

Are You Fighting The Good Fight?

The Whole Armor of God

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Given 05-Jun-04; Sermon #670

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote a series of commentaries that he had compiled from sermons he spoke at Westminster Chapel. In one of the commentaries, he wrote of a false and deceptive teaching that had crept into mainstream Christian churches over the last century. Its effect has been devastating to the personal growth of generations of professing Christians.

He explains how the Devil has been very diligent in causing confusion in this area. What struck me about his exposure of this deceptive teaching, is that a cleverly planned insertion of this doctrine was injected into the Worldwide Church of God beginning in the 1970s, rejected, and then reintroduced in the early 1990s. The residual effect still plagues the scattered brethren to this day.

This popular false teaching within mainstream Christianity is that in our Christian life we go on struggling and fighting so much, that we miss the point of Christianity—that is, "we must let God do it all for us."

Ephesians 6:10 is one of the apostle Paul's statements that is used to promote this false doctrine, ironically it says just the opposite of what they say it means.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

In many mainstream Christian churches, this scripture has been perverted to mean that you have nothing to do as a Christian, but just let God do it all for you. You do not have to overcome, because God will do it for you. They claim it is not our battle but God's. How does Ephesians 6:10 relate to us in practice, in our day-to-day needs, in our constant warfare against Satan, the world, and our own human nature?

Theologians promoting this counterfeit teaching say there is no need for any struggle; that our mistake is that we have gone on struggling and striving which is quite unnecessary. There is no need to feel any difficulty. I remember one comment that someone in Worldwide made to me in the early 90s. They said "God wouldn't want us to suffer, so therefore why should we be overcoming, because we suffer when we try to overcome." This is a very distorted and perverted use of Scripture. And, so goes the

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deceptive rhetoric that we should have faith in God, to the point of handing everything over to Him, while doing nothing ourselves.

This false doctrine is really quite deviously clever. Many were told that what is needed first of all is some sort of crisis in our lives. Then, the defeated Christian has to come to a point of crisis in which he will be ready to admit and confess defeat. He is hopeless until he does that—and in this we do see truth. That is the problem with Satan's deceptions. He takes truth and then perverts it from there.

Then they say, having realized defeat and having confessed it, he must come to this crucial question: Is he ready to surrender himself and this whole battle entirely to the Lord? Is he prepared to surrender, is he prepared to submit, to give up utterly and absolutely? They take it a step further and say that there is nothing that the individual has to do but to just love the Lord and to have the Lord in us.

If so, they say, he will pass through a crisis in which he will lose all sense of struggle and strain, and from there will go on to a process. According to these deceptive teachers, all this man has to do now, having passed through this critical experience, is to go on 'abiding in the Lord.' That, to them, means that he has to go on refusing to struggle and to do battle himself, and must leave it entirely to God; God will then win the battle for him.

The Christian has nothing to do but to 'abide in Christ:' he himself must not struggle at all; it will all be done for him.

But, does this teaching agree with God's inspired written word?

The apostle Paul refutes this false teaching that God does it all for us in his exhortation for us to 'Put on the whole armor of God.' He repeats the exhortation here in Ephesians:

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

That does not sound like a defeatist attitude to me, or that we are to do nothing, it sounds like we have a lot to do as individuals. Paul then proceeds to take these pieces of the armor one by one, in order that we may know how to use them. This flies in the face of the false teaching that if the Lord does it all for us, and we have nothing to do but to abide in Him and look to Him, then it is needless to tell us to put on this armor. If their false doctrine were true, then why are we told to put on this whole armor of God. Yet, it

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is obvious that the armor is something that we have to wear and use, therefore we have something to do.

The false teaching says that we have nothing to do, and that our mistake is that we have been doing so much; that we should hand it all over to God. We are to let go and let God do it; and to let Him fight our battles, so that we do not fight them ourselves. If this is true, then all the exhortations in the Scriptures, especially in the epistles, are not only unnecessary, but they are actually wrong. That, in itself, is a proof that this doctrine is wrong and perverted.

And of course, we know that the Scriptures are not wrong, or self-contradicting. We have confidence, in faith, that Paul's exhortations are of great value in expressing God's truth.

As related to the false teaching of letting God do it all for us, what are Paul's exhortations?

