

For Further Thought:

Spiritual armor is for...

1. Why must a Christian stand facing the enemy?
2. Why is the belt of truth an important piece of armor?
3. How do you put on the breastplate of righteousness?
4. Why is our readiness tied to the Gospel and not to the casting out of demons?
5. Why is our shield of faith, and what are the implications of faith?
6. Concerning the helmet; how are you identified with Christ?
7. What are the two aspects of the double edged sword of the Spirit?
8. Why does prayer have to be in the Spirit?

Memory Verse:

And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.
2 Timothy 1:11-12

Spiritual Armor

Weapons of War

The Bible teaches us that we are in a spiritual war. Throughout the centuries, all soldiers who went to war put on their armor before going into battle. Whether it be a Roman breastplate of Jesus' day or a flak jacket of today, one would think it inconceivable to enter the battlefield without the proper protection and weaponry. As already stated in a previous lesson, we do not choose whether or not we want to join in the spiritual war. The moment we become part of the kingdom of God, we enter into the thick of the battle against the kingdom of Satan. The Scriptures that address essential armor for spiritual warfare start with:

Finally, **be strong in the Lord** and in his mighty power. (Eph.6:10) Satan and his spiritual realm are stronger than mankind; they are usually invisible and thereby undetectable to our physical senses. Our only help is in God. The only way that we will win is if we turn to the Lord for strength. Acknowledging our weakness in humility is necessary if we are to draw from God's strength:

For **when I am weak, then I am strong.** (2Co.12:10)

Realizing our own inadequacies becomes our strength as we learn to stop relying on ourselves and reach out to God.

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Php.4:13)

As we begin growing in the knowledge of God and submitting to Christ, we are able to overcome all the spiritual forces that will oppose us:

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, **neither angels nor demons**, neither the present nor the future, **nor any powers**, neither height nor depth, nor **anything else in all creation**, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ro.8:37-39)

Once we daily seek God's strength, the Scripture then stresses the need to put on the whole armor of God:

Put on the full armor of God **so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.** For **our struggle** is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore **put on the full armor of God**, so that when the day of evil comes, **you may be able to stand your ground**, and after you have done everything, to stand. (Eph.6:11-13)

There are evil men all around us, but our fight is not against them. It is against the devil who controls the world. Before we became a Christian, the devil was stronger than us as the sinful nature allowed him control in our lives. Once in Christ, we have power over Satan and all his kingdom:

I write to you, young men, **because you have overcome the evil one.** ... I write to you, young men, **because you are strong,**

and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

(1Jn.2:13-14)

The previous Scriptures tell us twice that we have overcome the enemy. Hence, we do not lose heart and flee, but rather we stand facing the enemy. All our armor is designed to face the enemy; the moment we turn to flee our armor is useless. This is why we read:

Be self-controlled and alert. **Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion** looking for someone to devour. **Resist him, standing firm in the faith**, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, **after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong**, firm and steadfast. (1Pe.5:8-10)

A lion on the hunt does not roar; a lion roars only to set a trap. All the females wait at one end of a clearing. The male lion goes to the other and roars. The antelope (prey) run in the opposite direction right into the pride of lions. For this reason, we do not flee from the devil but stand firm, knowing that we have overcome him. For we **will win** the battle:

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and **the gates of Hades will not overcome it.** (Mt.16:18)

Therefore, the Scriptures command us to put on the armor of God so that we can stand and defeat the enemy.

Belt of Truth

I find it strange that many Christians act as if they are wiser than God. God commands us to do little things. Since they seem insignificant, we do not bother to consider applying them. The problem is that they are important. The first piece of armor is the belt of truth.

