:4).

Let's recap the important teaching of using the sword of the Spirit. Quoting Scripture in the actual time of temptation provides an incredible outlet for victory. In fact, it is the only outlet. The man who is walking in the Spirit's provision and power, instead of the flesh, has a resource of Biblical promises to which he can turn in the time of temptation. The Holy Spirit takes the absolute truth and purity of the Word of God and drives it home to our heart, providing victory for our lives. That is why it is called the "sword of the Spirit." It helps us to fight off the attacks of Satan. Victory is a truth encounter.

The promise is that the Devil will flee from the Word-filled man or woman. He will leave us, and we can be comforted (Matthew 5:11). The Word is the way out. You will be stuck in sin if you do not know what the Bible says and if you are not willing to use the truth to counteract the Devil. Without a healthy diet in the Scriptures, you will be biting the Devil's hook and be pulled along by his power.

Have you been filled with the Word of God as you should be? Have you been meditating upon the eternal and unchanging truth of the Word? Only as we learn to be Word-filled and Spirit-directed can we really start to be spiritual in our living and move forward in our growth with God. Start memorizing Scripture and meditating upon it. Start taking the Bible seriously.

Prisoner of war, Howard Rutledge, writes in his book, "In the Presence of Mine Enemies" wrote this. "That first New Year's Day of captivity I made at least three resolutions that I repeated each year:

- ✓ I would try never to be cold again.
- ✓ I would try never to be hungry again.
- ✓ I would never be without the Bible again."

You can be sure that if the Devil can get our minds and hearts off of the settled and uncompromising truth of the Word of God, then we will be opened to accept his lies about pleasure and sensual gratification that he (the Devil) is trying to plant within our mind and heart.

Dr. Andrew Telford used to say:

“Satan trembles when he sees, Bibles sold as cheap as these!”

Yes, indeed, there is no replacement for the Bible when it comes to enhancing our life of victory. Your Bible - don't leave home without it!

In the time of temptation (“the evil day”), and even before temptation comes (Matt. 6:13), we must make a clear commitment (mentally and prayerfully) to follow God's way over the Devil's way by using the Word of God to counter Satan's lies. The Spirit's guidance and assistance will give us the victory we need over the Evil One.

G. SUPPLICATION - 18

We will delve into the actual outline on prayer next week as we move toward the end of the book. For today, I want to make some general observations about prayer and how it relates to the armor of God. We have been breaking down each piece of the armor and now prayer as we finish out this most important part of our study on God's armor that God supplies us with for spiritual victory.



“Praying always **with all prayer** (*the frequency of prayer*) and **supplication** (*intercession of prayer for ourselves*) **in the Spirit** (*the guidance and power of prayer*), and **watching** thereunto (*spiritual alertness of prayer*) with all **perseverance** (*the persistence of prayer*) and **supplication** for all saints” (*intercession in prayer for others*).

Ephesians 6:18 finishes this section of Scripture on the armor of God: “Praying always with all prayer (*the frequency of prayer*) and supplication (*the intercession of prayer for ourselves*) in the Spirit (*the guidance and power of prayer*), and watching thereunto (*spiritual alertness of prayer*) with all

perseverance (*the persistence of prayer*) and supplication for all saints” (*intercession in prayer for others*).

Prayer is what keeps the armor working. It’s how we apply God’s armor during those times we are in spiritual warfare with the Evil One.

It’s rather interesting that the subject of prayer is usually excluded by most expositors from being part of the armor which Paul was describing. I can understand why since the expression of prayer does not correspond to any part of the Roman armor.

However, even if prayer does not parallel to any part of the Roman armor, Paul is certainly making the valid point that we must apply the spiritual armor through the ministry of aggressive prayer. In fact, it is probable that this prayer of supplication is linked to the last points which dealt with the “sword of the Spirit” and the “word of God.” This is because our victory can only be experienced in our lives as we apply what we know the Bible (the sword) says through the ministry of prayer. We pray through the Scriptures and depend upon God’s power in the time of spiritual warfare.