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

So many of the apostles tell us what we need to do and exhort us, but Paul seems to do it the most. It is an exhortation for us to resist the Devil. James does not tell us that we must not resist him, that all we have to do is to look to God and He will resist Satan for us. On the contrary, James tells us to resist the Devil, and he will flee from us. It is an exhortation to do something. Since it is part of God's inspired written word, it is a command for us to do something.

Then take a parallel, in I Peter 5, where there is a very clear and specific statement made to be sober and vigilant. We have to be vigilant, because our adversary the Devil is actively pursuing victims. He is not passive, he is active, he is pro-active, and he is planning his attack on individuals.

I Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

What that tells me is that every last Christian who has ever walked on earth has had to

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do this. He tells us that 'the sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.' That is an exhortation to us to *resist steadfast in the faith*. Here, we have two exhortations; one telling us that we have to be vigilant and observant, and the other that we, ourselves, have to resist the Devil. They urge us to do so with all the care and the energy that we can command. It does not matter how we feel physically, we still have to be active in resisting Satan.

Paul has many other examples of our responsibility in this as well. He writes about temptations arising in the flesh from within, used by Satan and fomented by him.

Romans 8:13 "For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

It says, 'you put to death the deeds of the body.' That means that we, with God's help, do it. The person who sits back and "has faith in God to do it for them" is not going to conquer anything, and they are not going to overcome anything. Notice that we have to do it; and we do it through the Spirit. It is not done for us. The teaching is not, 'Leave it to God, hand it to Him, and He will take care of all of it.' This is not the correct teaching.

In Philippians we have exactly the same teaching,

Philippians 2:12 "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;"

We have a lot of work ahead of us, but always with God's help. It is not surprising in one sense that people are in a state of confusion. In Paul's second epistle to Timothy, he gives him many exhortations. Having started by telling Timothy to 'be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,' Paul goes on to give him such detailed instructions as: 'Shun profane and vain babblings,' 'If a man therefore purge himself from these'—he has to do it, it is not done for him. 'Flee also youthful lusts.' One statement after another from Paul tells us that we have something to do. He does not say, 'Go through this crisis of surrender, hand yourself over to Christ, and look to Him. He will fight for you.'

What Paul says is, 'Take to your heels, flee youthful lusts, make no provision for the flesh!' Everything he tells us in this connection is also an exhortation to us. He has been telling this young man Timothy precisely the same thing in his first epistle, in detailed instructions:

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I Timothy 6:11 "But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness."

We have a lot of work to do. The epistles are full of this kind of teaching. They address men who had been habitual liars. What Paul tells such people as habitual liars is that they must not lie any longer. Here is a man who has been troubled by temptation to steal, the tendency to thieve, and it seems to be in him and a part of him. What is he to do? Is he to hand it over to God and let God take care of all of it for him? Of course not!

Ephesians 4:28-32 Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 5:1 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

How is it, if this false doctrine were true, can we be an imitator of Jesus Christ if we are just sitting back and letting Him do everything, and we are not bothering to even lift a finger to try to be like Him? That false doctrine is absolutely insane, but the whole of mainstream Christianity seems to have swallowed it.

Ephesians 5:2-5 And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done in overcoming with God's help. Those are some of the detailed instructions. But, above all, this false teaching that I have been talking about would make these exhortations unnecessary and indeed wrong. This also

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applies particularly to what we may call the military metaphors and similes that are used by Paul in order to make us do the things they are urging us to do. That false doctrine would just throw all of those military images and symbols out of the window and they would be worthless to us.

Have you noticed the frequency with which he uses these military images? Paul talks about our 'standing' and 'withstanding.' He says, 'Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.'

Then he uses this term 'wrestling.' It is a military term. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood.' We have to do the wrestling; we are actively involved in this struggle. Not a word about 'handing it over,' but a stern reminder that we are involved in this.

I Corinthians 16:13 Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.

This is typical New Testament exhortation.

II Corinthians 10:3-4 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

It is our warfare and we have to wage it in this particular way, with God giving us the power through His Holy Spirit to be conquerors.

Look carefully at these military terms.

I Timothy 6:12 'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life.'

