

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

Bible Studies on Ephesians 6

First given at
Mount Zion Baptist Church, Ashford
by Pastor Christopher Buss
2014

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE

Contents

- | | | |
|------------------|--|------------------|
| <i>1</i> | <i>The Christian's Call to Warfare –
Ephesians 6.10-11</i> | <i>5</i> |
| <i>2</i> | <i>Knowing the Enemy – Ephesians 6.12</i> | <i>13</i> |
| <i>3</i> | <i>The Christian's Armour: The Belt of Truth –
Ephesians 6.13-14a</i> | <i>21</i> |
| <i>4</i> | <i>The Christian's Armour: The Breastplate
of Righteousness – Ephesians 6.14b</i> | <i>29</i> |
| <i>5</i> | <i>The Christian's Armour: Gospel Footwear –
Ephesians 6.15</i> | <i>35</i> |
| <i>6</i> | <i>The Christian's Armour: The Shield of Faith –
Ephesians 6.16</i> | <i>43</i> |
| <i>7</i> | <i>The Christian's Armour: The Helmet of
Salvation – Ephesians 6.17a</i> | <i>49</i> |
| <i>8</i> | <i>The Christian's Armour: The Sword of the
Spirit – Ephesians 6.17b</i> | <i>55</i> |
| <i>9</i> | <i>The Vital Necessity of Prayer –
Ephesians 6.18-20</i> | <i>61</i> |
| <i>10</i> | <i>Paul's Concluding Benediction –
Ephesians 6.21-24</i> | <i>67</i> |

1. THE CHRISTIAN'S CALL TO WARFARE

Ephesians 6.10-11

'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.'

Throughout the *Epistle to the Ephesians* to this point the Apostle Paul has been teaching about the reality of the Christian life in Christ. He has covered such things as the abundant riches in Christ Jesus, the membership of His Church, and the walk with God in Christ Jesus. Now Paul deals with the reality of the Christian warfare which is a direct result of living the Christian life.

Why does Paul leave this teaching about the warfare until the end of the epistle? Because it is only as we live in Christ and walk with Christ, that our conflict with Satan becomes a reality. A believer, walking in God's way as exhorted and described in this epistle (*Ephesians 5.2-21*), will most certainly in some way or another come into direct conflict with Satan.

One of the evidences that we are born again, that we are truly walking in obedience to God's way following the Lord, and involved in God's work, is conflict with Satan. Satan will always oppose what is good, whether it is a work for the Lord practically or spiritually.

The first point we make therefore, by way of introduction, is to emphasise the certainty of conflict in the Christian life. It will be so for the remainder of time!

'And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ' Revelation 12.17.

The Christian Warfare

Here Paul is both warning us and directing us. His direction tells us emphatically and clearly what to do about this warfare, how to fight.

We are told to do two things: *'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might'* and *'Put on the whole armour of God'*. The first instruction concerns our devotion and dependence on the Lord, our walk with the Lord. The second instruction concerns our use of the armour He provides for the war by faith and in prayer.

The first instruction

'Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might' verse 10

The Christian can concentrate on the task in hand: *'Be strong in the Lord'*. Remember we are in a battle! Paul reminds us very clearly how to behave in this battle:

- verse 10: Be strong
- verse 11: Stand against
- verse 12: Wrestle against
- verse 18: Be watchful and be persevering

By contrast, an Old Testament example of how *not* to behave in the battle is given in *Numbers 13.25-14.4*. The Children of Israel had spied out the land of Canaan. They saw they were facing giants, and rather than fight, they wanted to go back to Egypt.

Several times in the Word of God believers are told to be strong. How can we be strong in the Lord?

a. By taking knowledge of God's Word

Some examples of this are:

- Joshua and the commandment of God to obey the Word:

'Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their

The Christian's Call to Warfare

fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest' Joshua 1.6-9.

- David's charge to his son Solomon:

'Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; and keep the charge of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: that the Lord may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel' 1 Kings 2.1-4.

God is not asking us to be strong to win battles in order to make a name for ourselves. But notice here: *'Be strong in the Lord **and in the power of his might.***' First, then, be strong in commitment to Him and His Word. We need a courageous spirit to obey God as a Christian but in His strength alone. God is calling us to be a Christian soldier, but He does not leave us to fight alone. The calling is very clearly to follow God and His Word, and depend on His strength and His armour.

The Christian Warfare

b. By following our Master, Jesus Christ the Lord

Jesus was the supreme example of courage. In His darkest hour His disciples fled but Jesus, though weak in body, was like a lion in His inner man in His steadfastness to save His people. He is the Captain of our salvation. Only as we follow Him can we be Christians of courage! Remember in this epistle Paul has already set out salvation, security, sanctification and spiritual strength in Christ.

c. By the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit of God

Here is the believer's secret strength. While the battle may rage without, God gives spiritual strength within.

'And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' Philippians 4.7.

d. By commitment to the way of the Lord in godliness and holiness

Here is a fundamental point in being strong in the Lord and the power of His might. We have to take our part in our walk with God. There is the exercise of godliness and holiness. But there is a secret to this exercise!

The great missionary David Brainerd, who spent his brief life (he died at the age of thirty) ministering to the American Indians, wrote these words in his journal:

'I never got away from Jesus and Him crucified. When my people were gripped by this great evangelical doctrine of Christ and Him crucified, I had no need to give instructions about morality. I found that one followed as the sure and inevitable fruit of the other.'

He also said in another place:

'I find my Indians begin to put on the garments of holiness and their common life begins to be sanctified even in small matters when they are possessed with the doctrine of Christ and Him

The Christian's Call to Warfare

crucified.'

Now the Word of God has a lot to teach us regarding such godliness.

- It is an exercise in our lives; we have to work at it because it does not come easily.

'But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness' 1 Timothy 4.7.

- It means that we will suffer persecution.

'Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution' 2 Timothy 3.12.

- It means to respect the holiness and judgment of God.

'Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire' Hebrews 12.28-29.

- It means to keep Christ in view.

'For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds' Hebrews 12.3.

- It is important as an evidence of grace.

'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord' Hebrews 12.14.

- It means a clear separation from worldliness and ungodliness.

'But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness' 1 Timothy 6.11.

The man of God is known by what he flees from – worldliness; what he follows after – righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and meekness; what he fights for – the faith; what he lays hold on by faith

The Christian Warfare

– eternal life; and what he is faithful to – the Word of God.

e. By receiving in our lives by faith the power that is in the Lord

Paul is encouraging us to embrace the power of God. Find your source of power in the Lord and in the strength of His might. The command is not to call on our own strength, but to rely on God's strength.

Let us consider some ways in which we can know the *'power of his might'*. We receive this power as we come to Him in faith believing that the Lord is almighty in power and that the Lord delights that we should lean on Him. We must constantly remember that we are dependent upon His power working in us.

'I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing' John 15.5.

We depend upon God:

- in prayer:

'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered' Romans 8.26.

- in study:

'Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come' John 16.13.

- in worship:

'But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father

The Christian's Call to Warfare

seeketh such to worship him' John 4.23.

- in ministry:

'For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake' 1 Thessalonians 1.5.

- in our daily walk:

'...who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time' 1 Peter 1.5.

Why can we trust the power of the Lord?

It has been proved throughout history to be almighty and faithful: *'for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee' (Hebrews 13.5)*. God's power is not only almighty and faithful, but also infinite, and that means without limit! It is this power that raised Jesus from the dead; it is this power that has quickened you into life, and we need this power continually in our lives.

The second instruction

'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil' v11

Paul turns to the armour provided for us by God with which we can fight in the inevitable battle. Our walk with the Lord will determine how important this armour is to us in the warfare against Satan. As we walk with God, being strong in Him and in the power of His might, we will use His methods not ours.

We will be studying the various parts of the armour in detail but first it is important to pick up the overall general teaching. We are told very clearly to put on something which God has provided for us. This is what we are called to do. God is not asking us to go to war unarmed or unprotected. Many times we leave off our armour and get hurt

The Christian Warfare

because we do not take notice of God's Word.

We are told here to put on *'the whole armour of God'*. Why? To stand against the evil one! This is our objective; we have to ask ourselves each day, Is my armour on? Have I left something off today? Is there something unprotected in my life? Start the day with a spiritual check up!

Paul asks us, Are we wearing all the armour that God has provided? Are we ready for the battle? because a committed Christian cannot consider the battle as an additional extra, but a certainty! The only way to be successful in the battle is by wearing all the armour. This is God's command: are we listening to the call of our Commander?