Stand firm then, **with the belt of truth buckled round your waist**,

(Eph.6:14)

People scoff at the concept that the belt is an important part of the armor, and yet think of it, how well can you fight if your pants keep falling down to your ankles, tripping you. Many Christians today spend little time in God's Word, for they are distracted and diverted by the entertainments of this world in its many forms of media. Through the media, they are constantly being presented with untruth in a passive manner. It is embedded in the movies they watch, music they listen to, or the novels they read:

They **exchanged the truth of God for a lie**, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is for ever praised. Amen. (Ro.1:25)

Satan seldom confronts Christians with an outright lie, but he subtly indoctrinates us with his propaganda through the innuendos of the media. When many professing Christians' media consumption is four to five times that of studying God's Word, they will be tripped up. Entertainment preconditions us to respond in the manner of the world, for we are being indoctrinated to react to situations in a worldly manner. For this reason, we need to be men and women of the truth, in constant study of the written Word of God:

now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. (Jn.16:24)

Once our lives are in agreement with God, then we can start making all kinds of prayers and requests and see answers. Before I participate in an evangelistic campaign, I pray commanding in Jesus' Name that the spirits of darkness be bound and command the release of the hearts of the people I will speak with that day. I know that it is God's will for people to be saved, for He commanded me to make disciples in the first place. So I pray in the confidence that it is His will, thanking Him for the conversations I will have that day. If we pray according to His will, we can pray with thanksgiving in everything:

Do not be anxious about anything, but **in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Php.4:6-7)

As we go through life, our lives will become one continuous prayer as we dialogue with God about everything:

Be joyful always; **pray continually**; give thanks in all circumstances, **for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.** (1Th.5:16-18)

It is because we are living in the consciousness of God that we can know God's will in every situation. It is a life of constant prayer that allows us to discern the spiritual realm and deal with it effectively. When the disciple could not cast out a demon, Jesus taught:

He replied, "**This kind can come out only by prayer.**" (Mk.9:29)

Jesus was not saying, "Did you pray?"; but rather He asked, "Are you connected to the Father in constant, direct communication.?" If we are concerned about something, do not worry—pray:

And **pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.** But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. (2Th.3:2-3)

When you are sharing the Gospel, pray:

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And **pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message**, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. (Co.4:2-4)

Prayer is not an alternative to ministry; it is an indispensable part to ministry:

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for **I know that through your prayers** and the help given by **the Spirit of Jesus Christ**, what has happened to me will **turn out for my deliverance.** (Php.1:18-19)

Therefore, do not overlook prayer as a indispensable weapon in the spiritual battle of the heavenly realms.

guided by the Holy Spirit. For not only is our sword of the Spirit the “rhema” Word of God but our prayers must be in the Spirit as well:

But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and **pray in the Holy Spirit.** (Jude 1:20)

When the Holy Spirit guides us as we pray, He will lead us in matters which we cannot see, intervening in the spiritual realm:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, **but the Spirit himself intercedes for us** with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because **the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.** (Ro.8:26-27)

When we are attacked by the enemy, we must pray in specifics. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit will lead us how we ought to pray. To pray in the Spirit is to have the Spirit control our thoughts in everyday life, making prayer just a part of our regular conversations with God.

Since we **live by the Spirit**, let us **keep in step with the Spirit.** (Ga.5:25)

It is when we are walking with God that He can answer our prayers, for we have willingly consulted Him on what to do in the situation that faces us. The key is to remain in constant awareness of Christ:

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. (Jn. 15:7)

When Christ is given Lordship over every area of our lives and we live according to His Word, He can answer our prayers; for our prayers will be in line with His will:

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if **we ask anything according to his will**, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we **know that we have what we asked of him.** (1Jn.5:14-15)

When Christ's life becomes our life, we will receive all that we ask because we are asking according to His will. If our focus is on living self-centered lives, it will be impossible for Him to answer:

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, **because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.** (1Jn.3:21-22)

It is only when we live to please God that He is pleased to grant us the desires of our hearts and to answer our prayers with power and precision:

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. (Ja.5:16)

If our lives are consumed by God's righteousness, then our righteous requests will be answered. Some believe that everything they ask will be theirs if they ask in Jesus' Name. However, Jesus' Name is not some incantation which will cause our prayers to be answered. What God is saying is that if Christ's will has become our will then our requests are in His Name. To ask in Jesus' Name is to ask on His behalf:

In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, **my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.** Until

Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. (Jn.17:17)

It is when we eat sleep and live in the Word of God that we will be equipped to discern the truth from error. It is similar to banking: we cannot withdraw that which we have not deposited. For this reason, once we have hidden God's Word in our hearts, the Spirit will bring to mind the Scriptural principles by which we can stand against Satan:

But when he, **the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (Jn.16:13)

Our study of God's Word is different than a person's study of math or science. God's truth can only be known by His Spirit revealing it to our spirits. It is knowing Christ, the living Word of God, in conjunction with the written Word of God that is our source of truth:

Jesus answered, **"I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me."** (Jn.14:6)

It would be nice if in our spiritual battle we could give ourselves time to study an issue in the heat of our spiritual battle. Many Christians feel they will study God's Word on the issue when it becomes important. Satan will not give you time to put on your belt before he attacks; you will find yourself holding up your pants with one hand and having either the shield or sword in the other. Satan knows our ill preparation will allow us to be tripped up—tricked into a trap through which he has destroyed many Christians. There is no insignificant truth in the Scriptures as each principle builds upon each other. We must always apply God's truth to our lives, for God often waits for us to apply what we already know before giving us more:

Jesus said, **"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."** (Jn.8:31-32)

Remember, the Bible is there for our benefit, not God's. It is a key component to discernment which if used properly will enable us to effectively war against Satan. The Bereans were masters in the use of this piece of armor:

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.** (Ac.17:11)

The Spirit, Who speaks into our hearts, will never contradict the written Word which He authored at the time of the apostles—He does not change. So learn the lesson that all soldiers of the cross have learned:

Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, **"Do not go beyond what is written."** Then you will **not take pride in one man over against another.** (1Co.4:6)

The written Word of God is the final authority on all matters of life; it is one of the greatest tools for discernment. Therefore, even though most would not even consider a belt a piece of our armor, it is vital to a soldiers'

mobility and stability; hence, the belt of truth cannot be overlooked or underestimated in its importance.

Breastplate of Righteousness

The second piece of armor that the Scriptures mention is the breastplate of righteousness.

Stand firm then, ... **with the breastplate of righteousness in place,** (Eph.6:14)

The breastplate of righteousness must be put in place before going into battle. In Jesus' day, the breastplate covered all of a soldier's vital organs, from injury. If one of their organs were struck, they would die either instantaneously or shortly thereafter. For a Christian, the breastplate of righteousness keeps our minds at ease in the thick of battle, knowing that we can focus on the enemy rather than worrying about an attack on the integrity of our lives:

If you know that he is righteous, **you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him.** (1Jn.2:29)

You cannot claim to be part of the kingdom of God without having a change of character. If our character has not changed to the nature of God and is not manifested by our actions, then we are still part of the kingdom of darkness.

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone **who does not love his brother.** (1Jn.3:10)

Our righteousness must be in place and must be reflected in the way we treat our fellow man. We were self-centered and self-gratifying, but now our lives will be self-less as we love others as we love ourselves:

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

Christians put on the belt by learning the Word of God. Now with the breastplate, we apply what we have learned to our lives. We are called to live out our faith, lovingly ministering to our fellow man:

Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.** (Ro.13:10)

Righteousness is not just to cease harming our neighbor; it is doing what is right, helping our neighbor in his hour of need:

If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, **let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.** (1Jn.3:17-18)

Righteousness is to live rightly in all areas of life. If we remain unchanged, being controlled by sin, it indicates that we are still in the kingdom of darkness and a child of Satan:

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. **He who does what is right is righteous,** just as he is righteous. **He who does what is sinful is of the devil,** because the devil has been sinning

from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and **he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.** (1Co.2:14)

Without the Holy Spirit, the Word of God is just another book; for it is the Spirit that reveals to our spirit the teachings of God. Understanding the Bible was never an intellectual exercise:

As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and **you do not need anyone to teach you.** But as **his anointing teaches you about all things** and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him. (1Jn.2:27)

For the Word of God is not my sword; it is the sword of the Spirit. The Spirit brings the words of God back into our memory, bringing clarity as to its meaning. No one will be won by our fine sounding arguments but by the Spirit doing spiritual heart surgery. This was clearly seen at Pentecost:

When the people heard this, **they were cut to the heart** and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" (Ac.2:37)

Whenever someone responds to the Gospel, it is because the Spirit is doing spiritual heart surgery:

A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and **the Lord opened her heart to respond** to the things spoken by Paul. (Ac.16:14)

There are two Greek words used for the Word of God. One is "logos" which is the written Word of God; and the other is "rhema" which is the spoken Word of God. When the Greek word used is "rhema", it is the Spirit of God speaking into our lives. It is only when the logos is combined with the rhema that people will be saved from Satan's kingdom:

Now that you **have purified yourselves by obeying the truth** so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. **For you have been born again,** not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, **through the living and enduring word of God.** (1Pe.1:22-23)

Therefore the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit, and our primary weapon in forcefully extending the kingdom of God.