Acts 6:4 says:

“But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

In other words, even though Paul does not include prayer as describing any part of the armor, neither is he excluding or disconnecting it from the armor. This is because prayer immediately follows the description of the Christian armor, and it is prayer that makes the entire armor effective. Notice the progression of thought: “stand,” “having” (vs. 14), “shod” (vs. 15), “taking” (vs. 16), “take” (vs. 17), and “praying” (vs.18). There is a logical progression and definite connection that the armor has with prayer. Prayer has a vital part with the overall performance and safety of the Christian armor. In fact, the Christian soldier who is part of the Lord’s army should be found kneeling and praying while putting on and wearing his armor! We must remember that Satan often defeats us by keeping us from maintaining a healthy prayer life. This alone keeps us from having victory. The Evil One is

always trying to interfere with our prayers so we might not apply God's armor effectively and live in victory.

In the timeless classic, *Pilgrim's Progress*, John Bunyan tells of Christian's weapon called prayer. He states: "When everything else failed, this would enable him to defeat the fiends in the valley of the shadow." Yes, prayer is what makes the armor work and is the vehicle we use to express our faith in God and dependence upon Him. Prayer is always linked with victory and therefore it is no surprise that Paul's explanation of the armor is inseparably linked to the ministry of prayer.

After the great victory of Jericho, Joshua forgot to pray for the Lord's guidance and help when he went to war with Ai. The results were devastating to the nation. Joshua's army was defeated. In the first battle, the walls came tumbling down on the enemy. But in the next battle, the walls came tumbling down on Joshua! This is because he forgot to pray and rely upon the Lord for guidance and victory.

If Joshua had prayed God would have sent him notice that there was sin in the nation that had to be dealt with before the war. But Joshua did not take time to pray before the battle as he did with the battle of Jericho (Joshua 5:13-15; 6:1) He prayed after the defeat of Ai instead of before the defeat (Joshua 7:6).

I think Joshua thought he could get through the battle of Ai with the prayers for the battle of Jericho. But it does not work that way! Our prayers need to stay fresh for each new battle that we face. Many times we will experience certain victories in life but then somehow think that we can continue to exist off the past victories. But this is never the case. Jericho is gone! Today we must face Ai (a new battle). We must always depend upon the Lord for "daily" victories since we encounter new temptations that war against our souls every day. We cannot afford to live on our past victories. We must live in present victory! We must live in the present tense.

Ephesians 6:18 informs us on the importance of prayer to God while wearing the armor of God.

a. There is the frequency of prayer.

The phrase “praying with all prayer” can possibly mean different types of prayer (prayers of praise, thanksgiving, confession) or it can mean the frequency of prayer in general, the persistence in prayer (prayer upon prayer). I think the latter view is better for Paul speaks of a specific type of prayer in the next word when referring to “supplication.” So, the idea seems to be that we must keep praying (“praying with all prayer”), one prayer after the other, considering we are living in a danger zone. Of course, this does not mean we must pray every minute and second of every day but maintain a steady diet of prayer and do not become lax in prayer, but instead possess persistence in maintaining a strong prayer life. Our prayers in general must focus on victory and living a sanctified life.

The Bible teaches that we are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) which means we are to be ready to talk to the Lord at any moment or time of the day. To “pray without ceasing” means to keep the receiver off the hook! It suggests that we must keep on praying frequently, consistently, and directly to God.

What air is for the lungs, prayer is for the soul; what breathing is physically, prayer is spiritually. Physically we cannot live without breathing. Likewise, we cannot function spiritually without praying. We are to pray always. Pray first and last. Before you do anything, pray about it. After you have done everything, pray. We do not have to be in a church building to pray. We don’t have to be kneeling by our bedside to pray. Prayer is a daily matter and through prayer we can immediately come into the presence of God no matter where we are and what we are doing.

During a moment of desperation, when Peter was walking on the water and began to sink, he immediately cried, “Lord, save me” (Matt. 14:30). At any moment we should be ready to enter the courts of the Almighty. When we pray in this manner (“praying with all prayer” and “praying without ceasing”) our life can be lived in habitual contact with God.

Albert Hughes said:

“There is not an hour marked on the face of the old clock that we do not need to pray.”

b. There is the supplication of prayer.

The word supplication speaks of a specific type of prayer where we petition God in prayer on the behalf of ourselves and others (“watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”). Paul uses the word “supplication” twice in this verse for this is the main thought and aspect of prayer that he is emphasizing. As we pray for ourselves and others, supplication (entreating God, petitioning Him, crying out to God) is the prayer that brings victory into our lives and the lives of others.