The teaching of Paul reminds us of the reality of God's care and protection in our warfare with Satan. Paul, the man of God, writing as a pastor with experience of the battle, knows what an enemy Satan is. He is not ignorant of his devices so he writes of the *'wiles of the devil'*. The word *'wiles'* means the devil's deceit, crafty scheming, evil trickery and perverse behaviour.

'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places' Ephesians 6.12.

Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wants the Church to be truly equipped for the battle, but before he speaks about the nature of the God-given protective armour and weapons of warfare, he now tells us a little about the nature of the enemy we face. Paul realises that God would have us know something of the danger of the devil. He writes in verse 12 that the battle is a spiritual one; it is awesome, above and beyond our ability to contain. We need help in this battle. We must know our enemy to understand more deeply the need of the armour.

2. KNOWING THE ENEMY

Ephesians 6.12

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

The enemy’s origin

Satan, the devil, was originally a bright angelic creature created by God to glorify Him. But Satan rebelled against his Maker; he tried to become as God himself. For this Satan and his angelic followers were thrown out of Heaven.

We read of this in both *Isaiah 14* and *Ezekiel 28* which speak figuratively of the fall of Satan from Heaven. Jesus confirmed this fact in *Luke 10.18*: *‘And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.’*

Pride was at the heart of the rebellion of the devil: *‘...lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil’* 1 *Timothy 3.6*.

We can note the cause of Satan’s fall as described in *Isaiah 14.12-14*:

‘How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.’

- *‘I will ascend into heaven’*: Satan wanted to enter into the inner sanctuary of Heaven reserved for God.
- *‘I will exalt my throne above the stars of God’*: Satan was dissatisfied with his angelic status.

The Christian Warfare

- *'I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation'*, the centre of God's earthly rule: Satan wanted the place of Jesus.
- *'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds'*: Clouds in the Old Testament are associated with the glory of God. Instead of reflecting God's glory, Satan wanted God's glory for himself.
- *'I will be like the most High'*: Satan wanted to be God!

At the same time the devil was thrown out of communion with God because of his pride and rebellion, he took with him other angels that were his followers.

'And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth' Revelation 12.4.

'For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment...' 2 Peter 2.4.

'And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day' Jude 6.

The devil since his fall has been filled with, and driven by, an intense hatred for God. His ambition is to destroy God's works and produce chaos. God in His sovereignty has allowed Satan to operate in this world; indeed the Fall of mankind took place when Satan came into God's perfect place here on Earth, the garden of Eden.

God made a perfect world but the devil and the fallen angels and all the spiritual forces of evil determined to destroy the beautiful world God created and its perfection. The only way to do this was to attack the pinnacle of God's creation – man, made in the image of God.

The devil came into the world in the disguise of a serpent and man fell, becoming Satan's slave by nature. The devil is now described as

Knowing the Enemy

'the god of this world' (2 Corinthians 4.4). He is the origin of evil; he is Enemy Number One, but remember, Satan can only go as far as God permits him!

The enemy's operation base

Paul describes very clearly how the devil operates in a spiritually evil way. Heaven is where God dwells; Satan operates in the air and in the mind:

'Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience' Ephesians 2.2.

While we do experience bodily persecution from Satan, the greatest persecution is the spiritual, the attack upon the mind and the inner being. Satan does not like us as individuals or as a church to spend too much time considering his power, but the Word of God warns us about the evil power of Satan.

The devil leads a spiritual host of wickedness in the heavenly places, not in Heaven itself but in the domain of the air, above the Earth but below the heavens: the principalities and the powers, the world rulers of the darkness of this age; the spiritual forces of evil that are to do with sinful ignorance and influence, spiritual blindness, spiritism, and the occult.

For our assurance we should remember two essential differences between God and Satan:

1. There is only one omnipresent Holy Spirit of God. Satan is not like God; he cannot be everywhere at the same time. Satan has to use his hosts of evil spirits to go at his command.

'And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it' Job 1.7.

The Christian Warfare

2. God is infinite in His power. Satan's power is limited to the sovereign boundaries of God.

'...who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son' Colossians 1.13.

The enemy's operating tactics

a. The mind

When we are converted we are born again spiritually by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are given a new nature, and a new Headman takes control of the mind – God. However, Satan still attacks and worries the mind and harasses and tries to regain control. Paul describes this for us in *Romans 8.5-11*:

'For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

The root of the problem is to do with the mind, because it is the mind which activates the actions of the flesh. So Paul is reminding us that first and foremost the battle is against Satan who is working through the mind to affect the flesh.

b. Temptation

Satan is an expert in the art of temptation. Sometimes he will hit us hard, while at other times he will ensnare through deceit. Remember that Satan knows our weaknesses:

- he knew Cain's weakness – jealousy;
- he knew Samson's weakness – sexual lust;
- he knew Saul's weakness – power;
- he knew Hezekiah's weakness – pride;
- he knew Peter's weakness – self-confidence;
- he knew Ananias' and Sapphira's weakness – materialism.

Because of our sinful natures we are all capable of sinning in all areas, but it is true to say we each have particular weaknesses. Satan, as the evil gardener, cultivates these areas to bring forth evil fruit. For example, if you are struggling with jealousy, then Satan will water that part of the mind with plenty of thoughts regarding the success of another person.

c. Unbelief

This has proved to be one of Satan's greatest and most effective weapons.

'And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching' Mark 6.6.

'And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief' Mark 9.24.

Here is evidence that believers are still harassed with Satan's attacks of unbelief. Why does he lay such great emphasis on unbelief? Because it is so vital:

'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth

The Christian Warfare

on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil' John 3.17-19.

'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life' John 5.24.

d. Error

Because Satan is the father of lies, he is very skilful in getting people to believe a lie.

For example, he has propagated the theory of evolution, so widespread in the world today. Also he deceives people into believing that there are many ways to God, and that man controls his own destiny. Furthermore he spreads the lie that the Bible is not the inspired Word of God, but only on the same level as the tradition of the Church.

e. Counterfeit

The Bible describes Satan as coming at times like an angel of light:

'...for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light' 2 Corinthians 11.14.

In the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness Satan even used the Scriptures sinfully in his attack upon the Lord. Satan is active in the churches to bring confusion. The Bible says that in the last days Satan will be terrible in deception.

In this present day and age Satan is confusing the Church with so-called signs and wonders and emotion. These divert God's people from the Word of God and the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. People become more interested in the signs than the Word, and in the emotion rather than God Himself.

Knowing the Enemy

The work of the Holy Spirit always brings glory to God, not to man. It is based upon the truth of God and points us to Christ. The emotion in our heart only safely comes spiritually from the realisation of the majesty, truth, holiness, glory, love and mercy of God.

Satan provides man-centred emotion which bypasses the mind. God gives a Word-centred emotion through His Holy Spirit by first working in the mind by His Word. This emotion is spiritually enriching and healthy and God-glorifying.

f. Cares of this world

Jesus spoke of this problem as it relates to hearing the Word of God.

The sower soweth the word...And these are they which are sown among thorns; such as hear the word, and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful' Mark 4.14, 18-19.

One of the reasons Satan ensures believers get taken up with the cares of this world is to stunt their growth!

g. Divisions

Because God has promised to bless the unified Church, Satan does his best to divide.

h. Deflection

Satan specialises in taking our time up on non-essential issues, deflecting our efforts from the command of God to preach the Gospel.

i. Discouragement

This is one of Satan's most powerful weapons. He loves to discourage us in the work of the Lord. Satan likes to wear us down, to see us give up; he reminds us of the failures and makes sure we feel down-hearted. He tries to make us bitter and angry with God. Satan is the master of discouragement.

The Christian Warfare

Someone had a dream in which he saw Satan's tool shed. He looked at the various tools, and then noticed one which was worn down. He asked what this tool was. The reply was that it was discouragement. Satan explained how effective he found this one; the power of this tool lay in the fact that few people realise it is from him.

j. Self

Jesus teaches the Christian believer takes up his cross. He who denies self experiences joy through suffering. Satan teaches self-protection, self-importance, self-satisfaction, self-promotion, and self-centredness. The Word of God speaks of humbling ourselves before God!

The enemy's objective

His objective is to oppose God at all times; his motive is always against God, to blind the eyes and block the ears and to prevent the Gospel being heard in the world.

'...in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them' 2 Corinthians 4.4.

