



Belt
of Truth



Breastplate
of Righteousness



Preparation
of the gospel
of peace



Shield
of Faith



Helmet
of Salvation



Sword
of the Spirit



Praying Always

The Armour Of God Series

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be
able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

Ephesians 6:11



By Daniel Kriss

Resisting the Devil

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” James 4:7

A GREAT PROMISE

It is a comforting thought to know that when we submit to God and resist the devil he **will** flee from us. This promise is applicable to all believers who will stand against the devil and his schemes in the manner that God has set out in His word.

HOW SHALL WE RESIST THE DEVIL?

The word “resist” is used on two other occasions in the Bible with reference to the devil or spiritual warfare:

1 Peter 5:8-9 *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*

Ephesians 6:13 *Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

In both instances the Bible gives the believer clear direction on how to have victory over our great adversary and his schemes. In 1 Peter 5:9 we are commanded to resist him by means of a “firm faith”. In Ephesians 6:13 we are instructed to “take up the whole armour of God.”

Turn to Ephesians 6:10-18

This passage is commonly referred to as the “Armour of God.” Let’s spend some time looking at what the Apostle Paul has prescribed as the only means of victory in this spiritual battle.

THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

The conflict with Satan is spiritual.¹ A spiritual enemy cannot be defeated with tangible weapons or physical strength. Since the strength required for this battle comes only from the Lord,² it is logical that only a Christian can resist the devil, and only a spirit-filled Christian can ever gain the victory.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE “WHOLE”

On two occasions Paul instructs the believers to put on the whole armour of God.³ We are not to be partly-clad, but fully equipped with every element firmly attached and ready for engagement.

Soldiers who select aspects of the armour and not the whole are disobedient to the word, and leave themselves vulnerable to infiltration by the enemy.

THE ELEMENTS OF OUR SPIRITUAL ARMOUR

Ephesians 6:10-18 list 7 essential elements of spiritual armour which form the basis of our being victorious in “resisting the devil”.

¹ Refer to Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:4;

² Refer to Ephesians 6:10

³ Ephesians 6:11,13

The Belt of Truth

Ephesians 6:14 *Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.*

The first imperative in this verse is to “stand”. A soldier should not be sitting, relaxing, or in a distracted stance. The image here is of a soldier who is alert, ready, and prepared for anything.

The words “having fastened on” speak of “girding around securely” or “binding firmly”. It is not a loose, insecure element, but firmly fixed around the waist providing support and holding the rest of the armour in place.

In ancient days the belt, or “girdle”, was highly ornamented, and the place where an individual would carry their money, sword, and writing instruments.

It is interesting to note that the first and most central element of the spiritual armour is truth. This is not subjective truth which is relative to each individual, but absolute and objective.

What is truth?

“Truth is that which is consistent with the mind, will, character, glory, and being of God. Even more to the point: Truth is the self-expression of God. That is the biblical meaning of truth. Because the definition of truth flows from God, truth is theological. Truth is also ontological—[this] is a fancy way of saying it is the way things really are. Reality is what it is because God declared it so and made it so. Therefore God is the author, source, determiner, governor, arbiter, ultimate standard, and final judge of all truth.”⁴

Why must the Christian Soldier be equipped with truth?

1. God is truth and it always originates with Him⁵
2. Satan is a liar and seeks to deny or twist the truth⁶
3. Our heart tends towards fallacy and fantasy⁷
4. The Christian is instructed to know, believe, and live the truth⁸
5. The world is full of lies⁹
6. Much of the “church” has moved away from truth and must be withstood¹⁰
7. God’s Word is truth¹¹

Group Exercise: Combatting lies and deception:

Discuss how the following ideas, theories and outright lies are refuted by God’s truth:

- The Theory of Evolution
- Abortion
- Homosexuality
- Psychology
- Prosperity gospel
- The Feminist Movement

Next Month

Second element of our spiritual armour – **The Breastplate of Righteousness.**

⁴ Quote by John MacArthur. Taken from <http://www.gty.org/resources/articles/A379/what-is-truth>

⁵ Refer to: Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 57:10; Psalm 25:5,10; Psalm 86:15

⁶ Refer to: John 8:44; Genesis 3:1

⁷ Refer to: Jeremiah 17:5-9; Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 John 3:20

⁸ Refer to: John 18:37; 3 John 1:4; 1 John 3:18; 1 Corinthians 13:6

⁹ Refer to: 2 Corinthians 10:5; Colossians 2:4; Jeremiah 9:3; Colossians 2:8

¹⁰ Refer to: 2 Peter 2:1-3; Romans 16:17; Matthew 7:15-20; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Acts 20:29

¹¹ Refer to: John 17:17; 2 Timothy 2:15; Proverbs 30:5; Psalm 33:4

The Breastplate of Righteousness

Ephesians 6:14 *Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.*

Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon from prison in Rome. During this time he was chained night and day to a member of the “imperial guard” or “praetorium.” These elite Roman soldiers were always decked out in their full armour because at any moment they could be called upon to protect the life of the emperor. Looking at the physical elements of their armour, the Apostle Paul sees a striking spiritual parallel which forms the portion of Scripture we call the “Armour of God.”