It’s only when we pray to God, claiming our own victory in Christ, and at the same time crying out to God on the behalf of others, that victory will be experienced in the lives of God’s saints.

A pastor was asked to call on a woman in a psychiatric hospital and pray for her. After his visit, he thought how good it would be for somebody to go there regularly and pray for the residents. The "somebody" turned out to be him. On a table in one of the wards, he put up a sign saying, "Free Prayer." Later he recalled, "Suddenly I had 15 people standing in line to get prayed for."

People often ask for our prayers, but do we faithfully pray for them? Many times we see others in great need but find it easier to discuss their plight with friends rather than to really intercede for them. But people need and want our prayers.

To know that someone somewhere is upholding us in prayer helps to keep us going. It recharges our batteries.

Intercession for others can help bring victory into their lives and help bring victory to your own personal life as well. We must remember that we are not in the battle alone. We sometimes think that we are the only ones fighting the battle with the Devil. Of course, this is a wrong mindset.

Ephesians 6:18 reminds us to be “watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” This involves a daily persistent prayer ministry on the behalf of others who are also engaged in the battle with you.

1 Samuel 12:23 says:

“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way.”

Job 42:10 says:

“And the Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends”

We need to possess a growing understanding and keen awareness concerning the importance of prayer for others. We are all in the same battle. God expects us to intercede for each other through the ministry of prayer. Intercessory prayer is the trumpet note for victory!

“To give to others what they need,
We show no greater care
Than when we give them to the Lord,
Upholding them in prayer.”

c. There is the Spirit and prayer.

The phrase “in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18) is often misunderstood. This simply means that you are to pray under the filling, guidance, power and direction of the Holy Spirit. As we do this, the Holy Spirit will help you to pray according to God’s will. Praying in the Spirit means that we pray under the Spirit’s guidance and direction for our lives (Jude 1:20). When we pray in the Spirit, it opens up our prayers and enables us to be refreshed through our prayers, receive power during our times of prayer, and experience the filling of the Spirit as we pray.

Lehman Strauss said:

“The Holy Spirit is the greatest unused power in the world.”

d. There is alertness and prayer.

You will notice that “prayer” and “supplication” is linked with “watching” (Eph. 6:18). The two go hand in hand. Watching causes us to sight (see) the enemy and praying allows us to fight the enemy! Staying spiritually alert to Satan’s movements while maintaining a strong prayer life work together to bring about victory. But it’s also true that prayer itself keeps us spiritually alert. Like reliable soldiers, we must remain spiritually alert to Satan’s tactics and temptations. In other words, we should maintain a strong prayer life in preparation for our spiritual battles and as we engage our enemy. As we pray, we stay close to God, we acknowledge that we are relying on Him for victory, and we also maintain our spiritual vigilance, so we are not caught off guard during the “evil day” (when Satan tempts us).

“Christian, seek not yet repose;
Cast thy dreams of ease away;
Thou art in the midst of foes:
Watch and pray.”

You will notice that spiritual vigilance is linked to prayer. In other words, if we don’t pray, then we won’t remain spiritually sober against the enemy’s attacks and temptations. Prayer keeps us alert and focused on God, His truth, and helps us maintain a level of alertness against Satan and the flesh.

Jesus taught the importance of this in Mark 13:33:

“Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.”

In Mark 14:38 Jesus repeats the importance of spiritual alertness:

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation (be caught off guard through temptation). The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak.”

The disciples were found sleeping when Jesus returned from the garden. They really had an inward desire to do what was right (“the spirit is willing”); however, their flesh or human existence was very frail (“the flesh is weak”). The body tends to go to sleep if it sits around too long. It even happens when you pray! Like many of us, we fall asleep physically very easily. However, the real emphasis Jesus was making was that we often fall

asleep from the spiritual standpoint. This is because we do not realize what is happening within us and around us.

We are in a spiritual battle or war zone. Satan's Scud Missiles are flying all around us and we can very easily step in the Devil's landmines. We must stay awake and watch our step from a spiritual standpoint. This means we must be on prayer alert. Praying and watching (spiritual vigilance) go together. If we are not praying, then we are not watching. As we pray, we do so by recognizing the dangers that surround us and plead for God to protect us and give us wisdom. Watch and pray!