Paul is exhorting Timothy that he Timothy has to 'fight.' Timothy's trouble was that he lost hope very easily, became discouraged, and felt that he was weak and could not go on. He was inclined to ask Paul to come to help him, and to lean on Paul. Which, in and of itself, is not wrong. Timothy was a typical Christian in many ways and he needed help in fighting the war against Satan.

But, Paul writes back to Timothy to 'Fight the good fight of faith.' He is telling him to pull himself together, and be strong, if he wants to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

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II Timothy 2:3-4 You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

This fight that we have against Satan, the world, and our own human nature, requires that we endure hardship. It is not easy to do, and it is very painful at times. The whole picture is in military terms. We are the fighters, soldiers in the army of the living God; and we are not just 'to hand it over.' We have our part to play, and our battles to fight as participators in this great battle. So the exhortations come to us in these military forms. Even though most of us have not been in the military, we can still relate very vividly to what it means.

The erroneous teaching of 'turning the battle over to God and doing nothing ourselves' is not consistent with what Paul says about himself and his own life. Listen to him here in I Corinthians 9:

I Corinthians 9:26-27 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.

Paul did not want to be a hypocrite, so he gave a great effort to overcoming whatever he could with God's help. Paul is telling us the way in which he takes part in this contest. He is using an illustration of a number of men in a race, a marathon race.

The point is, that they are running, they are not like the great crowds that sit just and watch others. Paul is running in the race himself, so this is how he puts it: 'I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight.'

At this point, he shifts to the image of a man boxing. He takes an illustration from the boxing ring and he himself is in the ring, and he is boxing an antagonist. He is not looking at somebody in the ring fighting on his behalf; he is in the ring himself.

'Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air.' He wants to beat his opponent; he is hitting his adversary, not the air. And he says he does not do these things uncertainly. Just a side note here, because it never ceases to amaze me how things can be misunderstood. This imagery in no way encourages a man to take up boxing literally. I am being very clear on that.

Paul says, 'I discipline my body and bring it into subjection.' He is doing it himself, and it is not an easy thing to do. He has had to prepare for it. There is a struggle involved here. He is not saying to himself, 'I have so many problems and lusts rising up in my mind that are frustrating me and wearing me down, so I'll hand them all over to God and let him do the fighting for me.' It sounds good to people in the world with no understanding, but we know better. Paul says, 'I discipline my body and bring it into subjection.'

In Philippians 3 Paul spoke of 'pressing toward the goal.'

Philippians 3:12-14 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul describes his great effort, his pressing with all of his might toward the mark, then he introduces a word of exhortation in verses 15 and 16.

Philippians 3:15-16 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

Basically he is saying, I am your leader under Christ. Follow me in this matter and let us be of the same mind. His exhortation here is for the entire church to keep pressing on and working to overcome. The whole church, together in unity, need to be fighting Satan. We do strengthen each other.

Toward the end of Paul's life, as he is facing death, he writes his last letter, the second epistle to Timothy. He looks back at it all, and this is what he says: 'I have fought a good fight.'

Note how Paul speaks about himself in all the stages of his Christian life. He, himself, lived the kind of life to which he exhorts all Christians to live. He is exhorting us to fight, and to battle. He tells us to exert ourselves and press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

So we see here where Satan's deception is exposed. The deceived person sits back, in what he believes is faith, and lets God fight all his battles for him. But faith without works is dead. Therefore his faith is useless, empty, and misplaced.

He believed that 'God would never fail to fight all his battles for him.' Then when he realizes he has the same problems with sin that he always had and probably even more, he begins to ask himself why God failed him. You see the person that believes this type of thing where God fights all his battles for him, God also receives all of the blame from him.

The truth of the matter is that God does not promise to do our overcoming for us. He promises to help us by providing access to the power of His Holy Spirit. He grants us limited but effective access to His mind. The more of the Holy Spirit that we use effectively, the more that He gives us. You have heard the phrase "if you snooze you lose." Well it applies here.

Before God converts a person, he is the 'old man' only, he has nothing but rebellious human nature. But when the new man has come into being, he is not as he used to be before. There is a principle of new life in him that is working to become righteous. This process is activated by the new power, the mind of God in him.