The Roman Breastplate

“The armor that covered the body from the neck to the thighs, and consisted of two parts, one covering the front and the other the back. It was made of rings, or in the form of scales, or of plates, so fastened together that they would be flexible, and yet guard the body from a sword, spear, or arrow.”¹²

The Physical and Spiritual Purpose

The purpose of this piece of armour was to protect the heart, lungs, intestines and other vital organs.

“In ancient Jewish thinking, the heart represented the mind and the will, and the bowels were considered the seat of emotions and feelings. The mind and the emotions are the two areas where Satan most fiercely attacks believers.”¹³

Clearly the importance of protecting these vital physical organs cannot be overstated. Similarly, it is essential that the believer ensure that the mind, will, and emotions are carefully and proactively guarded.

King Solomon writes: *“Keep [guard] your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”¹⁴*

What is this “Righteousness?”

There are three possible “types” of righteousness as seen in the Scriptures:

1. The righteousness that comes through the law¹⁵
2. The imputed righteousness of Christ¹⁶
3. The fruit and pursuit of righteousness¹⁷

Obviously the apostle is not calling the believer to operate with self-righteousness which comes by means of the law – that would be the very opposite of Christianity.¹⁸ Nor is he suggesting that the imputed righteousness of Christ needs to be reapplied as this would mean that our position before God is temporal and insecure.¹⁹

The Breastplate of Righteousness that we are commanded to “put on” is none other than “practical righteousness” or obedience to the Word of God. In other words, it is living a life that corresponds to our position in Christ. Since we are positionally righteous by means of Christ’s perfection, we must

¹² Taken from Esword – Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible

¹³ John MacArthur, *Ephesians* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1986), 351

¹⁴ See Proverbs 4:23

¹⁵ See Philippians 3:9

¹⁶ See Philippians 3:9; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Romans 3:22

¹⁷ See Philippians 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:22; James 3:18; 1 John 3:7;

¹⁸ See Isaiah 64:6; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 2:8

¹⁹ See Philippians 1:6; Ephesians 1:13

now live in accordance with our new identity. As citizens of heaven,²⁰ and members of God's household,²¹ we are to operate in the realm of righteousness.

The Importance of Righteous Living

Sometimes as Christians we get concerned by preaching or teaching that focuses on the importance of righteous living. This is because we have been so educated on the fact that our salvation is not based upon our works. However, it is critical to remember that we have been saved to produce a harvest of good works.

Consider the following texts:

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Titus 2:7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity,

Titus 2:14 Who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

Titus 3:14 And let our people learn to devote themselves to good works, so as to help cases of urgent need, and not be unfruitful.

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

The heart attitude determines the quality of our works

The definition of a "good work" is not based upon the deed but upon the motive of the heart. For example, the Pharisees constantly performed "good works" but they lived for the approval and esteem of others and look at what the Lord said about them:

Matthew 23:28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

The Bible reminds us that we will stand before the Lord one day and our works will be tested by fire.²² On that day it will not simply be whether we have performed good works as a Christian, but what our motive was behind those deeds.

Group Exercise: Dangers & Blessings of Righteous Living

Discuss how the Christian is to effectively operate with the Breastplate of Righteousness. How do the following dangers prohibit good warfare and how do we protect ourselves from falling into these traps?

- Hypocrisy
- Laziness
- Legalism
- Striving for heavenly rewards

Next Month

Third element of our spiritual armour – **The Gospel Shoes**

²⁰ See Philippians 3:20

²¹ See Ephesians 2:19

²² See 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10

The Gospel Shoes

Ephesians 6:15 *And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.*

There is undoubtedly an allusion here to what was worn by the ancient soldier to guard his feet. The Greek is, literally, "having under bound the feet;" that is, having bound on the shoes, or sandals, or whatever was worn by the ancient soldier. The protection of the feet and ankles consisted of two parts:

(1) The sandals, or shoes, which were probably made so as to cover the foot, and which often were fitted with nails, or armed with spikes, to make the hold firm in the ground: or.

(2) With "greaves" that were fitted to the legs, and designed to defend them from any danger. These "greaves," or boots 1Sa_17:6, were made of brass, and were in almost universal use among the Greeks and Romans.²³

The journey for any soldier is perilous and sturdy footwear is essential. No soldier would embrace the battle or the journey without adequate sandals. Similarly, the Christian soldier must never venture out into the cold, dark, dangerous world fraught with perils and enemies without being clad with the gospel shoes.

The word "preparation" (KJV) or "readiness" (ESV) is a unique Greek word. This is the only place in all of Scripture that this word is used. It denotes "the act of preparing"²⁴ or "fitness for a task." In this context Paul commands the Christian to be always ready to preach the gospel.

An intimate knowledge and understanding of the gospel is assumed. The true Christian soldier is equipped, ready, and prepared when called upon to explain, expose and expound the gospel. They are able to both attack ("take ground from the enemy") with the gospel, and defend the gospel. Every Christian is to be an apologist. Consider the following texts:

1 Peter 3:15 But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

Philippians 1:16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

The word "defense" is the Greek word "apologia" which is where we derive the English word "apologetics". As faithful Christian soldiers we are to be always ready and prepared to give a defense of our faith and the gospel. In other words, we must ALWAYS be clad with the gospel shoes.

What is the "Gospel of Peace"?

Isn't this a strange title for that which is to be "put on" in preparation for a battle? Peace and conflict cannot co-exist, can they? YES!!