Many times we live with our heads in the sand. It's no wonder we are defeated spiritually. We must remain spiritually alert and do as the Scripture says, "gird up the loins of your mind, be sober..." (1 Pet. 1:13). But we must also pray as Jesus taught that we do not "enter into temptation" off guard (Matt. 26:41), not prepared and ready to face the enemy.

Our prayer should be to avoid temptation as much as possible and be protected as we pass through the time of temptation and possess the desire to avoid the danger and trouble that sin creates ("lead us not into temptation" - Matt. 6:13). If we are not watchful and prayerful, we can very easily be caught off guard and find ourselves in a weakened position, when we pass through temptation, with the end result of being overcome by Satan through his orchestration of demonic followers.

"Principalities and powers mustering their unseen array,
Wait for thy unguarded hour; Watch and pray."

When I'm tempted, I must begin to pray and put on the armor of God. Prayer is the key to God's battle plan for victory. We apply the armor to our lives, mentally and verbally, through prayer. We pray on the armor, pray through Scripture, claim the victory we have in Christ, and counter the lies of Satan. It takes prayer to be victorious.

John R. Rice used to say:

"Every failure is a prayer failure."

Dearly beloved, stay spiritual alert and keep praying, depending upon God's power and claiming His promises. Keep praying on the armor of God verbally and mentally and stand upon your victorious ground in Christ (Eph. 6:10). Don't pray for victory – claim your victory! Pray expressing your faith in God's power and provision through each piece of the armor. Be specific. Prayerfully put on each piece of the armor and experience victory over Satan's temptations.

The beloved hymnwriter, William Cowper wrote:

“Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer keeps the Christian's armor bright;
And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon His knees.”

Every Christian soldier will use prayer while doing spiritual battle with Satan. It's interesting that the book of Ephesians begins by lifting us up to the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3) but ends by pulling us down to our knees! This is because only as we pray can we receive of our spiritual riches we have in Christ within the heavenlies.

Sam Gordon wrote:

“Thank God for that place of quiet rest near to the heart of God. This is where by faith we reach out and touch the Lord. This is where we see one who is invisible. This is where we realize that God is bigger than all our problems. This is where we are overwhelmed with the greatness of our God and the majestic wonder of his throne.”

e. There is perseverance in prayer.

The idea of “perseverance” (Eph. 6:18) means that we must stay at it. Perseverance in prayer for ourselves and others means we keep at it, we don't give up or give in, but we possess, as previously mentioned, a dogged persistence in the ministry of prayer. Beloved, it's always too soon to quite praying! Prayer is what demonstrates our dependency upon God. Prayer means contact with God, trust in God, and brings the power of God into our lives and the lives of other saints. Prayer is what makes the armor work.

Prayer has been compared to our wartime walkie talkie! Don't be too proud to plead to God.

Let us remember something:

“The devil is not far away when you are too busy to pray!”

The idea behind the word “perseverance” would also suggest that there needs to be a sense of urgency connected with the ministry of prayer, as the believer faces the enemy on the battle line. Prayer brings us in touch with God who alone can provide us with the power we need to over the enemy. We must put on each piece of this armor with prayer depending upon the Lord for victory. Trying to wear the armor and not rely upon prayer is like trying to jump out of an airplane without wearing a parachute.

The Gospel Song once stresses it so well:

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you -
Ye dare not trust your own.
Put on the gospel armor,
Each piece put on with prayer;
Where duty calls for danger,
Be never wanting there.”

Our part is to put on the armor by faith and prayer. This means we must depend upon God for strength, energy, and power to overcome the enemy. And it must be understood that this strength and dependency upon God only comes through the ministry of prayer. We must put on the armor with prayer and then realize that prayer is what makes all the armor work as it should. Prayer is the secret!

Without prayer our preaching, singing, witnessing, working, and serving Christ will be powerless. It will be like an electrical cord that is not plugged into the wall socket or like a light bulb that has the switch turned off. The truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, salvation, faith, and the use of the sword of the Spirit are to be bathed in prayer. Any good soldier knows

the importance of keeping his equipment in good working order. This calls for daily maintenance and attention. Likewise, we must keep our spiritual armor in good working order by maintaining a strong prayer life.

“The arm of flesh will fail you, You dare not trust your own.
Put on the gospel armor, Each piece put on with prayer.”