II Peter 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

The new man is a new life and a new life is something that grows. A new life should never be told that it is so utterly hopeless and helpless and that there is nothing that it can do but rely on God and His strength. What the strength of God does is to feed and to develop this new life that is in us, and to make it stronger and stronger.

The Bible is full of exhortations, appeals, arguments and demonstrations. And if this false doctrine of turning all of our battles over to God with us doing nothing were true, then the New Testament epistles, with all of these involved arguments, refutations of error, exhortations, and appeals would be entirely unnecessary.

False teachers emphasize that letting God do everything is really 'quite simple,' and that is the appeal to the person who is unconverted. But according to the Bible it is not 'quite simple'. These epistles are not 'quite simple' because Satan is not 'quite simple,' and because a Christian's life is not 'quite simple.' We have all found this out as we go

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through our Christian lives. It is a lot of work and it can be confusing at times.

That false teaching is too passive. Not only that, it is too mechanical. There is nothing mechanical in the biblical teaching; it deals with life and growth, and food and energy. We cannot test a teaching by results only; we have to test every teaching by the written Word of God.

A person may think he is "happier" believing all he has to do is let God do everything and not worry about overcoming sin, but that is a destructive "ignorance is bliss" approach to life. Initially, the person who turns it all over to God and does nothing is happy because he does not feel any responsibility. We should not primarily want to be "happy" now, we should want to be righteous and holy. We should want to conform to the Scriptures so that we may have eternal joy later. There is a lot of happiness that comes from obeying God and living His way of life, but there is also a lot of struggle and some downfalls.

Ephesians 6:12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

We wrestle against overwhelming odds if we do not include God in the picture. God is in the picture and He is giving us His help, but He is not doing it all for us.

So far, this sermon has taken a negative approach to a false teaching. Now let us take a positive approach to how we are to fight and to wrestle, and how we are enabled to do so. Most of it is done for us, but we are enabled to do a lot of it ourselves, by being 'strong in the Lord, and the power of His might.' We do this by putting on the whole armor of God.

Paul mapped it out for us. This is not the only way to attack it but it is a major way of resisting Satan and fighting him.

Ephesians 6:10-11 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

The purpose for putting on the armor of God is so that we may stand firm against Satan's wiles. Did you know that a synonym for "wile" is the word *trick*? It is interesting

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that for Halloween, children put on their costumes and say "trick or treat." In this light, they seem to be wearing the armor of Satan. They are certainly doing his bidding, even though unknowingly.

A "wile" is a stratagem intended to ensnare or deceive. It is traced out with method, or well laid-out. Other synonyms for "wile" are *entrap*, *enslave*, *lure*. Satan lures us to sin as a fishing lure entices fish. You are well familiar with James' example of that enticement.

To put on the whole armor of God is to spiritually put on the mind of God. The armor is provided by God and modeled on what He and Jesus Christ wear figuratively.

Isaiah 11:5 "Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist."

Isaiah 59:17 "For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head."

It is a complete outfit. "Whole armor" is from the Greek: panoplia. We know the Greek word 'pan' to be *all* or *whole*. The soldier must be protected from head to foot and the "whole armor" is made up of both defensive and offensive pieces. A good soldier needs a substantial amount of strength, courage, and skill to use the complete armor effectively.

The soldier of the world develops his strength over time, so also our strength comes gradually through the power of God's might working in us as we make great effort to strengthen ourselves.

Ephesians 6:12-14 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

"Stand" is a key word in Ephesians 6:11, 13, and 14. Standing comes from overcoming. In the Greek, the word means to work out, effect, or produce; and then to work up to

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make an end of, to vanquish. The idea seems to be is that we are to overcome or vanquish all of our enemies while standing firm. The equipment enables the soldier to ward off the attacks of the enemy and make a stand against him.

The Greek word from which 'stand' is translated is *stete*—it is a military term for holding on to a position. Before an offense can be launched, we must first of all strengthen our own ground. That is basic military strategy.

Many of the churches of God feel it is imperative to go on the offensive and preach the gospel to the world. Biblical principles show that we have to shore up our own foundation first, and strengthen the position God wants us in, before moving on the offensive.

In a battle, if an army neglects to secure their own ground while on the offensive, they take a foolish chance that the enemy may come in from behind or by stealth and occupy that home territory.