The word "peace" means "tranquility, harmony, concord, security, safety, a state of rest and contentment, fearlessness and quietness." It is interesting that the Holy Spirit selected the word "peace" in this context to be associated with the gospel instead of "grace, mercy, or love."

Consider the following references:

Acts 20:24 But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

²³ Taken from Albert Barnes' Notes on the Bible (Esword Version 10.1.0).

²⁴ Taken from Thayer's Greek Definitions (Esword Version 10.1.0).

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

Mark 1:1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Mark 1:14 Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God

Romans 1:9 For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you

Galatians 2:5 to them we did not yield in submission even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved for you.

Ephesians 1:13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,

1 Timothy 1:11 in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.

Revelation 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.

Ephesians 6:15 is the only time in the New Testament that the gospel is specifically associated with the word “peace”. It is inferred in many places but not directly given this title.

Why then in the midst of a spiritual battle is the Christian to don, or “bind the feet with”, the *gospel of peace*?

The answer is simple. In the midst of spiritual warfare, the saint is called upon to preach a gospel which results in great peace. They are to “*implore*” men and women to be “*reconciled to God*.”²⁵ In other words the Christian is to promote the reality of peace with God through Christ.

The unbeliever knows no peace,²⁶ and true and lasting peace is only possible in Christ.²⁷ Interestingly, the message that Christ proclaimed was the message of peace:

Ephesians 2:14-17 For he [Jesus] himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.

Peace in the Life of a Christian

Furthermore, the Christian knows the reality that even though the battle rages around them tranquility in God reigns within them. There is a peace and rest even in the storm. This is never more clearly seen than in the life of Jesus Christ.²⁸

Group Exercise: Understanding & Applying the “Gospel of Peace”

Discuss how an understanding of the gospel will bring about peace in your own life as a Christian and in the lives of unbelievers. What are the hindrances to a “peace-filled gospel”?

Next Month

Fourth element of our spiritual armour – **The Shield of Faith**

²⁵ Refer to 2 Corinthians 5:20

²⁶ Refer to Romans 3:17

²⁷ Refer to Romans 5:1

²⁸ Refer to Mark 4:35-41

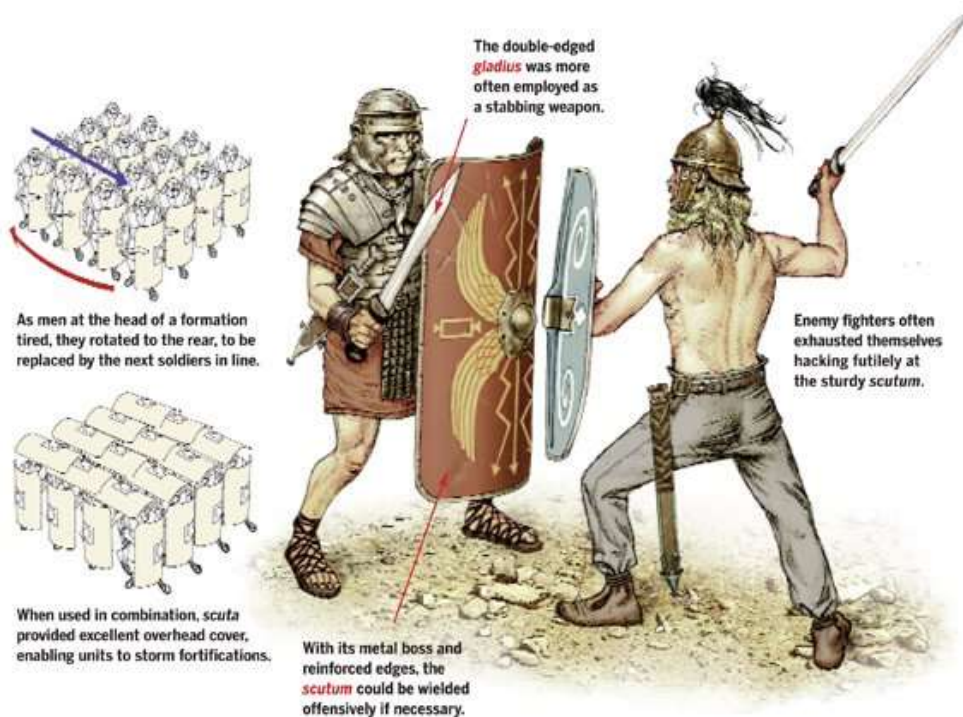
The Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16 *In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;*

Like the Spartans, every Christian is born a warrior. It is his destiny to be assaulted; it is his duty to attack.²⁹

Some translations read *“above all take the shield of faith”*.³⁰ This does not refer to the priority of the shield but rather to its all-encompassing means of protection. The shield constitutes a protection over every part of the soldiers’ body, as it can be turned in every direction.³¹

“Shield” is the Greek word “thureos” which denotes a large, oblong, four-cornered “scutum” or shield used by the Roman army. This Greek word was used by Homer in describing a large stone used as a door.³² The Greek word “thureos” (shield) is derived from “thura” which refers to a large oblong door, and “aspis” which is “small” or “circular”. The following image gives an indication of what a Roman soldier would have looked like and the enormity of the shield or “scutum”.³³



It was inconceivable for a soldier to leave off the shield. To do so would render him almost entirely defenseless and would result in certain death. Interestingly, the Roman “Scutum” was used in both a defensive **and** offensive capacity as seen in the image above.