His objective is to attack the Church at all times.

'And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ' Revelation 12.17.

3. THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR: THE BELT OF TRUTH

Ephesians 6.13-14a

'Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.'

The soldier's application of the armour

We face a foe, the devil, who schemes with the intent to deceive and operates in the spiritual realm. It is therefore essential that we put on the whole armour of God. We now come to consider the various parts of the armour that God has provided for the Christian soldier.

As we come to consider the various parts, let us remember that Paul tells us that each piece is vitally important. We are told very clearly to put on the *whole* armour of God. Each piece is designed, prepared and provided by God; it has a definite, worthwhile and essential function. Each piece perfectly harmonises with the others; and every piece of the armour must be put on.

We have been considering the various tactics of the devil, the way in which he attacks. We need to remember that each piece of armour has a purpose in our warfare with Satan. There are no wasted pieces, no pieces we can discard, no pieces which are just for show.

Satan's tactics

Dividing

Denouncing

Disturbing

Doubting

Soldier's armour

Upheld by the unity and integrity of
truth T

The breastplate of Christ's
righteousness

The Gospel of peace

The shield of faith

The Christian Warfare

Discouraging	The helmet of salvation reminding us of victory
Denying	The Word of God, the sword of the Spirit

Each piece must be kept on by prayer and faith in the dedication and exercise of our minds.

‘...praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints’ Ephesians 6.18.

Of necessity the all-important work of the Holy Spirit in this exercise is essential.

The soldier is not only instructed to put on the whole armour of God but he is also instructed what to do when all the armour is on. The Christian soldier is to stand firm: that is his objective. The word ‘stand’ is used four times in this passage.

The Word of God is speaking here of the believer’s personal combat with Satan and his evil host. The picture is of the believer resolutely defending himself through the power and the protection of God. He is not a person who is being blown about by every wind of doctrine; not one who is easily led astray, or who is continually taking his eyes off the Leader. Rather he is to be a person who has his feet fully and squarely on the Rock Christ Jesus.

Paul is very clear on this teaching by repeating the word ‘stand’ and using the word ‘wrestling’. The picture is of the soldier standing and withstanding resolutely the assault of the enemy. His security and his success is dependent upon the power and protection of God.

The first piece to be applied – the belt of truth

The picture in our minds is of the Roman soldier first putting on a belt from which hung leather strips. This protected the lower part of his body. It was like an apron hanging from a belt around the waist.

The Christian's Armour: The Belt of Truth

This part of the armour can be viewed in two ways.

a. The truth of God's Word and its protection

The belt of truth is the revelation of God, the Scripture of truth centred in Christ Jesus – authoritative truth.

'Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' John 8.31-32.

- Spiritual freedom to stand against Satan.

'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth' John 17.17.

- Spiritual health to resist Satan.

'Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come' John 16.13.

- Guidance.

As Jesus was attacked by the devil He resisted, stood firm and withstood the devil by using the Word of God. His strength at that time was seen in His knowledge and use of the Word of truth. It was Satan who was attacking Jesus. The Word was used by the Lord as the solid defence against the attack of the enemy.

The Lord Jesus showed us the way. There was no way that Satan could break through that the perfect, protective truth of God used by the Lord. As Satan hurled his assaults the Lord simply said *'It is written'*.

We must also put on God's Word of truth and use it in our defence against the assaults of the enemy. This means the Word of God in our minds and hearts is used as a protection against being overturned by the enemy. When Satan hurls his assaults against us, having on the girdle of truth will mean using the protection of God's Word.

The Christian Warfare

So, for example, when Satan says, ‘God has left you,’ the answer is, ‘It is written, “*For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*”’ (Hebrews 13.5).

Another example – when Satan attempts to crush you with worry and care, answer, ‘It is written, “*Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you*”’ (1 Peter 5.7).

Later on we will see the Word of God used in a more attacking, offensive role with the sword, but here it is to be seen for our protection, for our strength, and for our stability in the battle.

‘This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest’ Joshua 1.8-9.

It is absolutely vital that we remember the significance of the Word of God, the pure truth of God, for protection. If we want to know the truth, if we want to be established in the truth, if we want stability and strength in the warfare, then we must put on the belt of truth.

‘Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth’ 2 Peter 1.12.

God’s Word is the truth: it is given for our protection and well-being. Admire God’s Word for its truthfulness.

b. The effect of truth in the mind and the will

The second and also very important teaching from this part of the armour, which cannot be separated from the first point, is the fruit of God’s Word of truth working in our life giving us integrity and sincerity in the battle against Satan.

The Christian's Armour: The Belt of Truth

To have on the girdle of truth means to be honest about ourselves and our utter dependence upon God. It also means to be people of integrity and truth in our dealings, knowing that otherwise we become tools of Satan. There is nothing like dishonesty and deceitfulness to weaken us in the battle. A believer will feel uncomfortable and insecure and miserable if they are not being honest.

'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts' Psalm 51.6.

'The lip of truth shall be established for ever' Proverbs 12.19.

This is of vital importance if we are going to stand firm, for anything less than truth only serves to weaken us in the battle against Satan. Having on the girdle of truth, bringing forth the fruit of integrity, will affect all areas of our walk and witness.

- Our speech

'Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another' Ephesians 4.25.

- Our actions

'For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth' 3 John 3-4.

- Our worship

'But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth' John 4.23-24.

- Our preaching

'But [we] have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully;

The Christian Warfare

but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God' 2 Corinthians 4.2.

'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth' 2 Timothy 2.15.

It is vital that we appreciate the responsibility of proclaiming the truth in sincerity and truthfulness.

Conclusion

In understanding how truth and integrity can help us defeat Satan it is helpful to look at a biblical example of someone who was victorious because he put on the belt of truth. We will start, however, by looking at someone who was defeated because he did not have on the belt of truth.

Lot took off his belt of truth and lost his integrity. He had a double-minded approach to life. When he looked at the land towards Sodom and Gomorrah his decision was taken without honest assessment. When assaulted by Satan he looked at the material gain of the fields, while at the same time he closed his mind to the truth about Sodom being central to its location (*Genesis 13.10-12*).

He left off his belt of truth. This was proven because his double-minded attitude to life meant he was not fixed upon God's Word of truth. Because of this, Lot eventually drifted off into Sodom. Then, without his armour on, he became exposed and weak in his witness, and eventually was taken captive (*Genesis 14.12*).

Meanwhile Abraham behaved, in this instance, as a man of integrity and truth. There were times when even faithful Abraham, left to himself, took off his girdle of truth. But here, in rescuing Lot, Abraham showed the way of putting on the girdle of truth (*Genesis 14.14-16*). This was proven not only in the way he came to rescue Lot, but in the manner of his behaviour afterwards. After the battle, when the King

The Christian's Armour: The Belt of Truth

of Sodom wanted to give him gifts, Abraham, the man of integrity, refused to take a gift from an evil king (*Genesis 14.21-24*). He remained a man of integrity in deliverance and in temptation.

This part of the armour reminds us that loyalty to God is vital. As Joshua said: *'as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'* (*Joshua 24.15*).

The belt of truth as in the Word of God is given for our protection and integrity in withstanding Satan. The two must go hand-in-hand; this is the particular point Paul is teaching here.

4. THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR: THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Ephesians 6.14b

'...and having on the breastplate of righteousness.'

We now come to consider the second piece of armour to put on, the breastplate of righteousness. We remind ourselves that every piece of the armour has been provided by God Himself; each piece harmonises perfectly with the others, has a definite function and clearly-defined purpose, being essential to the spiritual well-being of the believer. We are told to put on the *whole* armour of God. Therefore the breastplate of righteousness is another essential part of the believer's armour.

What does the word 'righteousness' mean? The word was formerly spelt 'right-wise-ness' meaning to be both correct and wise. It is a word in the original Greek language which is full of rich meaning, carrying a wealth of substance: purity, truthfulness, uprightness, innocence, justice, holiness, faithfulness and correctness.

This surely must bring us clearly to the point that the breastplate of righteousness spoken of here is that provided for us by God; Paul is not teaching us about our own righteousness. We cannot, in our own strength, measure up to the real meaning of righteousness! Our own breastplate of righteousness is inadequate, a hindrance, easily pierced by the enemy, and fails God's standards of safety.

'All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags' Isaiah 64.6.

Just and holy is Thy name,

I am all unrighteousness;

Vile and full of sin I am,

Thou art full of truth and grace.