Churches make this foolish mistake by rallying behind preaching the gospel to the world only, while not stabilizing their own spiritual foundation. Eventually, the spiritual enemy will gain a foothold within that organization. Satan cannot prevail against the spiritual church, but he may be allowed to pick off weak or dying associates.

When Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, there were deliberate attempts to destroy faith and unity in the church through the infiltration of false doctrine and the promotion of dissension. We read many examples of this in Paul's writings.

In verse 12, the Greek word for "powers" is *krato*. It is a root word of the title *kosmokrator* denoting one who aspires to world control. Those powers and influences there are Satan and his representatives. That word was attached to savior gods in the ethnic religions and identified with the sun. So these powers are evil spiritual influences.

Pride, rebellion, and presumption were three main sins in heavenly places by which Satan and his demons themselves fell. That is what Satan will introduce into our minds because he is so familiar with that; he is the father of lies as well.

In verse 13, "in the evil day" refers to the time in our lives when things are at their very worst because of Satan's schemes and conspiracies to devour us. "Having done all we can" refers to our efforts to stand with the help of the Holy Spirit against the enemy.

In verse 14, again we are exhorted to stand with immovable steadfastness in the face of

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a ruthless enemy. In verse 13, Paul talked about standing firm in the midst of battle. Here, in verse 14, he writes at greater length about standing ready in anticipation of it.

The major items of the soldier's armor appear in the order in which they would be put on. Together they comprise the whole armor worn before taking the field.

Ephesians 6:14-18 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

So that is quite a list of things that has to be done by a soldier and we are Christian soldiers as the song goes, and we have a lot to do to put these things on.

Let us take a look at 'the waist with truth.' The belt tied tightly around the waist indicated that the soldier was prepared for action. To slacken the belt was to go off duty. The belt zone was not an ornament, but served an essential purpose. It gathered in the short tunic and helped keep the breastplate in place when the latter was fitted on. From it hung the scabbard in which the sword was sheathed.

The King James translation in this instance is not as good as it should be; it is misleading in the sense that it puts it in a passive way instead of an active manner. Instead of reading 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,' as if someone else did it for you, a better translation is, 'Stand therefore, having girded your waist about with truth' (as the New King James Version and the English Standard Version and other versions have it).

In other words, it is we who have to do this. The girdle is not put on us by another. We have to put it on firmly and in position.

Putting on the girdle frees the soldier for action because it binds up his loose hanging garment that would get in the way and slow down his actions. He becomes unencumbered in all his movements, and is able to hold up his shield with one hand and handle the sword with the other.

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The girdle gave the soldier a sense of security. He was ready, he was keyed up, he was alert, he was tense, he was toned up for action, and felt that everything was in order and in position.

There is no doubt that the girdle is the foundational garment in the soldier's armor. The soldier cannot hope to do anything without it, and there would certainly be nothing but confusion if he did not start with it and make sure that it was firm.

The girdle represents the whole truth of God—truth in and of itself.

John 8:31-32 Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Notice the term Jesus uses. He talks about knowing the truth. He is speaking about it as a whole—the whole doctrine of Christ in its entirety, the full summation of truth. Notice what Jesus is saying here, 'if you continue in My word, in My instruction concerning the truth, then you will be My disciples indeed, and then the truth will be imparted to you and that you will be continuing in, will make you free'.

In order to be free from the Devil and his wiles we must put on the girdle of truth—we must be well versed in the Word of God. Putting on this truth means applying it in our lives.

The "breastplate" covered the body from the neck to the thighs. It was known as the heart-protector. Usually it was made of bronze, but the more affluent officers wore a coat of chain mail. The front piece was strictly the breastplate, but a back piece was commonly worn as well. The breastplate protects the vital organs of the human body—the lungs, abdominal cavity, and especially the heart.

The 'breastplate of righteousness' protects us in the warfare that we are engaged in with Satan, the world, and our own human nature. In this case it is primarily concerned with fighting Satan and the world. This is probably the most important area to be careful about in regard to protection. Because it is so directly related to protecting the heart, it is the area where the emotions and affections are controlled, as well as the conscience, desires and will.

Wearing the breastplate of righteousness gives us a general sense of confidence and of reassurance. That is one of the great advantages of putting on this armor—we feel

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better the moment we put it on. We do not feel as exposed as we were, we are ready, and we can rely on its protection.