Let’s put on each piece with prayer!

- Pray to God with sincerity, possessing a truthful heart before God, that you really desire to live victoriously (belt of truth). “Lord, I place the belt of truth upon myself. I sincerely, with all of my heart, desire to possess victory and live for You. I want to be free from all hypocrisy and deceit and be wholly committed and obedient to You” (John 13:17; 15:10; 1 Jn. 5:2-3).
- Pray to God that you need His help to maintain your spiritual and righteousness living and be better prepared to face the enemy (breastplate of righteousness). “Lord, I want to live for you today. I want to express righteous living in my attitudes, actions, outlooks, thoughts, and aspirations in life. I place the breastplate of righteousness over my life today” (Phil. 1:11; Heb. 12:11; 1 John 2:9).
- Pray claiming your standing of acceptance before God, that God loves you unconditionally, that He will maintain your salvation, always forgive and restore you, and never leave you. (Gospel of peace). “Lord, I claim the Gospel of peace for my life. You really do accept me and love me unconditionally through Jesus Christ. I accept your forgiveness and receive your fellowship. I want to protect my life with the Gospel of peace” (Isa. 53:3; Rom. 5:1; Col. 1:20).
- Pray to God expressing your faith in His power, promises, and persevering work through your life, claiming the protection that His armor gives to you from all the fiery temptations that Satan sends your way (shield of faith). “Lord, I place the shield of faith over my life. I truly believe in your promises, power, provision, and providence over my temptation. I cover myself with the shield of faith, so that

Satan's fiery darts do not lead me astray" (1 John 5:4; 1 Pet. 5:9; Mark 11:22).

- Pray to God casting out the wicked imaginations Satan has placed in your mind (2 Cor. 10:5) and renew your thought process (Rom. 12:2) in the truth of God's infallible Word (helmet of salvation). "Lord, I claim the helmet of deliverance for my life. I want my mind to be filled with God's truth and not the lies of Satan. I place this helmet of truth and deliverance over my thoughts and declare my victory over Satan's sinister suggestions" (John 8:44; 17:17).
- Pray to God using the "sword of the Spirit" (the Word of God) and claim your victory over Satan's lies and temptations. "Lord, I will carry with me the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. I will hide God's truth in my heart (Ps. 119:11) and not allow Satan to deceive me. I will not put down this sword but be ready to use it against the deception and tricks of Satan" (Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 3:16).

Again, prayer is the way we apply the armor to our Christian lives. When we pray on the spiritual armor (mentally clothing ourselves with this armor) and claim our victory in Christ, we can be victorious over Satan's temptations. All the armor will mean nothing without victorious praying. Prayer unleashes the power behind the armor.

I challenge you to pray to God reciting and embracing the truths of Scripture regarding victory, speaking forth and claiming the truth of His promises and embracing His commands, applying them to your various temptations.

John Dorsey described our spiritual battle with Satan in this way.

"I had a battle fierce today
Within my place of prayer;
I went to meet and talk with God,
But I found Satan there.
He whispered, 'You can't really pray,
You lost out long ago;

You might say words while on your knees,
But you can't pray, you know.'
So then I pulled my helmet down,
Way down upon my ears,
And found it helped to still his voice
And helped allay my fears.
I checked my other armor o'er;
My feet in peace were shod;
My loins with truth were girded 'round;
My sword the Word of God.
My righteous breastplate still was on,
My heart's love to protect.
My shield of faith was all intact--
His fiery darts bounced back.
I called on God in Jesus' name,
I pled the precious blood--
While Satan sneaked away in shame,
I met and talked with God!"

Prayer is the battle plan that we must engage in if we are going to experience victory. We can't sit idle and think that we will maintain our spiritual living (1 Tim. 5:13). We must apply the power and persistence of prayer to our lives so we can live victoriously. Prayer is the way to claim our spiritual riches in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Christ's soldiers fight best on their knees!



“And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon His knees.”

We have discovered in this study what we need to wear to war. When the Bible says, “arm yourselves likewise with the same mind” (1 Peter 4:1) it means to prepare yourself for the war with the mindset of practicing sanctification and holiness. We must live with this military mindset and focus today! Too often we are not living in the sanctified mode! We must possess the mindset to do what is right and claim our victory in Christ.