Charles Wesley, 1707-88

The Christian Warfare

A perfect breastplate of righteousness provided for us

The first point is to eject from our minds any thoughts that this breastplate is something that we can provide or manufacture; no, it is something God gives to us.

Here our attention is brought to the glorious doctrine of justification by faith in Christ Jesus alone. If our righteousness is unacceptable in God's sight, then we must rely on a righteousness provided for us. The only sufficient righteousness for us is found in Jesus Christ; the only acceptable righteousness for us before God is found in Him; and the only effective and permanent righteousness for us is Christ's.

'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' Philippians 3.8-9.

'Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth' Psalm 119.142.

'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life' Titus 3.4-7.

A sufficient righteousness

The second point is that we should rejoice that there is sufficient righteousness found in Christ. Our sin is imputed to Christ, laid on Him. His righteousness is imputed to us, given to us.

The Christian's Armour: The Breastplate of Righteousness

'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him'
2 Corinthians 5.21.

This is the great exchange of salvation. All we can bring is our sinful selves; what we get in exchange, by faith in Christ Jesus, is His righteousness for us; nothing less than the pure righteousness of Christ speaking perfectly for us instead of our sin condemning us.

'Imputed righteousness' means God puts Christ's righteousness on your account: you are justified by faith in Him.

*A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear with Thy righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring;
The terrors of law and of God,
With me can have nothing to do,
My Saviour's obedience and blood,
Hide all my transgressions from view.*

Augustus M Toplady, 1740-78

A protective breastplate

Satan is described as the accuser of the brethren. He is a liar and accuser; he torments our minds. He accuses us of our past and present sin; he reminds us of our failures; he discourages us to fear and unbelief. The answer is to put on by faith the breastplate of Christ's righteousness, and to rest solely upon Christ.

The breastplate of Christ's righteousness is the only answer. Come to Christ just as you are, with your unbelief, your fear, your failings, your coldness, and your deadness. It is not what we are that saves us and justifies us, but what Christ is and has done for us! An illustration from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* helps us.

The Christian Warfare

Christian is on his way to the Celestial City. Along the way he meets Apollyon (Satan) who tells him, 'You have already been unfaithful in your service to God; and how do you think to receive wages of Him?' Christian replies, 'When have I been unfaithful to Him?' Satan answers, 'You fainted at first setting out, when you almost choked in the Slough of Despond; you attempted wrong ways of taking off your burden, whereas you should have stayed till your Prince had taken it off; you sinfully slept and lost your choice thing; you were almost persuaded to go back at the sight of the lions; and when you talk of your journey and of what you have seen, you are inwardly desirous of vainglory in all that you say and do.'

Here Apollyon was reminding Christian of his many sins. He accused him of being unfaithful. But notice Christian's response: 'All this is true, and much more which you have left out; but the Prince whom I serve and honour is merciful and ready to forgive; but besides, these infirmities possessed me in your country; I have groaned under them, been sorry for them, and have obtained pardon of my Prince.' Notice how Christian was using his breastplate of righteousness focussing upon Christ.

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress.*

Nicolaus L Von Zinzendorf, 1700-60

Trust in the righteousness provided for you by God in Christ Jesus. I would like to quote a hymn by the converted slave-trader, John Newton (1725-1807). Satan would often remind him of his past in a time of trial. He wrote:

*When Satan appears to stop up our path,
And fills us with fears, we triumph by faith;
He cannot take from us, tho' oft he has tried,
This heart-cheering promise, 'The Lord will provide.'*

The Christian's Armour: The Breastplate of Righteousness

*He tells us we're weak, our hope is in vain;
The good that we seek we ne'er shall obtain;
But when such suggestions our faith thus have tried,
This answers all questions, 'The Lord will provide.'*

*No strength of our own, nor goodness we claim;
Yet since we have known the Saviour's great name,
In this our strong tower for safety we hide,
The Lord is our power, 'The Lord will provide.'*

*When life sinks apace, and death is in view,
This word of his grace shall comfort us thro';
No fearing or doubting with Christ on our side;
We hope to die shouting, 'The Lord will provide.'*

Remember, we are in a warfare with Christ on our side; in Him we have the victory.

'And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke' Isaiah 59.16-17.

A breastplate that affects our lives

Like the belt of truth, which can be applied not only to the Word of truth in the heart but also to the fruit of that truth working in our life bringing integrity, sincerity and truth in our walk, so also the breastplate of righteousness speaks to us of the fruit of holiness in our lives. The effect of the breastplate of righteousness in the believer's life is godliness. We call this 'imparted righteousness', which is to do with our sanctification, the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us affecting our lives. As Paul says, '*Christ liveth in me*' (Galatians 2.20).

The Christian Warfare

We are reminded of the connection between righteousness and stability here:

'That ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness' Ephesians 4.24.

'For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth' Ephesians 5.9.

'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace' Romans 6.12-14.

This is a perfect breastplate, a protective breastplate, a provided breastplate and an effective breastplate.

5. THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR: GOSPEL FOOTWEAR

Ephesians 6.15

'...and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.'

The Roman soldier would be supplied with good quality sandals fixed firmly to his feet and legs with leather straps. On the soles of the sandals were hobnails to give the soldier a very firm footing. With this footwear the soldier could walk a great distance in one day. This care taken for good footwear made the Roman army very mobile, and many a battle was won simply because they arrived upon the enemy earlier than expected. They walked with confidence and were sure-footed; they made excellent progress because they had good footwear.

Many times in warfare men have suffered terrible hardship because of inadequate footwear. We tend to think only of the big pieces of the armour, but they are rendered useless if we fall down because our feet are not taken care of. God provides the Christian with a complete armour.

In the Korean Conflict of 1950-53, one of the problems the American combat soldiers had was inadequate footwear. In the damp conditions the temperature went below freezing and their thin, wet shoes froze, and then their feet froze and they got frostbite. The problem the soldiers were having to deal with first was not the guns of the enemy but their inadequate footwear.

If you go on a long walk you need good footwear. It is miserable and painful to walk with bad boots or shoes. We once walked up Ben Nevis, and saw some people most ill-prepared, walking in plimsolls, trainers, and ordinary shoes. Strong boots were required, with a good tread on the sole which would provide protection from sharp stones, and adequate support for the ankles.

The Christian Warfare

The Bible tells us that in the Christian warfare it is essential to have good footwear. Applied spiritually this reminds us how essential it is to have on our feet the Gospel footwear. Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, is reminding us that we should remember that every part of the body must be taken care of. We rely on each part; if we neglect one part, all our body will suffer.

‘But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you’ 1 Corinthians 12.20-21.

The Gospel

We are given a clear description of what is the good news of the Gospel:

‘Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures’ 1 Corinthians 15.1-4.

Satan hates this Gospel because he knows that through it he has been defeated by Christ.

What are the benefits of the Gospel of peace to the Christian soldier?

1. Stability

The soles of the Roman sandals gave stability; they walked confidently. They held their ground gripped by the nails in the soles of the sandals. So the person fighting against Satan does not want to lose ground to slip and slide all over the place.

The Christian's Armour: Gospel Footwear

The Gospel of Jesus Christ brings stability into our lives, our thinking, our actions, and our words. The great and most important issue in our life has been settled and established. Through the Person and work of our Redeemer we have peace with God. Whatever else happens in our life, nothing superabounds that wonderful truth. This Gospel, received by faith, enables us to stand firm against Satan.

'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God' Romans 5.1-2.

The Gospel remains unchanged and unchanging; other religions have come and gone, new edicts are made, new instructions, new thinking, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ remains the same. This gives total stability. We will be able to stand firm and to walk in difficult terrain.

'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places' Habakkuk 3.18-19.

It is rather like taking part in a tug of war where Satan is on the other end of the rope. The strength of your grip is in the Gospel!