We need to be protected in the area of our emotions and moods, because they can be so erratic. Satan knows our weaknesses perhaps better than we know them, and he has had a lot of practice influencing and manipulating every last human on earth, but he especially wants to manipulate us.

There is only one primary protection for this—the righteousness of Christ.

This righteousness is imputed and imparted to us by faith through Christ, but we have to work out our own salvation as Paul tells us here in Philippians:

Philippians 2:12-13. Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

The righteousness of Christ, implanted in us, is our breastplate to fortify our minds against Satan's attacks.

Let us take a look briefly at 'shod feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.'

Once the breastplate has been fitted into position, the soldier puts on his boots, in the case of those back in the time of Paul many times it was actually reinforced sandals. Josephus described them as "shoes thickly studded with sharp nails" so as to ensure a good grip and sure balance.

The military successes of both Alexander the Great and of Julius Caesar were due in large part to their armies being well shod and thus able to undertake long marches at incredible speed over rough terrain.

Paul uses the word 'stand' or 'withstand' to emphasize the importance of the feet. We stand upon our feet. We do not stand on our chest. And, we usually do not stand upon our heads.

In a sense, everything relies upon security, safety, and the good functioning of the feet. It is important that the feet provide firmness of hold, mobility, and balance.

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Our entire personality is engaged in this Christian warfare. Every part of the body is essential to the true functioning of the whole body. The feet are absolutely essential to the body's welfare because of the unity of the body.

There is little that is more important in our Christian lives than balance. Many of our troubles are due to a lack of balance, something of which Satan is very much aware. A person who is off balance is a person who is confused, unaware, and who lacks self control.

The 'preparation of the gospel of peace' conveys the notion of firmness that is given to us by the gospel of peace. Also, our feet should be shod with preparedness, or readiness to withstand the onslaught of the enemy, that is Satan and his demons.

Since Paul is speaking about our fight against the Devil, there are several principles that fit here. There is firmness, confidence, and a sense of assurance. In fighting such a wily adversary as Satan, we have to guard against slipping and falling.

This means we have to know exactly where we are standing, and be balanced in all that we are doing. This means that we must be resolute; that we must be resolved to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. We have to resolve to adhere to this Gospel, even unto death if need be. If we are not willing to go to that length, then we are, at the very best, a Laodicean Christian.

To stand firm, with shod feet, does not allow room for a half-hearted Christian who desires the benefits, but objects to the duties. It does not allow for the person who wants the privileges but rejects the responsibility. We have to start by being firm, resolute, and assured.

II Corinthians 1:15-17 And in this confidence I intended to come to you before, that you might have a second benefit—to pass by way of you to Macedonia, to come again from Macedonia to you, and be helped by you on my way to Judea. Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?

Paul is saying here, that there is not such inconsistency and uncertainty in his counsels and actions that no one can depend on him or know what to expect of him. He is saying that he is not a fluctuating Christian, he stands firm and his yes is yes and his no is no.

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II Corinthians 1:18-19 But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes.

Paul is saying, that he, and the other ministers, were not representing Christ by being fickle and changeable. They were steadfast and firm in the truth, just as we should be.

II Corinthians 1:20-22 For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

The only way we can have that guarantee, and know that all will be fulfilled, is because there is no vacillating on the part of God, there is no fickleness, and no change of heart toward His gospel of peace. As God stands with His feet firmly planted, so should we.

Let us take a look briefly at the 'shield of faith.' Above all, through thick and thin, or to cover all the rest of the Christian soldier, is to take up the shield of faith. The Greek word from which we get our English word 'shield' is thyreon. It is derived from thyra meaning a door, and refers to the large oblong or oval shield the Roman soldier held in front of him for protection. It consisted of two layers of wood glued together covered with linen and hide, and bound with iron. I know if I were out there in battle, I would want a whole door the size that we walk through, and that is not even as large as the shield of faith that we grab hold of with the help of God.

Soldiers often fought side by side with a solid wall of shields. But even a single-handed combatant found himself sufficiently protected. After the siege of Dyrachium, Sceva counted no less than 220 darts sticking into his shield. He was very thankful for that shield.