What is faith?

The word “faith” (πίστις or “pistis”) appears some 244 times in the New Testament³⁴ and has a wide variety of applications. In the simplest sense, faith refers to that “firm persuasion or total dependence upon that which is an objective reality.” In other words faith is the *“assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*³⁵

²⁹ Taken from Biblical Illustrator (Esword)

³⁰ KJV, Geneva Bible (1587).

³¹ Taken from Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible (Esword).

³² Homer is best known as the author of the Iliad and Odyssey. He was considered a great epic poet.

³³ This image is taken from <http://www.historynet.com/roman-gladius-and-scutum-carving-out-an-empire.htm>

- There is some doubt regarding the sandals and the absence of brass or leather grieves.

³⁴ Based upon the Textus Receptus Manuscripts.

³⁵ Refer to Hebrews 11:1

True faith is not a subjective belief. Faith is not sort of a wistful, longing, hoping that something's going to come to pass in a nebulous tomorrow, faith is an absolute utter certainty.³⁶ True objective faith cannot be manufactured by human means. Saving faith is that which is implanted by God.

Ephesians 2:8-9 *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Faith is the first and most crucial element of an individual's life, without which none can be saved, or please God.

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.*

Faith is simply "believing the truth about God." It is the believer's responsibility to be anchored and fixed to the objective realities about the Lord. Since the enemy would seek to sow doubt and propagate deception, it is essential that the Christian exercises faith in the truth.

A Synopsis of Faith in the New Testament

1. Salvation must be received by faith: Romans 3:30; Romans 5:1-2; Ephesians 2:8; Galatians 2:16
2. Faith must be tested to ensure it is the genuine article: 2 Corinthians 13:5
3. Saving faith and a growing faith comes by means of God's Word: Romans 10:17; 2 Tim.3:15-16
4. There are different "levels" of faith in the church: Romans 14:1; 2 Corinthians 10:15
5. Life in Christ is lived by faith: Galatians 2:20
6. Faith for the Christian life is fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:22
7. Faith is a specific spiritual gift: 1 Corinthians 12:9
8. The true church is the "household of faith": Galatians 6:10
9. Church leaders are given to strengthen, unify and mature faith: Ephesians 4:13; 1 Thess. 3:2,10
10. Walking with Christ results in a firm faith: Colossians 2:7
11. The church is to be known for its faith: 1 Thessalonians 1:8
12. To love money is to wander from the faith: 1 Timothy 6:10
13. The life of faith is a fight: 1 Timothy 6:11-12
14. Sharp rebuke is sometimes required to produce soundness in faith: Titus 1:13
15. Imitate the faith of church leaders: Hebrews 13:7
16. Faith tested brings perseverance: James 1:3
17. Wisdom comes by asking God in faith: James 1:6
18. Sincerity of faith is impartial towards others: James 2:1
19. A "faith" which is not proven by works is dead: James 2:14, 17-18
20. The Elder's prayer of faith can bring about restoration and forgiveness: James 5:15
21. The genuineness of faith is determined through trials: 1 Peter 1:7
22. The devil is resisted by the firmness of your faith: 1 Peter 5:9
23. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world: 1 John 5:4
24. The Christian must contend for the faith: Jude 1:3
25. Faith is to be built up and on: Jude 1:20; 2 Peter 1:5

The Christian has already been given saving faith and now that faith must be constantly built upon so that the truth of God can extinguish the flaming darts of the evil one. Our prayer must be: "I believe; help my unbelief."³⁷ In other words, strengthen and build my faith.

Activity: How does faith protect us from the doubts and deceptions of the Devil?

Next Month: Fifth element of our spiritual armour – **The Helmet of Salvation**

³⁶ Taken from <https://www.gty.org/Resources/PDF/Sermons/1626>

³⁷ Refer to Mark 9:24

The Helmet of Salvation

Ephesians 6:17 *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

The helmet worn by the Roman soldier was a kind of cap which was made of leather; but this leather had been strengthened, and incidentally ornamented, with plates or “bosses” of metal, to give it protection. Then surmounting all of this there was a kind of crest or plume, again mainly for the purpose of ornamentation.³⁸

In Roman times the helmet played an unprecedented role in protecting one’s life. The enemy would approach with a broadsword (3-4 feet long), battle-axe, or war-club and seek to bring about instant death by means of splitting one’s head or decapitation.

The head of the soldier was among the principal parts to be defended, as on it the deadliest strokes might fall, and it is the head that commands the whole body. The head is the seat of the mind, which, when it has laid hold of the sure Gospel “hope” of eternal life, will not receive false doctrine, or give way to Satan’s temptations to despair.³⁹

What is this “salvation”?

Since Paul is addressing believers, putting on the helmet of salvation cannot refer to receiving Christ as Saviour. The only ones who can take up any piece of God’s armor, and the only ones who are involved in this supernatural struggle against Satan and his demon forces, are those who are already saved.⁴⁰

It is interesting to note that this is not the only time the Bible refers to salvation as protective head gear. Isaiah 59:17 reads: *“He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.”* Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 *“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.”* King David refers to God’s salvation as a covering for his head: Psalm 140:7 *“O LORD, my Lord, the strength of my salvation, you have covered my head in the day of battle.”*

Salvation is a three-part process – justification, sanctification and glorification. Since Paul is not referring to that initial conversion to Christ, nor the future time when they are present with the Lord, it is evident that this helmet of salvation forms an integral part of sanctification.