2. Readiness

The word 'preparation' used here has the meaning of being ready for Satan's onslaught. No Christian soldier can hope to succeed without having the Gospel footwear on; we are not ready! This is why a firm belief and understanding of the Gospel is absolutely essential for the Christian. This is evidenced in the concise manner in which Paul begins his *Letter to the Romans*. He reveals several aspects of the Gospel in *Romans 1.1-7*:

The Christian Warfare

- Its **origin**: it is the Gospel of *God* and therefore it demands our respect: *‘Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God’ v1.*
- Its **core** is the Person and work of Jesus Christ the Lord, demanding our love: *‘Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh’ v3.*
- The **confirmation** of the Gospel is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, giving us certainty: *‘And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead’ v4.*
- Its **fruit** is faith and obedience; its positive message transforms lives: *‘By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith’ v5a.*
- The **extent** of the Gospel: it reaches to all nations. Our own country is now a people of many nations, and it reaches every one: *‘...among all nations’ v5b.*
- Its **purpose** and objective is to show the glory of God in Christ Jesus: *‘...for his name’ v5c.*
- The **call** of the Gospel is the Word of the Holy Spirit, which makes such an impact upon His people: *‘Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ’ v6.*
- The **heart** of the Gospel is grace and peace, bringing comfort and assurance to God’s people: *‘To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ’ v7.*

Having established key aspects of the Gospel, Paul then assures the church at Rome of his thanksgiving and prayerful concern for them. He tells them of his sincere desire to see them and to teach them, but at the same time he is burdened not only to teach believers, but also to evangelise others in Rome (see verse 14). He goes on to say that both the educated and the uneducated must be reached with the Gospel.

The Christian's Armour: Gospel Footwear

Paul understood the Gospel message must be passed on; there was nothing to be added and nothing to be taken away. Paul states his obligation, willingness and attitude to the Gospel in verses 14-16: *'I am debtor', 'I am ready to preach the Gospel', and 'I am not ashamed.'* So here in *Ephesians 6* the Apostle again states the same thing when he says, have your feet shod with that readiness derived from the Gospel of peace.

If we go outside without our shoes on we are likely to get cut and bruised. We cannot walk with confidence; our head is down looking for anything sharp. So in our warfare with Satan we cannot hope to stand and walk confidently if we neglect the Gospel. We must have on our shoes to be ready for anything that will come across our path; then we will walk with confidence.

3. Peace

As mentioned earlier, one of the great strengths of the Christian is to know that he has peace with God though our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

*'For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;
and, having made peace through the blood of his cross...'
Colossians 1.19-20.*

A hurricane is an incredible force of power and destruction, but in the centre, the eye of the hurricane, it is calm. Similarly, with the Lord at the centre of our lives there is calm and peace. We are a friend of God and an enemy of Satan. Reconciliation has been made: we are soldiers in God's army.

The Gospel speaks to us about having peace with God. The assurance of being reconciled with God through the blood of Jesus Christ gives the courage and zeal to fight the good fight. It is this realisation, as we lay hold of this truth by faith, that gives peace in our hearts.

The Christian Warfare

4. Purpose

We have spoken before of having an objective. Here in this war we know who is our enemy. We know we have got to stand firm against the enemy, but we also can see from the Word of God that in this warfare the Gospel has a purpose: we are to put on the Gospel footwear and spread the message of the Gospel of peace.

'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion' Isaiah 52.7-8.

'How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!' Romans 10.15.

It is very important to see that our enemy is the devil (Satan), not people. As we resist the devil we become on the offensive in our warfare against him, with the Gospel a message of peace and reconciliation, not between the devil and people, but between people and God in Christ. The devil hates this message; he does not want us to bring it to the world. But we need to remember that being in opposition to the devil we are ambassadors of peace and reconciliation.

'And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him' 2 Corinthians 5.18-21.

The Christian's Armour: Gospel Footwear

At the time this epistle was written, messengers would be employed to bring news of the state of the battle. If it was good news the watchmen could tell by the way the messenger was running. So we have the phrase, *'How beautiful are the feet'* of those who bring good news. The Gospel is good news, and people should know about it!

Conclusion

So we can see the picture before us.

- We know how important footwear is for us. So is the Gospel. We cannot be a soldier without believing in it.
- We know how much we need to be sure-footed. The Gospel brings security and stability.
- We know how much bad footwear causes anxiety and hinders us. Satan is the divider, the unsettler. The Gospel brings peace and comfort to our minds.
- We know how much we need footwear that lasts.

'Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be' Deuteronomy 33.25.

The Gospel is the only answer for the world lost in sin.

6. THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR: THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Ephesians 6.16

'Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.'

The shield

This piece of armour was long enough and wide enough to completely protect the body of the soldier. It was made of wood coated with leather and a metal plate. It was designed to quench and stop the flaming darts that the enemy were hurling at them.

The shield protected in two ways. First it stopped the fiery darts so they did not injure the soldier; secondly the shield put out the fire so the damage did not spread. The Roman soldier would soak his shield in water to help extinguish the fiery darts.

These shields were also designed to be interlocked together, so the soldiers would go forward together united, not allowing any darts to get between them.

Another way in which these shields were used for protection when they went to capture a city was to form what they called a 'tortoise shell' or 'phalanx'. The front row of soldiers would lock their shields together, protecting the front of their bodies. The next row would hold their shields higher, tilted backwards. Then the next row would hold the shields above their heads so the army would be protected from attack in front of them and above them. They would move forward as a body.

The darts

These were a terrible weapon in the hands of the enemy, causing dreadful hurt if they penetrated the body. Before they were thrown,

The Christian Warfare

they were soaked in flammable liquid like pitch, set alight, and then hurled at the enemy.

Spiritual application to the Christian warfare

The fiery darts

Now it is very clear here that Paul is speaking about something thrown at us from without. Remember our warfare is with the devil our adversary. He is behind the attacks and is orchestrating them; his ambition is to destroy us.

a. Fiery dart of fear

We see this type of fiery dart at work in Peter when the Lord was betrayed and taken to be questioned.

‘And as Peter was beneath in the palace, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest: and when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked upon him, and said, And thou also wast with Jesus of Nazareth. But he denied, saying, I know not, neither understand I what thou sayest. And he went out into the porch; and the cock crew. And a maid saw him again, and began to say to them that stood by, This is one of them. And he denied it again. And a little after, they that stood by said again to Peter, Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilaean, and thy speech agreeth thereto. But he began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this man of whom ye speak. And the second time the cock crew. And Peter called to mind the word that Jesus said unto him, Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. And when he thought thereon, he wept’ Mark 14.66-72.

‘What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee’ Psalm 56.3.

b. Fiery dart of doubt

Abraham had to deal with the fiery darts of doubt concerning the fulfilment of the promise of his son Isaac. God appeared to him on one occasion and said, *‘Fear not, Abram’* when Abraham spoke of his

The Christian's Armour: The Shield of Faith

servant Eliezer being his only heir (*Genesis 15.1*). On another occasion he suggested that Ishmael might live before Him (*Genesis 17.18*). Yet Abraham is the great example of faith, for when Abraham exercised the shield of faith he quenched the fiery darts of doubt.

c. Fiery dart of memory accusation

Satan will send his fiery darts of accusation – he who is the source of evil reminds us of our sin.

'And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment' Zechariah 3.1-4.

d. Fiery dart of distraction

How often you can read the newspaper, or listen to or watch the news, and can concentrate with no problem at all. Then you pick up your Bible, and maybe start to pray, and all of a sudden all sorts of distractions come your way. Or maybe you were able to apply your mind clearly to a purchase, or something else you were involved in during the day, but at the time of evening worship you are attacked with all sorts of fiery darts of distraction.

Satan will use various means to distract us from our duties and our service for the Lord.

e. Fiery dart of trial

The Apostle Peter tells us not to be surprised if we are attacked by Satan:

The Christian Warfare

'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you'
1 Peter 4.12.

We are not to consider these fiery trials as though some strange thing happened to us. This is the experience of a believer walking with the Lord. We are grieved by various trials, yet able to rejoice in who God is and what He has promised.

f. Other fiery darts:

Unbelief – 'Has God said?'; uncertainty; confusion; temptation; discouragement; jealousy and envy – the one that nearly destroyed Asaph until he wielded the shield of faith (*Psalms 73*).

The source of these fiery darts

Remember these attacks are coming from without, from Satan. We need to recognise the devil for what he is and what he is doing here. We dealt with some of these things in Chapter 2, 'Knowing the Enemy'. His aim is to destroy. We need to see that this part of the Christian warfare is speaking about those fiery darts hurled at us.

The shield of faith

What is the nature of this faith, and how does this faith act as our shield?

Remember, faith never points to itself; it always points to its object. It is objective faith. We must not put faith in faith; we must not feel a measure of security in faith itself. We must not try to work up stronger faith in and of ourselves. Faith is only strengthened as it looks, trusts, admires and believes in its object, God.

Paul illustrates this point regarding Abraham using the shield of faith correctly:

'Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be' Romans 4.18.