The breastplate secures the vital organs (especially the heart). But, the shield is a universal defense that can be moved to intercept danger. In battle, you need your shield to protect you against the things that may be hurled at you as a preliminary before the enemy comes in person, sword in hand, and attacks you still more directly.

This is the only one of which Paul indicates the effect of a specific piece of armor. With such a shield the fiery darts are not only stopped but extinguished as well.

With his fiery darts, Satan drives us down into the depths of depression and utter hopelessness about ourselves. Let me give you a couple of examples of this:

Now I am sure that you have found that when you have been praying, or are trying to pray, that these darts come from all directions at you. When your one desire is to be concentrating on God, you seem filled with all these distracting, and maybe even evil thoughts. Where do they come from? They just come out of the blue, it is not a subject that you are thinking about.

I am sure you have also experienced this when you are reading the Bible. It seems you can read a newspaper and concentrate on it, but when you start reading the Bible, distractions and thoughts just seem to bombard you, they come from all directions, and it is almost impossible sometimes to concentrate. Where did they come from? Those are the result of the fiery darts.

These fiery darts obviously come from outside ourselves. They are not generated by us; they come to strike us. Dr. Lloyd-Jones gives a warfare analogy that will help picture this. In the First World War in particular, when trench warfare was practiced, there were days when there was a kind of lull. The enemy was still there, and you could afford to take risks. If you exposed yourself you would be shot at, but on the whole there was a lull with nothing much happening.

Then suddenly a barrage would come from the enemy's lines. You can picture Satan doing that, with his influences and ideas and enticements. One effect these darts in various shapes and sizes have is that the saint under attack will assume that they are his own thoughts and begin to doubt whether he is a Christian at all. The holding up of the shield of faith reminds us that we are looking to God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and that means that we are depending on God and His grace in Christ. It means that we link ourselves in our mind and thought to God who has all power and who will enable us with power of His Spirit. A major tool in doing this is the tool of prayer.

We do not try to work up some kind of feeling called faith. Faith never points to itself; it always points to God. We should not be looking at ourselves and trying to cultivate faith in ourselves. Faith always points to God and His character. It is the faith of Jesus Christ in us that builds and develops.

God is the One on whom we can rely. True faith is an absolute trust and confidence in Him. It is knowing that all things work together for good for those who love God.

Let us take a brief look at the 'helmet of salvation.' The shield has to be fixed in place

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before the helmet since the handle of the shield could not pass over it. The helmet was made of bronze with leather attachments. The previous items were laid out for the soldier to pick up. The helmet and sword were handed to the soldier by an attendant or by his armor bearer.

The spiritual application of the helmet is obvious. Paul is drawing attention to the head, the mind, the brain, the understanding, and the thinking of a Christian. We have already seen that the feelings, desires, and emotions are protected by the breastplate of righteousness.

Now, we have to direct our attention to the specific aspect that involves the consideration of the mind and the understanding, which is the intellectual part of our whole position as Christians. (Of course when we are dealing with the heart, we also include the mind, since Satan can tempt us with doubts as well.) You can only take these analogies so far.

The helmet of salvation does not relate as much to tactics of warfare (as the previously mentioned pieces of armor do) as it does to the strategy of warfare. It regards the whole military campaign.

In this general sense, our adversary, the Devil, often attacks us through producing a sense of weariness or of tiredness; so much so that we sometimes feel like giving up the entire battle. It is interesting that man, in his human way of fighting battles, will use psychological warfare to wear down and weary the enemy. In this general sense, our adversary the Devil often attacks us through producing a sense of weariness or of tiredness.

Compare this strategy to the tactics. We are sometimes in difficulties and trouble about specific aspects of the faith, maybe even about a doctrine. That does not raise the question of giving up the whole of Christian life.

There is something bigger, and in a sense, much more serious. It is that we tend to become weary and tired, and to feel hopeless about the whole campaign itself, and its outcome. We reach a condition when we begin to feel that the whole fight is in vain. This is the condition Paul warns us about:

II Thessalonians 3:13 "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good."

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Paul also warns the Galatians of the same thing, because it is a common spiritual shortfall.