Prayer as a weapon

One of the greatest weapons used in modern warfare is communication. When the battle is fierce, soldiers can call in air support, artillery, or even reinforcements. Communication is a powerful piece of weaponry which stresses the importance of prayer:

And **pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.** With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. (Eph.6:18)

Praying in the Spirit is not praying in tongues, for we are told to pray on all occasions, while the Bible commands that tongues only be used with interpretation (1Co.14:12-17). However, if prayer is going to be an effective part of our arsenal of weapons, then it is going to be prayer

for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "**Do not go beyond what is written.**" Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. (1Co.4:6)

The Scriptures defend us by identifying if any speaker goes beyond the context of the passage and by discerning his error:

Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and **examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.** (Ac.17:11)

Today there are many teachers who run ahead of the Scripture to conclusions which are contrary to the very character of the Scriptures. John warns against these people:

Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching,** do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him **shares in his wicked work.** (2Jn.1:9-11)

Therefore, the Word of God is a defensive weapon as it judges the thoughts and attitudes—whether they be of God or of Satan.

The Word of God is also an offensive weapon. The way we free people from the kingdom of Satan is by preaching the Word.

He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of all he created. (Ja.1:18)

Sharing the Gospel is a offensive weapon that is very effective. This is why the Scriptures are banned in many countries. For God promises that the power of the Word will not return to Him without having an affect on people's lives:

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, **so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.** (Isa.55:10-11)

The Word of God will achieve the purpose for which He gave it. The power of the Word of God does not need to be instantaneous. It works long after the person heard it as the Holy Spirit brings it to memory:

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But **the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit,** whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.** (Jn.14:25-26)

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit. I place no confidence in my words but rather in the Word of God that the Spirit will use in bringing many people to Christ. For I cannot teach anyone how to live for Christ unless the Holy Spirit empowers the message and opens minds to understand:

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come

from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared **was to destroy the devil's work.** (1Jn.3:7-8)

We cannot claim to be righteous if we continue to sin. Our breastplate of righteousness must be in place, for we will only be considered perfect by the blood of Christ if our lives are becoming holy like God:

Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because **by one sacrifice he has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy.** (He.10:13-14)

Christians sin less and less each day as they grow in progressive sanctification. We will never be perfect but will continue to be perfected as the Holy Spirit displaces the sin in our lives:

For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so **he condemned sin in sinful man,** in order **that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.** (Ro.8:3-4)

A Christian will fulfill all that the law required and more. The Gospel is about being freed not only from Satan's kingdom but from sin as well. Christ broke the power of sin, setting us free from the slavery of sin:

When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. (Ro.6:20)

Before Christ, we were slaves of sin; but now after Christ, we read:

You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness . (Ro.6:18)

Notice the difference between the two previous passages: we were slaves of sin, but now we have been set free from sin; we were free from the control of righteousness, but now we became slaves of righteousness. In the same way that we were slaves of sin, we have now become slaves of God:

But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap **leads to holiness,** and the result is eternal life. (Ro.6:22)

When we are no longer a slave of sin, the breastplate of righteousness is in place and we have become slaves of God. When we were a slave of sin, we were in darkness; but as a slave of God, we are the light of the world:

So let us put aside **the deeds of darkness** and put on the **armor of light.** (Ro.13:12)

The breastplate of righteousness is our armor of light. Our lives must reflect God's holiness, for Christ has effectively dealt with our sin:

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so **that we might die to sins and live for righteousness;** by his wounds you have been healed. (1Pe.2:24; 2Co.5:21)

We can be sure we are in Christ when we cease our sinful action and live righteously like Christ. Christ has done everything we need to enable us to live a righteous life.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, **so that in him we**

might become the righteousness of God. (2Co.5:21)