The Christian's Armour: The Shield of Faith

We are saved and secure and resist Satan by faith in God, not by faith in faith. We need to have faith in:

- God's character: *'The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe' Proverbs 18.10.*
- God's promises: *'For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee' Hebrews 13.5.*

'Faith will always point to God and His promises; it is believing what God has said, for no other reason than God has said. It is taking God at His word, it is accepting His teachings, His commands, heeding His warnings and laying hold of His promises.'

Stuart Olyott

- God's providence: *'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose' Romans 8.28.*
- God's Son: *'Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us' Romans 8.34.*
- God's inseparable love in Christ: *'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' Romans 8.35.*

'Remember that faith is not a noble quality found only in superior men. It is not a virtue attainable by a limited few. It is not the ability to persuade ourselves that black is white or that something we desire will come to pass if we only wish hard enough. Faith is simply the bringing of our minds into accord with the truth. It is trusting in the promises of God in complete assurance that the God of the whole earth cannot lie.'

A W Tozer

The effectiveness of faith

Now let us be encouraged at the effectiveness of the shield of faith in God:

The Christian Warfare

‘...wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked’ Ephesians 6.16.

The unity of faith

The shield was also used not only for individual but also collective protection. Remember how the shield could be interlocked together to form an effective barrier. Then further back it was raised to form a shell covering the body of soldiers pressing forward. This is a picture of a united Church in battle with the enemy. As we join together in the unity of the faith in Christ Jesus, locked together as brothers and sisters in the Lord, we will be protected from the enemy.

Conclusion

Remember, faith in God speaks to us of victory, of overcoming the evil one.

‘For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?’ 1 John 5.4-5.

7. THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR: THE HELMET OF SALVATION

Ephesians 6.17a

'And take the helmet of salvation'.

What is the helmet of salvation?

Believers encourage themselves with the salvation accomplished by Jesus Christ the Lord in the past, the evidence of that salvation in the present, together with the eternal inheritance of that salvation in the future. We understand that salvation is not just about justification, blessed as that is, but also sanctification and glorification. It is the particular aspect of our future inheritance in Heaven, acquired by salvation, which is considered here.

To put on the helmet of salvation means to look towards the victory in Heaven. It is to remember what we are saved to.

*'But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation'
1 Thessalonians 5.8.*

It means to encourage ourselves in what Christ has done and accomplished for us. Satan wants us to look down and around us just at time things, but God encourages us to remember the real issues at stake; to look past the present difficulties to the future glory.

'For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church' 1 Corinthians 4.17.

'Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward' Hebrews 11.26.

The Christian Warfare

'Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure' 1 John 3.1-3.

Why do we need to wear the helmet?

The two main targets for the enemy in warfare are the head and the heart. If you lose a hand or a leg you can still live, but if you sustain injury either to the head or the heart it is likely to be fatal. So the enemy in combat is seeking to attack these two parts of the body in particular.

In spiritual warfare the same objective applies. Satan is all for attacking the head and the heart. The breastplate of righteousness and the shield of faith are so effective to protect the heart, feelings and emotions. The helmet of salvation is effective to protect the head, mind and thinking

The battle of the mind

The Christian is someone who is born again. That means quite simply they have the spiritual life of the Holy Spirit within them, having a spiritual mind in union with the mind of Christ. They have a new nature, and new desires. A transformation has taken place in the mind; it is no longer a slave to Satan, but it is a mind that follows Christ.

There is a great conflict between Satan and the spiritual mind. Before, the worldly mind ruled as it was at enmity with God, but now the spiritual mind rules which is united to Christ, but opposed to Satan, so Satan will attack the mind.

Warren Wiersbe, in his excellent book *'What to Wear in the War'*, helpfully describes the attacks of Satan on the mind.

The Christian's Armour: The Helmet of Salvation

The helmet of salvation prevents a divided mind

Loyalty to God is vital in the Christian walk. God is described as a jealous God, and He requires loyalty from His children. When the Children of Israel turned their back on God and went over to idols they demonstrated disloyalty to God.

Moses had to say at one time, *'Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me'* (Exodus 32.26). Joshua too said, *'Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'* (Joshua 24.15).

There is something very disabling to the Christian walk when Satan succeeds in dividing our mind. By contrast, our Lord and Master shows us perfectly what it means to have a single mind as He wholly committed Himself to doing His Father's will. *'He stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem'* (Luke 9.51).

The helmet of salvation is essential to guard against the divided mind.

The helmet of salvation prevents a distracted mind

This is one of Satan's greatest tools against the mind in this day and age, but when we have the helmet of salvation upon us it helps us get life into perspective. We learn to hold the legitimate things of this world maturely and with a loose hand. Satan can distract us with an issue in life which can overwhelm us, which is spiritually sapping and draining.

Possibly internet surfing is the most common distraction to the mind in our day. We may start the day being distracted and deny ourselves the opportunity to start the day with the Lord in prayer. Nevertheless we understand we are pilgrims, greatly privileged and blessed to be in the family of God.

There are spiritual priorities in life and we are not unaware of Satan's devices to distract our minds.

The Christian Warfare

The helmet of salvation prevents a deceived mind

A divided mind leads to a deceived mind. Note *2 Corinthians 11.3*: ‘*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.*’ Simplicity is single-hearted devotion.

How did Satan deceive the mind of Eve?

- he questioned God’s Word: ‘*Yea, hath God said?*’ (*Genesis 3.1*);
- he denied God’s Word: ‘*Ye shall not surely die*’ (*Genesis 3.4*);
- he substituted God’s Word: ‘*Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*’ (*Genesis 3.5*).

Satan still attacks the mind now by questioning, denying, and substituting God’s Word.

Early on in his leadership, Joshua allowed the Gibeonites to trick him into making a treaty with them (*Joshua 9.3-16*). Rather than asking God’s counsel he believed their story and made a covenant with them. This caused all kinds of difficulties for the Children of Israel. Joshua had taken off his helmet and allowed himself to be deceived. The Gibeonites’ case seemed so plausible; it was so easy to be deceived without the helmet! Without the helmet Satan will deceive us into thinking wrong thoughts about ourselves, others and the Word and will of God.

Remember how the Children of Israel had suffered defeat at the hands of the Philistines because they had gone to battle in their own strength, doing the right thing but in a wrong way (*1 Samuel 4*). They had not been walking or worshipping or depending upon God properly. The Ark of the Covenant still remained at Shiloh.

After their first defeat they had a meeting and considered. Why has God not helped us? Why have we suffered such a defeat? They decided what they must need was the Ark; as long as they got the Ark all would be well. They thought, We don’t need to pray, we don’t need

The Christian's Armour: The Helmet of Salvation

to repent of our sin; we don't need to humble ourselves before God, asking His deliverance; we just need to get the Ark here with all its ceremony.

So they sent for the Ark and Hophni and Phinehas, the ungodly priests, came with the Ark to the camp. When they arrived the Children of Israel give a great shout. Here was something they could see with their eyes. But having got there with the Ark, Hophni and Phinehas didn't lead the Children of Israel in worship or prayer to God; they just came with the Ark. The Children of Israel treated the Ark as some type of lucky charm, hoping the power of God came with it. As long as the Ark was there with them, they thought they would win. With something visible before their eyes, they were deceived in the way they treated the Ark.

The helmet of salvation prevents a discouraged mind

Discouragement comes in various forms. For example, Satan may remind you that as yet something you have been praying for remains unanswered. Having distracted the mind in reading and prayer he then goes on to discourage the mind. Are you going to make it to the end? Is it all worth it? Why all this suffering? Why do things seem to go wrong? We need to put on the helmet to prevent discouragement.

The helmet of salvation prevents a doubtful mind

One of Satan's chief tactics against the believer is to make us unstable through doubting. Jesus said, in the context of God's providential dealings, Do not be of a doubtful mind. In the *Letter of James* we are reminded of the danger of the doubtful mind evidenced by a double mind in prayer.

'For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways' James 1.6-8.

* * * * *

The Christian Warfare

In these different ways Satan attacks the mind, and it is the work of the helmet of salvation to defend the mind.

Conclusion

Remember there is nothing uncertain about Christian hope. The hope of salvation is Heaven.

'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil' Hebrews 6.19.

'Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' Titus 2.13.

'Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ' 1 Peter 1.13.

8. THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR: THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 6.17b

'...and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'

In Heaven we will be honoured and privileged to wear the Robe of Righteousness in perfect peace and rest. While here on Earth we are called to wear the whole armour of God.