Galatians 6:7-10 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

We do not earn salvation; it is a gift. Nevertheless, God requires that we fight with a strategy, so that we do not become weary in well doing. Enduring perseverance requires that we are proactive, not passive. The helmet of salvation protects us from becoming weary. We have to know where we are headed, what the goal is, and we must have it clearly in our mind.

Let us look briefly at the last item: 'the sword of the spirit.' For the Roman soldier it was a short two-edged cut-and-thrust sword. It was a fairly short sword and could be moved very quickly. Every other part of armor provides a protection for the body as a whole, or specific parts, of the body. But this is not true of the sword of the Spirit.

This weapon is defensive in a different way. It is defensive in the sense that it keeps back the enemy as a whole, rather than some specific aspect or method of his attack.

The sword does not protect different parts of the body, or cover the whole body as the big shield does. It protects us in the sense that it helps us to hold back the enemy himself rather than some specific action on his part.

The sword serves a dual purpose: defensive, and even more so, offensive. The sword is something whereby we can not only repel the enemy, but also attack him. It throws light on scriptures such as, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

Our only weapon of offense is "the word of God" or "the sword of the Spirit." The word of God during the apostle Paul's time consisted of only the Old Testament books. Christ used the words of Old Testament scripture to repel Satan the tempter.

In Matthew 4 Christ quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 to Satan, "every word that comes from the mouth of God." Christ also quotes Old Testament scripture during each of the

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temptations by Satan. In Isaiah 11:4 Christ is portrayed as one who strikes the ruthless with the rod (or, scepter) of His mouth, that is, by the authoritative impact of what He says. Elsewhere in Scripture, speech is compared to a sword.

We are living in desperate days when the enemy is trying to undermine our whole position. But God provides understanding of the Word, through the Spirit. We must take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We must know the Scriptures in a very detailed manner. We must not use the Word of God to feed our own vanity as so many have, in trying to impress others. But we must actively use it, and wield it, to the glory and praise of God.

Following the list of the armor of God, in verse 18 of Ephesians 6, the paragraph break in most Bible translations starts a new paragraph. But the command to "be alert" is in keeping with what has gone before and effectively rounds it off. Prayer is not itself included among the armor worn by the Christian soldier. However, constant prayer is required in preparation for battle as well as in the engagement itself.

Paul says, 'Take these various separate parts of armor and put them on carefully,' using them as he described. But in addition to all that, always, and at all times, and in every circumstance, keep on praying. Everything we have to do must be done in this spirit and attitude of constant prayer.

This means that the armor that is provided for us by God cannot be used except in fellowship and close relationship with God. The armor God provides for us must never be thought of mechanically.

The danger, the temptation, is to feel that as long as we put on this armor there is no more to be done; all is well, the armor will, in and of itself protect us, and do so mechanically. So having put it on, we can relax, and put watching aside. Here is the deep dark pit that mainstream Christianity falls into.

But, that is the exact opposite of the true position. That is a defeatist attitude. The armor and the spiritual application of it must be conceived in a vital and in a living manner. Every single piece, excellent though it is in and of itself, will not suffice us, unless we are always in a close relationship with God.

Look once more at the things we have been considering.

'Having girded your waist with truth'—the great and glorious truth about salvation as a whole and in general.

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'The breastplate of righteousness'—seeing clearly the principle of right living, and proving that we see it, by living a righteous life.

"Having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace"—a firm, resolute, and assured stand for God and His Kingdom.

'Above all, taking the shield of faith'—a faith that always points to God and His holiness.

'Take the helmet of salvation'—a protection from weariness and development of our righteous strategy.

'The sword of the Spirit'—the living and powerful Word of God.

Most of the soldier's garb is for protection against whatever the enemy would come at him with. Only the sword—"the word of God"—is for offensive action. From this we may deduct that God wants most of our efforts to be defensive. That is, overcoming our own problems and developing godly character, in preparation for His Kingdom. A defensive position is strong in self-government, based on the love of God.

We have to fight and keep on fighting. We have to be able to say, 'I have fought a good fight,' as Paul did.

II Timothy 4:7-8 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

It is indeed God who gives us the strength and the armor to withstand, resist, and repel Satan, and the world. But we have a great personal responsibility to put on and take up the equipment God has provided! Are you fighting the good fight? Will God say to you, "Well done My good and faithful servant?"