D.M. Lloyd-Jones writes:

“The spiritual application of the helmet is obvious; the Apostle is drawing attention to the head, to the mind, the brain, the understanding, the thinking of the Christian.”

How does our enemy infiltrate our mind?

There are many ways that our enemy seeks to destroy our thinking and cause us to be ineffective for Christ. There are three primary weapons he uses which need to be identified and then protected against.

BROAD SWORD: The devil’s broad sword is doubt/deception

The most common and most dangerous weapon in Satan’s arsenal is doubt. This is where it all began in the Garden of Eden.⁴¹

³⁸ D.M. Jones, *The Christian Soldier* (London: Morrison & Gibb Ltd 1977), 309

³⁹ Taken from Jamieson, Fausset & Brown Commentary (Esword)

⁴⁰ Taken from: <http://www.gty.org/resources/bible-qna/BQ060513/what-is-the-helmet-of-salvation>

⁴¹ Refer to Genesis 3:1-5

His wicked intention is to sow doubt in the minds of the believer and if we are not grounded in the word we will fall prey to his strategy. Common areas of doubt which find their source in the devil and our own flawed thinking include:

1. Doubting salvation.
2. Doubting the word of God.
3. Doubting the promises of God.
4. Doubting the power of God.

BATTLE AXE: The devil's battle axe is discontentment/dissatisfaction

Doubt quickly becomes discontentment. If the Devil has successfully brought you to a place where you doubt God in some way you will immediately be susceptible to discontentment. You will begin on the downward spiral of believing that God is not enough, His Word is insufficient for my needs, His promises cannot be trusted, and I must look elsewhere for help and strength. There are scores of Christians who live in the realm of discontentment, having forsaken the fountain of living waters, are now drinking at the man-made cisterns which cannot truly satisfy.⁴²

Common areas of discontentment include:

1. God.
2. Marriage and family.
3. Finances and career.
4. Church family.
5. Self-image.

WAR CLUB: The devil's war club is discouragement/despair

The downward progression continues until you reach the final destination of discouragement. It is at this location that the Devil has won a tremendous victory. He has sown doubt and deception and you fell for it. You became discontent and dissatisfied as a result, and then finally you have reached the bottom where you now live in the realm of discouragement and despair. At this point, it is all too hard. The Christian life is not worth the effort. All hope is lost and you may even wish you had never been introduced to Christ. An example of this is the "mighty prophet" Elijah.⁴³ Discouragement often comes on the back of great victory and success in the battle.

Illustration: Discouragement

It was advertised that the Devil was putting up for sale all of his tools. On that date the tools were laid out. They had prices marked on them for public inspection, and there were a lot of treacherous instruments: hatred, envy, jealousy, deceit, pride, lying, and so on. Lying in the corner was a well-worn tool with an extremely high price.

"What's the name of this tool?" asked one of the customers.

"That," the Devil replied, "is discouragement."

"Why have you priced it so high?"

"Because discouragement is more useful to me than all the others. I can pry open and get inside a man's heart with that when I cannot get near him with any other tools. It's badly worn because I use it on almost everyone, since so few people know it belongs to me."

Protecting the mind with the virtues of salvation

Since this battle with the devil and his hordes rages ferociously, it is essential that the Christian's mind and thinking is protected. The world, the flesh and the devil are united in their desire to control

⁴² Refer to Jeremiah 2:13

⁴³ Refer to 1 Kings 19:1-8

our minds and destroy biblical thinking. Christians must pro-actively engage themselves in truth and “put on” right thinking if they are to survive the onslaught of these three powerful enemies.

Probably the most helpful passage in the Bible regarding the mind and right thinking is **Philippians 4:8** which reads:

“Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is any praise, think about these things.”

The Apostle Paul provides the reader with six great defenses for the mind. A summary of each is listed below with a short definition:

1. Whatever is TRUE: *“objective truth, genuine, correct and right.”*⁴⁴
2. Whatever is HONOURABLE: *“reverent, holy, and God-honouring.”*⁴⁵
3. Whatever is JUST: *“Innocent, righteous, and equitable.”*⁴⁶
4. Whatever is PURE: *“promotes veneration, chaste, clear, blameless.”*⁴⁷
5. Whatever is LOVELY: *“acceptable, pleasing, friendly, loving.”*⁴⁸
6. Whatever is COMMENDABLE: *“reputable, well-sounding, proper, useful & profitable.”*⁴⁹

A God-ward gaze is essential to combat the enemies of darkness. Doubt, discontentment and discouragement are spiritual matters and must be combatted with God’s Word. Failure to do this will result in us trying to gain victory through human effort which is futile and cannot be trusted.⁵⁰

How to have victory in the Mind

1. Turn away from all humanistic forms of self-help including Psychology, rationalism, relativism, and other false forms of “truth”.⁵¹
2. Confront the spiritual battle with God’s truth.⁵²
3. Walk in the Spirit and therefore operate with the mind of Christ.⁵³
4. Fix your mind on God and eternal matters⁵⁴
5. Protect the heart/mind from foolishness⁵⁵
6. Actively “put off the old self” and “put on the new self”⁵⁶
7. Understand your identity in Christ and God’s work in you⁵⁷
8. Trust in the Lord fully⁵⁸
9. Love God supremely⁵⁹
10. Remember that ultimate victory is ours⁶⁰

Group Discussion: How does the truth about salvation protect us from the enemy?