It is only when our lives are in Christ that we will live in the righteousness of God. We do not have to try to be righteous, but rather we need to put on righteousness—to put on the person of Christ:

You are all sons of God **through faith in Christ Jesus**, for all of you who were baptized into Christ **have clothed yourselves with Christ**. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you **are all one in Christ Jesus**. (Ga.3:26-28)

We do not become righteous by working at it, but by Christ living in us. An apple tree does not work at producing apples to prove it is an apple tree; an apple tree produces apples because it is an apple tree. Righteousness is the fruit of being a Christian, which is produced because we are in Christ. If Christ is Lord of your life, then your breastplate is in place

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound **more and more in knowledge and depth of insight**, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ**—to the glory and praise of God. (Php.1:9-11)

Is Christ in the place as Lord of your life or just an honored guest? If you made Christ Lord of your life, then He will transform your lives into His righteousness by the work of the Holy Spirit:

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but **of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men. (Ro.14:17-18)

Our righteousness is in the Holy Spirit, for it is He Who transforms our lives, displacing the sin:

For **if** you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but **by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body**, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Ro.8:13-14)

If the Holy Spirit lives in you, He has changed the spiritual dynamic of the heavenly realms in relation to man. Without the sinful nature, Satan has no leverage to manipulate mankind:

Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. **You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit**, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. (Ro.8:8-9)

The breastplate of righteousness is in place when the Holy Spirit lives in our lives, controlling us. When the Holy Spirit lives in us, He displaces the sinful nature with its passions and desires by God's divine nature, which causes us to live holy lives:

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us **his very great and precious promises**, so that through them you may **participate in the divine nature** and escape the corruption in the

worship me." Jesus said to him, "**Away from me, Satan!** For it is written: **'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'**" (Mt.4:9-10)

Satan tempts us by placing thoughts in our minds, generating feelings in our hearts. We need to discern the originator of the thoughts and attitudes so that we can effectively deal with them. When Peter spoke out of love and loyalty, Jesus identified where it came from:

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "**Get behind me, Satan!** You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." (Mt.16:23)

Peter was speaking out of loyalty to Christ; however, what Peter was proposing was contrary to what the Scriptures say must take place. When a thought is contrary to the Scripture or an emotion contrary to the character of God, we must scrutinize it by the Word of God:

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

Peter did not discern from the Scripture where that thought came from, whether his own soul, from the Holy Spirit, or from Satan. There are many Christians who are ready to battle Satan and his strongholds with their new found authority, yet they totally ignore their consistent loses in their personal spiritual warfare in their minds. Satan wars against our minds:

For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work **in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin** at work within my members. (Ro.7:22-23)

The previous verse is speaking about Paul's life before Christ, but it makes the point that there is a battle for our minds. Generals were defeated in physical wars because they advanced the front beyond the reach of their supply lines. The battle of personal holiness must be as great a priority as that of our battle in our public ministry. Let me repeat for emphasis: our public engaging of the enemy must never have a greater priority than our personal engagement of the enemy in personal holiness. Satan warring against our minds is as harmful to man as any other demonic manifestation:

The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and **we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ**. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once **your obedience is complete**. (2Co.10:4-6)

Priority one is to learn to discern our thoughts as to their origin and to take them captive for Christ. For this reason, we need to know the unchangeable Word of God. We must not go beyond the Scripture:

Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos

it is a testimony of all that He has done for us and that they too can be freed from Satan's tyranny through accepting Christ:

And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because **I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.** (2Ti.1:11-12)

It is only when we are sure of Christ's ability to guard our lives from the devil that we will be able to freely proclaim the Gospel. Once sure of our protection in Christ, we are ready to do battle and thereby put our helmet on. Paul was so confident of God's power that he put his faith where everyone could see it:

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. (1Co.2:2)

If we are not readily identified with Christ, we will be spared from major satanic attacks; but we will also forfeit our salvation:

And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. **If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God.** (1Jn.4:14-15)

Therefore, let us put on the helmet of salvation by being publically identified with Christ, proclaiming His Gospel and trusting that the shield of faith will keep us safe.