We have been considering the armour used by the soldier to defend his body from the attacks of the enemy. The purpose of these pieces is to protect and to enable the person therefore to resist with confidence. Spiritually applied, these pieces are used in our defence against the assaults of the enemy of souls, Satan.

Now we come to the final piece of the armour, which is indeed both defensive and offensive – *'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.'* God provides this weapon for us to not only defend ourselves from the enemy, but also to attack the enemy.

One of the key things to remember here in the Apostle Paul's teaching is that each part is required in the warfare; therefore it will be of little use having the sword without wearing the other pieces of the armour. Neither is it effective to have on the protective armour without using the sword to attack the enemy. We need the protection of the armour *and* the power of the sword. The Christian must protect himself by using what God has provided for him. Christians need to use the weapon given and ordained by God for use in this battle.

Great dexterity was required in the use of the sword by the soldier. An expert swordsman was an enemy to be feared. So the Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, is to be used in combat by the Christian. It is to be wielded with spiritual wisdom and dexterity using its truth to combat the enemy of souls in times of temptation and trial.

The Christian Warfare

We should also beware of the danger of trying to fight the enemy in some way other than by the Word of God. We lose battles against Satan if we neglect to use the main weapon God has provided for defence and attack. For example, if we try to defend ourselves with emotionalism, tradition, a positive frame of mind and feelings, or mysticism, we will lose many a battle against Satan. Or if we go on the offensive against Satan bypassing the Word of God, likewise we will lose many a battle. For unless we use and loyally hold to the weapon of absolute truth, which is God's Word, we will fail to impact upon the enemy and undoubtedly at times succumb to him.

The union of the Holy Spirit and the Word – the sword

One of the vital points to remember about the sword is its relationship to the Spirit. The Word of God came by the inspiration and direction of the Holy Spirit of God.

'Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost' 2 Peter 1.20-21.

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness' 2 Timothy 3.16.

The Word of God can only be understood when we are taught by the Holy Spirit.

'But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you' John 14.26.

'Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever

The Christian's Armour: The Sword of the Spirit

he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come' John 16.13.

Therefore intellect in itself is not the vital factor in our knowledge and use of God's Word but the Holy Spirit. The Church is blessed with believers from all walks of life, regardless of intellect, all dependent upon the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God.

'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God' 1 Corinthians 2.12.

The Word of God, then, can only be effective in defence and attack with the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember, the Holy Spirit has no other sword for us to use in the battle than the book He has inspired. The Bible is a unique book: it is not like any other book. It is the only book in the world where the Author is immediately available to guide us in our understanding of it. It is the only book whose Author, when you attempt to carry out its instructions and teachings, is ready and able to give you the strength and grace you need. It is the Holy Spirit who can guide us into seeing the truth of God behind the words. Without the enabling of the Holy Spirit the Bible remains a closed book to our understanding for the Word of God is to be spiritually discerned.

'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned' 1 Corinthians 2.14.

Because the Holy Spirit guides us through the Word then we can understand the deep things of God.

'But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God' 1 Corinthians 2.10.

The Christian Warfare

The *Letter to the Romans* was written to a church made up of very ordinary people, many of them slaves, but God gave them all spiritual understanding. As we read the Bible we need to pray that God will, by His Holy Spirit, help us to understand it.

'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law' Psalm 119.18.

Why is it so important to really understand the Word of God? Why is it so important for the Christian soldier to have the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God? Without understanding the Word of God we cannot be very effective as a soldier in using that Word. The Word of God is essential to our spiritual life and warfare because:

a. It will enable us to grow

'As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby' 1 Peter 2.2.

'But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' Matthew 4.4.

b. It will gain God's approval

'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth' 2 Timothy 2.15.

c. It is the right spiritual training

'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' 2 Timothy 3.16-17.

d. It helps us overcome sin

'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word' Psalm 119.9.

The Christian's Armour: The Sword of the Spirit

e. It is the only way to succeed in the battle

'Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success' Joshua 1.7-8.

It is important, then, to understand the Word to be able to use it effectively. We need also to remember that the skilful use of the sword is seen in its right application. Quoting the Scriptures is not enough; we need to be able to make the correct application, in its right context.

Remember, Satan knows how to quote Scripture out of context and to misapply it. This is well illustrated by his temptation of Jesus in wilderness. See his use of *Psalm 91.11-12* in tempting Christ to jump from the Temple:

'For it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone' Luke 4.10-11.

But the next verse of *Psalm 91* goes on to actually condemn Satan:

'Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet' Psalm 91.13.

Jesus knew this verse was being used in a presumptuous fashion. He used the Word correctly to overcome the enemy.

Using the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God

With the Word of God and the Spirit of God working together in our lives we can accomplish great things. We can be victorious, we can be steadfast, and we cannot be overthrown. Do we realise the power of the Spirit and the Word?

The Christian Warfare

The sword is not only of use in our defence against Satan, but also in our attack against his strongholds. When Peter preached in *Acts 2* he used the inspired Word of God as his sword, quoting from *Joel* and the *Psalms*. When Paul preached, he used the inspired Word of God as his sword, quoting from the Scriptures:

'And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures' Acts 17.2.

When the Lord Jesus spoke to the disciples on the Emmaus road to quell the attack of Satan, how did He teach them? How did He break down the stronghold of unbelief, sadness and fear?

'And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' Luke 24.27.

The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is described in the way it breaks down the barriers of Satan in the heart.

'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart' Hebrews 4.12.

God's work must be done with God's Word for by it lives are changed, minds enlightened, sinners converted, and Satan's strongholds broken down. There can be no spiritual advance in the battle without the use of God's Word.

Conclusion

With the Word of God and the Spirit of God we can accomplish great things.

We can be victorious, we can be steadfast, we cannot be overthrown.

9. THE VITAL NECESSITY OF PRAYER

Ephesians 6.18-20

Prayer is necessary to put the armour on

It is not enough for the Christian soldier to know *about* the enemy, and to know *about* the armour: he has to go to war and use the armour and fight the enemy. Therefore immediately following the description of the armour comes the exhortation to prayer.

William Cowper (1731-1800) summed up the vital necessity of prayer in the war in the verse of a hymn:

*Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer keeps the Christian's armour bright;
For Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.*

Prayer is the power behind the Christian's armour. Prayer is vital if we are going to experience victory in our battle with Satan. The correct way to put on each piece of the armour is by prayer.

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

George Duffield, Jr, 1818-88

We put on each piece of the armour by faith, but we exercise this

The Christian Warfare

faith by prayer. Prayer and faith go hand-in-hand. Each day let us remember to ask ourselves: have we put on the armour of God by prayer and faith?

'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service' Romans 12.1.

This is something very personal to each believer in their walk before God.

Prayer is necessary to make the armour work

Prayer is not only the exercise whereby we put the armour on, it is also the power behind making the armour work. Prayer is the channel whereby the Christian receives the energy, power and strength by God's Holy Spirit to fight in the warfare. We cannot expect the blessing of spiritual strength to resist Satan without prayer!

Satan distracts and hinders us from prayer, tempting us to doubt its importance so weakening us in battle. Compare the *Book of Joshua* with the *Book of Judges*. *Joshua* speaks about the Israelites doing great exploits, claiming and enjoying their inheritance. *Judges* speaks to us about the Israelites still as God's chosen people, but weakened through worldliness and lack of prayer, and at times taken captive. The problem was that prayer became no longer important in their thinking, falling away to worldliness. The first step to be rescued was repentance with humility and prayer.

The armour works as we pray! One of the great examples of this is Nehemiah who served the Lord in Jerusalem under the attack of the enemy. On many occasions we read of Nehemiah praying to his God for strength, guidance, protection and wisdom. Nehemiah knew prayer was the power behind his armour and his work.

'But it came to pass, that when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the

The Vital Necessity of Prayer

walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth, and conspired all of them together to come and to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them' Nehemiah 4.7-9.

Four essentials in prayer for the Christian soldier

1. Always pray

'Praying always' v18a

This means to be praying at all times and in every season of life. In other words, there is never a time when a Christian should stop praying to God. We are to pray regularly and constantly! Many are the examples and exhortations in God's Word concerning this.

'Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime' Daniel 6.10.

There is an interesting picture of prayer in the life of the Children of Israel. Joshua was in the midst of the battle fighting the Amalekites. Moses sat on the top of the hill with his hands raised in prayer, but when through weariness his hands went down the Amalekites prevailed. So it was that Aaron and Hur held up Moses' arms for him, and thus the battle was won. Many see this as a picture of prayer in which Aaron and Hur support the servant of the Lord, Moses. The fruit of this partnership was that Joshua, on the battle front, led the people in the great exploits of the Lord.

'Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually' 1 Chronicles 16.11.

'Pray without ceasing' 1Thessalonians 5.17.

The Christian Warfare

The 'when' and 'where' of prayer is answered here in this verse.

2. All types of prayer

'...with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit' v18b

This includes thanksgiving, adoration, intercession, confession, supplication; specific, public and private prayer. Daily we are called to have a special time to pray with God. Other times, as we work, sometimes it is a sigh, and sometimes we are praying silently.

Paul is teaching us not to restrict our prayers to certain times and places or to certain phrases, but use all prayer; to remember that God is not impressed with oratory or style, but with reverent, heartfelt prayer.

Prayer takes many forms. We can pray in private in a way that we cannot in public, but both types of prayer are necessary for the good of the believer and the Church. For example, Satan would be tolerant of a situation where public prayer was made but not private prayer. But we are not to restrict our prayer times just to the House of God.

'*Supplication in the Spirit*' means to be specific in our requests before God, understanding our dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

*'But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life'
Jude 20-21.*

3. All alertness and perseverance

'...and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints' v18c

It is one of the most common problems in the Christian warfare to become downhearted in prayer. Often we do not feel like praying; often we are distracted in our minds when coming to prayer; we often feel our prayers are repetitive, but we are called to persevere in prayer.

The Vital Necessity of Prayer

Prayer is definitely enriched as we worship God in prayer. In private prayer, meditating upon God's greatness and His mercy tends to warm the heart in prayer.

Jesus tells us very clearly to continue in prayer. He told the parable of the unjust judge in *Luke 18.1-8*, and then taught to guard against a self-righteous spirit in verses 9-14.

Jesus tells us very clearly to watch and pray.

'Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak' Mark 14.38.

'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving' Colossians 4.2.

4. For all the church

Jesus while here on Earth evaluated prayer for others very highly. On four occasions in the *Gospel of Matthew* we see how Jesus responded positively to people coming to Him praying on behalf of others:

- a centurion pleading for his servant – *Matthew 8.5-13*;
- Jairus asking for healing for his daughter – *Matthew 9.18-19, 23-26*;
- a Canaanite woman crying for mercy on her demon-possessed daughter – *Matthew 15.22-28*;
- a man beseeching the Lord to heal his epileptic son – *Matthew 17.14-18*.

Jesus, our great Intercessor, not only intercedes for us but lives to do so. So in prayer we must not become so self-centred that we forget to pray for the one Church and other Christians in this world.

5. Prayer for God's servants

'And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak' v19-20

The Christian Warfare

But then Paul also reminds us in particular to remember God's servants because these people are often the particular targets of Satan's attacks. Pray that they will be given boldness, what to do? To preach with boldness and clarity, to make known the whole counsel of God whatever the cost, to speak as they ought to speak, speaking the truth in love.

'Brethren, pray for us' 1 Thessalonians 5.25.

'Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you' 2 Thessalonians 3.1.

Conclusion

Prayer is essential in the putting on of the armour by faith.

Prayer is essential in the fight of faith.

Prayer is essentially the heart of the Christian life and the Christian Church.

10. PAUL'S CONCLUDING BENEDICTION

Ephesians 6.21-24

'But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts' v21-22

The Apostle Paul has the blessing of a dear friend called Tychicus. Tychicus was known for his loyalty and for being a trustworthy and reliable brother in the Lord for Paul. Let us be thankful to God for brothers and sisters in the Lord, people in whom we can confide and with whom we can have fellowship, people who are trustworthy and who can even be trusted to speak on our behalf. Tychicus was such a man.

Paul was sending this epistle in the hands of Tychicus. He was confident that Tychicus could be trusted to inform the Church faithfully of the situation Paul was in. He was a man who could minister the Word of God to comfort the hearts of the people. Paul was in prison; he was unable to go personally and speak to the Ephesian church so he had to rely on his brother in the Lord to go on his behalf.

The four pillars of the Christian life

'Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen' v23-24

Now in the final benediction of Paul and conclusion of this epistle he desires that four areas of their Christian life may be nourished and increased from the good hand of God: peace, love, faith and grace.

Notice how similar the beginning of the epistle is to the end.

The Christian Warfare

'Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ' Ephesians 1.2.

Paul, in the wisdom of God, knew exactly how to communicate with believers. He sums up the epistle with these four vital areas that needed to be nurtured and developed.

Peace

Paul's desire is that peace may increase and reign among the brethren in the church. Now through the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ their peace with God was assured. But the blessing and fruit of that peace needed to be flowing through the church, giving a vertical and horizontal peace. Note how Paul follows the same pattern as he communicates with the churches at Rome and Corinth.

'To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ' Romans 1.7.

'Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ' 1 Corinthians 1.3.

Now there is a peace which is unique to believers. It is a peace which can break down all barriers of race, culture, poverty, wealth, title, or position. It is the peace of God which passes all understanding keeping our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus the Lord (*Philippians 4.7*).

'Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen' 1 Peter 5.14.

Believers, and only believers, have the possibility to unite around a Person Who will never fail them, never leave them; a Person Who is pure, Who loves them so much that He gave His life for them; a Person Who has made peace for them with God, bringing them into a right relationship with God the Father.

The strength of the believer's peace is the foundation upon which it rests. True peace can only be known as it is centred around the Person

Paul's Concluding Benediction

of Jesus Christ, because it is Jesus Who has purchased the vertical peace between His people and His Father. Jesus as the Peacemaker is the foundation upon which all true peace and unity rests in the Church.

The fragrance of the purchased peace of Jesus Christ with God should permeate the Church in relationships. It should harmonise those of different temperaments and gifts around a common focus – the cross. We are all saved in the same way, through the same Person, dependent on grace, and equally loved by God.

Jesus spoke of this unique peace before He left this Earth.

'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid' John 14.27.

This is the peace that comes through the indwelling and influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. So we forbear one another, forgive one another, edify one another, support one another, and pray for one another. This peace in the Holy Spirit enables us to reflect a Christlike Spirit.

Why is Paul so emphatic about peace in the life of the Church? Because the Word of God tells us without it we can quench the Spirit and we can put up barriers to spiritual prosperity.

Love and faith

Why does Paul connect so clearly love with faith? It is because without love to God there can be no faith. Faith grows as our love for God grows.

Both these gifts from God can grow in the life of the believer. The question before us is not, how much are we doing for the Lord? It is firstly, how much do we love the Lord? because faith works by love.

'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love' Galatians 5.6.

The Christian Warfare

Growing love to God leads to a faith that increases. A faith that increases in turn leads to a love to one another that abounds.

Think of this illustration of a large oil tank. It is impossible to look into it to see how much oil it contains. But alongside the tank is a tiny glass tube that serves as a gauge. As the oil stands in the little tube, so it stands in the great tank. When the tube is half full the tank is half full; if empty so is the tank. How do you know you love God? You believe you love Him, but you want to know. Look at the gauge. Your love for your brother and sister in the Lord is a measure of your love to God.

It has been said, 'Love for God is not love for Him at all unless it expresses itself in a practical way.'

'We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth' 2 Thessalonians 1.3.

This was the reason Paul gave thanks to God for the Ephesian believers at the beginning of the epistle.

'Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints...' Ephesians 1.15.

The increase of love and faith comes from God the Father and Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul, in this benediction, recognises the source of all blessing – God the Father and God the Son. Let us remember then the unity and partnership between love and faith. If our faith seems weak, then examine our love; if our love is weak, then so will be our faith!

Grace

The final pillar that Paul desires for believers to be strengthened is the pillar of grace. What is the meaning of the word 'grace' spoken of here? It means the divine influence of God by His Holy Spirit upon

Paul's Concluding Benediction

the heart. The reflection of that is seen in how we live our lives as Christians.

- Preserving grace: 'There but for the grace of God go I.'
- Enabling grace: 'By God's grace I have come this far.'

Grace is not something God dispenses for living the Christian life to all no matter what. But God's grace is continually given to those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, truly, wholeheartedly, for His glory not our own, with a single mind, with a desire to grow in Him.

Conclusion

There is one theme that occurs repeatedly in this epistle in one form or another. Indeed no less than thirty five times the phrase '*in Christ*' or equivalent is used. This phrase reflects the heart of the epistle and the need for each one of us.