Next Month: Sixth element of our spiritual armour – **The Sword of the Spirit**

⁴⁴ This is the same word used for the Holy Spirit in 1 John 2:27

⁴⁵ This matter of being honourable or “grave” is to be found in deacon’s and their wives: 1 Tim3:8,11

⁴⁶ This is the same word used to describe God in forgiving the sin of the believer in 1 John 1:9

⁴⁷ Spoken of on 3 occasions in reference to wives: 2 Cor.11:2; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:2

⁴⁸ This is the only usage of this word in the New Testament.

⁴⁹ This is the only usage of this word in the New Testament.

⁵⁰ Refer to Jeremiah 17:5

⁵¹ Refer to Colossians 2:8

⁵² Refer to Psalm 1; Romans 12:2

⁵³ Refer to Ephesians 5:18 in connection with 1 Corinthians 2:16

⁵⁴ Refer to Isaiah 26:3; Colossians 3:1-4

⁵⁵ Refer to Proverbs 4:23

⁵⁶ Refer to Ephesians 4:22-24

⁵⁷ Refer to Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 8:28-29; Jeremiah 29:11

⁵⁸ Refer to Proverbs 3:5-6;

⁵⁹ Refer to Matthew 22:37

⁶⁰ 1 John 5:4; Romans 8:37

The Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:17 *And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

The sword of the Greeks and Romans generally had a straight two-edged blade, rather broad, and of equal width from hilt to point. It was worn on the left side.⁶¹

The double-edged ancient sword was called a *gladius* and was designed for engaging in close hand-to-hand combat. The word *gladiator* (“a swordsman”) is derived from *gladius*, also the *gladiolus* (“a little sword”), which is a flowering plant with sword-like leaves.

Gladii (plural) were two-edged for cutting and had a tapered point for stabbing during thrusting. A solid grip was provided by a knobbed hilt added on, possibly with ridges for the fingers. Blade strength was achieved by welding together strips, in which case the sword had a channel down the center. The owner's name was often engraved or punched on the blade.⁶²

Gladius (Pompeii type)



The Spirit's Sword – the Word of God

This is the only time in the Bible where the term “sword of the Spirit” is used. It is interesting to note that this is also the only truly offensive weapon listed in the armour. In each of the armour metaphors, Paul has drawn a spiritual association: belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel shoes, shield of faith, helmet of salvation, and here, the sword of the Spirit.

Some have argued that the word “spirit” does not refer to the third person of the trinity, but rather to the human spirit. This is absurd! To think that our human spirit could wage spiritual warfare against the enemies of darkness is ridiculous. Additionally, our spirit is never referred to as being the “Word of God.”

The author of Hebrews writes: *For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*⁶⁵

⁶¹ Merrill Frederick Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1957), 104

⁶² Taken from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gladius>

⁶³ Image taken from: <http://www.mikeanderson.biz/2011/12/gladius-most-important-weapon-of.html>

⁶⁴ Image taken from: <http://www.romancoins.info/MilitaryEquipment-Attack.html>

⁶⁵ Refer to Hebrews 4:12

Paul is clearly communicating the offensive power of the Word of God. In other words he wants the Christian to realise that God's Word, the truth that has been revealed, is the only means of successfully defeating the enemy. All other components are protective but the Scriptures take ground from the adversary. We are only given one weapon and we only need one. Many Christians try to add logic, reasoning, devotional guides, worldly philosophies, and psychology to the Scriptures, but these are not supplementary, they are oppositional. They do not aid the Word, they take away from it. The Scriptures are sufficient and it is high time the church returned to a place of *sola scriptura* (by Scripture alone)⁶⁶.

Surveying the Sword:

Let's look at some specifics regarding the Word of God.