The Sword of the Spirit

The shield of faith is one of the two weapons which Christians must wilfully deploy in spiritual battle—hold with their hands. The second weapon is the sword of the Spirit:

Take **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.** (Eph.6:17)

Our sword in spiritual warfare is the Word of God. First, the Word of God is a defensive weapon; it blocks the blows of the enemy. The best example of this is seen in the desert when Christ is being tempted by Satan. When Satan was tempting Christ in the hope that He would sin, Christ always blocked the temptation with Scripture:

The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, **"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"** (Mt.4:3-4)

When Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus responded with Scripture, placing food in its created perspective. In the second temptation, we read:

"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. **For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'**" Jesus answered him, **"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"** (Mt.4:6-7)

Jesus showed us that the Scriptures can be taken out of their context as a defensive weapon to identify and deflect these deceptive blows of the enemy. We find this again in the third temptation of Christ:

"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and

world caused by evil desires. (2Pe.1:3-4)

Since receiving the divine nature is something that God does, we must believe that He will do it. We must claim it, asking Him to transform our lives.

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: **"The righteous will live by faith."** (Ro.1:17)

Since our righteousness is from God, then it is not something that we must attain but rather something we must receive. Rather than try to attain righteousness, we need to believe that Christ will do as He promised. In this way, the breastplate of righteousness is kept in place by faith, making it a breastplate of faith as well:

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

Our faith is in God that the Holy Spirit will transform our lives from that which was sinful to that which is holy. We must be certain and not doubt that our breastplate will stop any blow that our shield and sword might not block. We live in the faith that God's righteousness will become a reality in a Christian. Paul and his team lived holy, righteous, and blameless lives:

You are witnesses, and so is God, **of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed.** (1Th.2:10)

We must believe that the Holy Spirit will transform our lives into righteousness. If we begin to doubt, it will leave us vulnerable. To doubt in God's promise to keep us from sin will cause us to attempt to do it by ourselves:

You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. (Ga.5:4-5)

If Christ lives in us, then we have the breastplate of righteousness in place. Anything else leaves us vulnerable:

No-one who is born of God will continue to sin, because **God's seed remains in him;** he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. (1Jn 3:9)

Therefore, if we are going to be on the offensive with the devil, we had better make sure we have done everything defensively first, putting on the breastplate of righteousness, whose quintessence is the Holy Spirit.

Feet Fitted with Readiness

Now that we have the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness, we need to have our shoes fitted with readiness:

and with **your feet fitted with the readiness** that comes from the gospel of peace. (Ga.6:16)

I find it strange that the Bible commands people to cast out demons and instructs us to break down strongholds but never speaks of the gift of the Spirit in regard to spiritual warfare. The reason for this is that we are all

involved in spiritual warfare and are to engage the enemy whenever we encounter their opposition. Every aspect of ministry is a form of spiritual warfare, but our goal is not to engage the enemy at every point. Rather our prime objective is to free the captives through the Gospel:

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** (1Pe.3:15)

It is the Gospel that frees men from the kingdom of Satan, and if we neglect that part of our ministry—then what is the point of doing battle. Christ did not send us out to engage the enemy but to preach the Gospel, bringing other people into His kingdom:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **Therefore go and make disciples of all nations**, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Mt.28:18-20)

As seen in our earlier lessons, to cast a demon out of a person is only a temporary fix. For without Christ's indwelling, the spirit is able to return:

"When **an evil spirit comes out of a man**, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.' When it arrives, **it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order.** Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. **And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.** (Mt.12:43-45)

The only time a person is rescued from the kingdom of Satan and thereby protected is when Christ's Spirit indwells them:

You, dear children, are from God **and have overcome them**, because **the one who is in you is greater** than the one who is in the world. (1Jn.4:4)

Since Christ, who is in you is greater, a person is only free when they accept the Gospel and Christ indwells them by His Spirit. For this reason, the only way we will win in God's war against Satan is by sharing the Gospel and not by casting out demons—even though it is important.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because **it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes**: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (Ro.1:16)

When a person makes Christ Lord of their lives, they are then rescued from Satan's kingdom:

For **he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son** he loves, in whom **we have redemption**, the forgiveness of sins. (Co.1:13-14)

Casting out demons is a hollow victory if we have not brought the people into the kingdom of God. We have all seen them, people coming week after week for deliverance. Were they delivered? (I believe they were) However, the Churches who are involved in deliverance ministries have neglected their prime objective—bringing people into the kingdom of God. Paul was far more involved in deliverance than anyone today:

I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; **no-one can snatch them out of my hand.** My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; **no-one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.** (Jn.10:28-29)

Helmet of Salvation

I think that the order in which Paul wrote this has spiritual significance. From a practical perspective, I would think that before you would pick up the shield, you would put on your helmet. But Paul has us picking up the shield before placing the helmet of salvation on our heads. A helmet speaks of identification, for when a soldier looks around a corner, what would their enemy see—their helmet which identifies which side they are on.

Take the helmet of salvation (Eph.6:17)

As Christians, the Scriptures require that we readily be identified with Christ; for our salvation is contingent upon it:

That **if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord,"** and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, **and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.** (Ro.10:9-10)

Our being identified with Christ is an essential part of our being saved. For there is grave warning for those who are ashamed of Him:

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, **the Son of Man will be ashamed of him** when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." (Mk.8:38)

It would be foolish to be identified with Christ without having the assurance that He is able to protect us. However, once we know that God controls every movement of Satan, God calls us to boldly proclaim our allegiance to Christ:

I tell you, **whoever acknowledges me before men**, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. **But he who disowns me before men** will be disowned before the angels of God. (Lk.12:8-9)

It is only when we know the power of God that grants us authority over the enemy that we can boldly testify about the good news of Christ:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because **it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes**: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. (Ro.1:16)

Satan leaves most Christians alone if they keep their Christianity to themselves while dabbling in sin, but then, how will anyone be saved? In other words, leave me alone; and I will leave you alone. Identification with Christ is more than an acknowledgement of being a Christian. It is a proclamation that we know who the enemy is and that God is stronger:

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

The helmet of salvation is more than an admission that we are a Christian;

prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. (Lk.22:31-32)
Satan required God's permission to tempt Peter. God controls the tempter so that our faith is in Him and in His promise to shield us from all fiery arrows:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; **he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.** (1Co.10:13)

God controls the tempter as to how he will tempt us, and God promises to provide what we need so that we will not fall. No matter how many temptations or accusations Satan sends our way, we know that we will stand for God has promised:

May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. **May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless** at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. **The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.** (1Th.5:23-24)

God is telling us that He will keep us from falling into sin. To say otherwise is a lie:

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. **And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.** (Ro.14:4)

Our ability to stand up to all that Satan will try to inflict us with will be fully met by God who empowers our lives:

...for you, who **through faith are shielded by God's power** until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. (1Pe.1:5)

Since it is God who shields us from the enemy, all we can do is humble ourselves, ask Him to protect us, and rest in that belief:

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, **that he may lift you up in due time.** Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. **Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion** looking for someone to devour. **Resist him, standing firm in the faith**, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, **after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.** To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen. (1Pe.5:6-11)

God grants us the faith to stand against everything with which He has permitted us to be tempted. So even if we are arrested, God will give us the strength to stand there as well. For it was to the church in Revelation that we read:

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. **I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you**, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Re.2:10)

Therefore, let us stand with our shield of faith firm in hand; for we know God will stop all the fiery darts of the enemy.

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that **even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him** were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured **and the evil spirits left them.** (Ac.19:11-12)

Paul was active in demonic deliverance, but he did not go after every demon he met. This is very clear when we read:

...we were met by a slave girl **who had a spirit by which she predicted the future.** She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. **This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days.** Finally Paul became so troubled that he turned round and said to the spirit, **"In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!"** At that moment the spirit left her. (Ac.16:16-18)

Paul did not cast out the demon the moment he recognized it in the girl, but he waited many days before finally dealing with the spirit. The reason for this is that his focus was preaching the Gospel, thereby rescuing people from the dominion of darkness. It was when the girl hindered the Gospel that he dealt with the demonic oppression. Paul's focus was the advancement of the kingdom of God and not the engagement of the enemy:

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, **if only I may finish the race and complete the task** the Lord Jesus has given me—the **task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.** (Ac.20:24)

Paul only engaged the enemy when they impeded the message of the Gospel. Therefore, our shoes are fitted for readiness to preach the Gospel; for it is only through the acceptance of the Gospel that people are freed from Satan's kingdom and from all forms of oppression.