1. The Word of God is Pure:
 - a. Purity denotes freedom from defilement, absolute truth, without error-inerrant.
 - i. Proverbs 30:5; Psalm 119:140; Psalm 12:6; Psalm 18:30; Psalm 19:8; Psalm 119:160; John 17:17; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:15
2. The Word of God is Pertinent:
 - a. Pertinent speaks of relevance. Many today suggest that the Bible is an ancient book which was for yesteryear. The Bible is a living book and is applicable for all ages.
 - i. 1 Peter 1:22-23; Hebrews 4:12;
3. The Word of God is Powerful:
 - a. The Scripture was "breathed-out" by God and by very nature are life-changing.
 - i. Jeremiah 23:29; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:28; 2 Timothy 3:15; Romans 10:17
 - ii. Examples of its power: Matthew 4:1-11; Acts 7; Acts 8:26-40; 2 Chronicles 34:8-21; Nehemiah 8:1-8;
4. The Word of God is Profitable:
 - a. The "profitability" of the Word cannot be calculated. It yields a harvest in every heart with which it interacts. It brings fruit and spiritual prosperity.
 - i. 2 Timothy 3:16; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:2-3
 - ii. Profitable for teaching: *doctrine, learning and information.*
 - iii. Profitable for reproof: *conviction and convincing*
 - iv. Profitable for correction: *"a straightening" or rectifying*
 - v. Profitable for training in righteousness: *tutorage, disciplinary correction, chastening and nurturing.*
5. The Word of God is Precious:
 - a. The Scriptures must not be undervalued. It is God's revealed, complete communication to mankind bound in a book.
 - i. Psalm 19:9-10; Psalm 119:72; Psalm 119:127
6. The Word of God Protects:
 - a. Not only does it take ground from the enemy, it is also a protective mechanism in the life of a Christian.
 - i. Psalm 119:11; Psalm 37:31; Psalm 119:114;
 - ii. D.L. Moody wrote: *"This book will keep you from sin or sin will keep you from this book."*
7. The Word of God Prevails:
 - a. Since the Garden of Eden, the Devil has unceasingly attempted to thwart, distort and bring to naught the Word of God. The wicked one has employed many techniques and many men to accomplish this task but he has failed and always will. God's Word as an anvil has stood firm and sure against the countless blows of its enemies. Men like Sennacherib, Jehoiakim, Diocletian, Voltaire, Paine, Hume, Semler, Lachman, Strauss,

⁶⁶ By "Sola Scriptura" we affirm the belief that the Bible is the supreme authority in all matters of doctrine and practice. Sola Scriptura was the rallying cry of the protestant reformation.

Fosdick, Hitler and the cults have wielded their infidel arguments against the Word of God, and yet it prevails. The floor of history is littered with broken hammers of critics, but the anvil of God's Word is unharmed.

- i. Psalm 119:160; 1 Peter 1:25; Acts 19:20; Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 119:89; Matthew 24:35

8. The Word of God is about a Person:

- a. The purpose of divine revelation is to introduce a fallen creation to the Saviour. The most incredible truth that is revealed in the Scriptures is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the good news that sin can be conquered through a sinless substitute and that a relationship with God the Father can be restored.
 - i. John 20:31; Luke 24:44; John 5:39;

Sword Drills

The Romans would spend many hours each day training and practicing with their swords. When they were not actively on the battlefield they were engaging in sword drills. A soldier became incredibly familiar with his own sword and knew how to use it effectively.

The Christian is a soldier of Jesus Christ⁶⁷ and must take the time to become acquainted with the weapon. How will a Christian wage a good warfare if they are unsure of how to use the weapon? It is no wonder that most believers are "losing" in the daily battle when they spend next to no time in private practice. Church is not enough. Bible study is not enough. EVERY CHRISTIAN must engage in sword drills on a daily basis in order to defeat the enemy.

"The Shower" – A Short Quiet Time – Helpful keys to a fruitful sword-drill

1. A "quiet time" requires a quiet place. It ought to be just you and the Lord.
2. The written Scriptures (as opposed to digital format) is preferable but not essential. Ideally a pen and notepad would assist you also.
3. Pray before you begin. A great prayer is found in Psalm 119:118 *"Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law."*
4. Choose a "simple," practical portion of Scripture. For example: A passage from Psalms, Proverbs, or James. Trying to delve into Leviticus or Romans with a limited timeframe will do you more damage than good, and leave you with questions lingering all day.
5. Do not read a large portion of text – meditation is more important than quantity.
6. Do not try to exegete the text. Time constraints are the enemy of exposition. It is essential that you maintain the context but do not endeavour to understand every jot and tittle.
7. Identify bite-sized truths and make personal application from these on paper if possible.
8. Look for God in all that you do. The ultimate goal of our time in the Word is to increase in the knowledge of our God⁶⁸.
9. Choose one aspect of truth to meditate on for the day and seek to memorise it.⁶⁹
10. Pray and ask the Lord to cleanse your way by means of meditating and applying the truth which has just been gleaned.

The Christian is also called to be a diligent student of the Word and it is essential that the "daily shower" does not replace this. We are to embrace the "weightier matters of the law" too so that we can adequately defend our faith in the face of opposition.⁷⁰ Are you skilled with the sword?

Group Discussion: How can you practically use the sword of the Spirit in the daily battle?

Next Month: Seventh element of our spiritual armour – **Prayer**

⁶⁷ Refer: 2 Timothy 2:4; 1 Timothy 6:12

⁶⁸ Refer to Colossians 1:10

⁶⁹ Meditation speaks of "pondering, praying, speaking, uttering and declaring." Refer to: Psalm 119:48,78,148,

⁷⁰ Refer to 1 Peter 3:15

Prayer

Ephesians 6:18 *Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.*

No matter how complete the armor; no matter how skilled we may be in the science of war; no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayer we shall be defeated.⁷¹

Prayer is the last element of the spiritual armour but it is in no way the least. No metaphor is associated with prayer signifying its absolute importance in the totality of the battle.

What is prayer?

In previous Bible studies we have defined prayer as *“Our heartfelt dependence upon God expressed.”*⁷² Prayer is the non-optional exercise of faith and hope in a dependable God. True prayer is only possible when an individual abandons pride and self-sufficiency.

The Scripture makes it clear that prayer is to be a ceaseless activity in the life of a Christian.⁷³ The problem with most of us is that we exercise total dependence on God only after we have tried everything else. Our prayer lives shift into “overdrive” when we are confronted with a great tragedy, trial or temptation that is too great for us. This was never God’s design for prayer. This hit-and-miss prayer life denotes partial dependence on God. God has called the believer to total and absolute dependence on Him in EVERYTHING and at ALL TIMES.

Dependence on the Lord is increasingly difficult in a culture where wealth and materialism abound. A luke-warm, blasé approach to God is often the result of being *“rich and increased with goods”*.⁷⁴ One of the reasons God brings about testing in the life of His children is to create a greater level of dependence upon himself. Consider the following biblical examples where God placed an insurmountable problem before his people so that they might depend upon Him fully: Israelites at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:11-14), disciples in the storm (Luke 8:22-25), Paul’s thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).

A prayer-filled life is summarised in Proverbs 3:5-6. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*

How can I strengthen my prayer life?

Many try to install a daily “regiment of prayer” with the hope that this will bring about a passion for this practice. However, these noble intentions will only bring about greater despair because it will not yield the results that are desired. Don’t practice prayer – practice dependence!

Prayer will be the natural response of a Christian who is confronted with their utter dependence upon God. We have no trouble doing this when faced with an insurmountable problem. We fail however, to recognise that the “little things” of life that we take for granted are also the gracious provision and power of God on display.

For example: A Christian in a third world country recognises his absolute dependence on God for his next meal and for a drink of clean water. We, however, in this first world country walk to the pantry, select one of the many choices to eat, and then go to the water distiller and get a drink without recognising that it was God who provided all these benefits.

The passion and power of our prayer life is in direct proportion to our dependence upon the Lord. If you want to strengthen your prayer life you must become exceedingly aware of every good gift that

⁷¹ Taken from Albert Barnes’ Commentary on the Bible (ESword)

⁷² Definition by Daniel Kriss. Refer to “12 Hindrances to Prayer” Study.

⁷³ Refer: 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Ephesians 6:18; Luke 18:1; Colossians 4:2

⁷⁴ Refer to Revelation 3:17

has been given to you, and that its origin is the Father of Lights.⁷⁵ By taking inventory of both physical and spiritual life we realise quickly that it is God who supplies all life and breath,⁷⁶ food,⁷⁷ warmth and health,⁷⁸ and clothing.⁷⁹

Let me encourage you today to start a “Declaration of Dependence Directory” in which you write anything and everything that God has given to you. Offer praise and thanks to the Lord for each item and your prayer life will be transformed!

What is “Praying in the Spirit?”

The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements use this phrase as a proof-text for praying in tongues. This is faulty exegesis and had no resonance of truth whatsoever. The Bible refers to “praying in the Spirit” on three occasions⁸⁰ and it signifies praying in accord with the Spirit. In other words we are to pray as the Spirit leads us and with His will in view. The Christian is to pray under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us that it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to pray⁸¹ and that he will intercede for us when we do not know what we ought to pray.⁸² A Spirit-filled life will result in Spirit-led prayer.⁸³

What is the difference between “prayer” and “supplication” (Ephesians 6:18)?

Paul commands the Ephesians to be *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication*.

The words “*with all prayer*” refer to the various forms of prayer which include, but are not limited to: public prayer, private prayer, internalised prayer, and music-accompanied prayer (hymns, spiritual songs etc.)

“*Supplication*” is a different Greek word which denotes persevering, strong and incessant pleadings. This word is used of Zechariah’s appeal to God for a child,⁸⁴ Paul’s request that Israel might be saved,⁸⁵ and the “effectual, fervent” prayers of the righteous one which has great power.⁸⁶

In summary, “prayer” in Ephesians 6:18 is a general term for communicating with God, whereas “supplication” is a specific and enduring appeal which is brought before the Lord.

The importance of prayer in the context of spiritual battle

Prayer undergirds absolutely every other aspect of the spiritual armour. Without total dependence on the Lord and His might, the Christian soldier will surely be overcome in the daily battle. To reject a life of consistent, persevering prayer is to engage in the spiritual battle trusting in the arm of the flesh. This is utter foolishness and will result in great harm and spiritual wounds.

Hezekiah successfully conquered Sennacherib because he trusted in the Lord: “*With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God, to help us and to fight our battles*” (2 Chronicles 32:8). To trust in your own ability is to turn your heart away from the Lord: “*Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD”* (Jeremiah 17:5).

⁷⁵ Refer to James 1:17

⁷⁶ Refer: Acts 17:28; Isaiah 42:1-5; Ephesians 2:4-6; Colossians 3:4; John 11:25; 1 John 5:12;

⁷⁷ Refer: Acts 14:15-17; 2 Corinthians 9:10; 1 Peter 2:2; Jeremiah 3:15; Jeremiah 15:16; Hebrews 5:11-14

⁷⁸ Refer: Matthew 5:45; Psalm 103:1-3; John 16:7-14

⁷⁹ Genesis 3:21; Matthew 6:30; Isaiah 61:10; Zechariah 3:4; Philippians 3:9

⁸⁰ Refer: 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20

⁸¹ Refer: Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6

⁸² Refer: Romans 8:26

⁸³ Refer: Ephesians 5:18

⁸⁴ Refer: Luke 1:13

⁸⁵ Refer: Romans 10:1

⁸⁶ Refer: James 5:16