Shield of Faith

When we have the belt of truth on, the breastplate of righteousness in place, and the focus of preaching the Gospel, we are now ready to do battle with the enemy:

In addition to all this, **take up the shield of faith**, with which you can **extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.** (Eph.6:16)

The Bible teaches that there are two things that are used in active warfare with Satan's domain. These are the weapons of righteousness:

Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: ... in truthful speech and **in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left;** (2Co 6:4, 7)

The first weapon of righteousness is the shield of faith. The Bible teaches us that faith is not a formal set of beliefs, but rather it is functional:

We live by faith, not by sight. (2Co.5:7)

We can see the physical world, but we can only discern the spiritual world. Faith is necessary when we cannot see:

Now faith is being **sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.** (He.11:1)

Our faith allows us to discern and engage the unseen, whether it be a thing or an action. First, since we cannot see the spiritual realm, we need faith:

For in this hope we were saved. But **hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?** But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. (Ro.8:24-25)

Second, since the shield is of faith, it is in something that is not tangible—namely spoken authority; our faith is in what we hope for. The Bible teaches that we have authority over the enemy, but we need to believe that we have the authority if we are going to use it. God has promised us many things in the New Testament, but we need to believe they are ours:

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. (2Co.1:20)

Faith is 100% belief. If you have faith, you will not doubt. If you doubt, you do not have faith. If you have 5% doubt, it nullifies the 95% faith. You either believe or you don't:

But when he asks, **he must believe and not doubt**, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; (Ja.1:6-7)

The devil will attack your belief to cause you to doubt whether the Scriptures are true. We need faith that God has given us the power over the enemy because they are usually invisible; hence, we need to discern their presence and activity. When we discern what they are up to, we command what we can not see, believing they must obey our command. Our interaction is first believing we have power and second that the demonic presence has been forced to do as we command. For we are promised:

"I tell you the truth, whatever you **bind on earth will be bound in heaven**, and whatever you **loose on earth will be loosed in heaven**." (Mt.18:18)

When the spirits press in on us or our companions, we need the faith to believe that when binding them, say in the form of commanding them to leave and not return, we must believe that they did leave and not doubt. In the same way, when we command release of a person afflicted in some way, we must believe that they are released and not doubt. In this way, our shield is of faith, believing that the spirit does as it was commanded, solely on the basis that Christ promised the authority to His ambassadors.

When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. "Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering." Jesus said to him, "I will go and heal him." The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. **For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,'**

and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. (Mt.8:5-10)

The centurion believed Christ had the power to command his request. He knew that Christ's presence was immaterial because he himself knew the power of command. If we are going to overcome Satan's system, the world, then we need faith in the power of command:

And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. **This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.** Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1Jn.5:3-5)

Jesus prayed on the night He was betrayed for His Church:

I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. **Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me**—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. ... My prayer is **not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.** (Jn.17:11-12&15)

The authority given to the disciples is the authority given to us, for we are His church, charged with His mandate—by the Name given to us, Jesus. We have been given authority over all the power of the enemy, part of which is defensive—nothing will harm you:

He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. **I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you.** (Lk.10:18-19)

No matter what Satan may want to throw at us, he needs God's permission before he can do anything—and I mean anything to us:

But the Lord is faithful, and **he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.** (2Th.3:3)

The fact that nothing will harm you goes well beyond Satan's ability to inflict demonic illnesses or subjection:

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; **the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him.** (1Jn.5:18)

God has dealt with the demonic manifestations. He dealt with the power of sin so that Satan does not have free access into our lives to tempt wherever he wants. Jesus taught us to pray:

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' (Mt.6:13)

Why do we pray "and lead us not into temptation" since the Bible also teaches us:

When tempted, no-one should say, "God is tempting me." **For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone;** (Ja.1:13)

The reason why we pray "and lead us not into temptation" is because God controls the tempter. A clear example of this is:

Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have