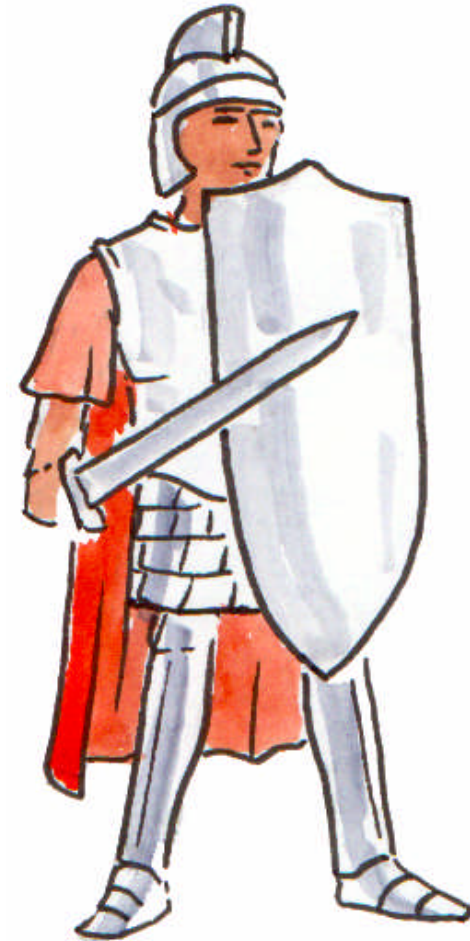


WARFARE



The Christian Warrior's Armour

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“Warfare”

We're considering the subject of 'Warfare', because the Christian life essentially is a battle, and the Christian essentially is a soldier in that battle. Paul said to Timothy in his second epistle: 'Endure hardness as a soldier of Jesus Christ'. We are soldiers, or at least we are meant to be soldiers in the army of the Lord.

Now warfare is not a very popular subject in our day and age, specifically in our society - and at present the unpopularity of the war in Iraq threatens to eject Labour from government and the Prime Minister from his seat. War is unpopular, and I think there seems to have developed a similar aversion to warfare in the church of Jesus Christ. An observer on the sidelines of the battlefield where the church is meant to be encamped in battle would be forgiven for thinking that the battle is won, or that the battle is over, or maybe that there isn't even a battle on at all. But the Scripture is very clear that there is a battle raging, and this is how the Bible describes the Christian experience, as being an experience of warfare. Sadly today the church seems to have sanitised itself. It has gone a long way to popularise its message; it no longer sees itself as an army but an institution; it has replaced the fight with fun; it has substituted entertainment for artillery; it has substituted comfort for the conflict. It would have to be said that those on the sidelines, the observers of our war, perhaps see us as clowns in a circus rather than gladiators in an amphitheatre fighting for the cause of God today in our world.

But however the focus of Christendom today has changed, the Bible has not changed. The Bible tells us that we still have an enemy. The Scriptures teach that we have a Commander in our headquarters of heaven. We as Christians are actually soldiers, fighting not for victory but in the victory of our King of Kings - and Ephesians 6 tells us that we also have an armour that we are told to put on. Now before we look at this Christian armour I want to ask a very elementary question: have you got a fight on your hands? A personal question: have you got a fight on your hands? For some reason in this life, I don't care or want to know what it is in particular, but if you are Christian in the Christian battle with Christ as your Commander, one thing is certain: you will have a fight on your hands.

Three Types Of Soldier

The sad fact is that many have retired from the battlefield. It's very easy to tell whether you've got a fight on your hands or not, or whether you're in the battle. There are few contrasts greater than that between war and peace, and you'll know if people, or principalities, or powers are fighting against you. Every Christian is a soldier, but it seems to me that there are at least three types of soldiers in the Christian army.

I'm finished, but my last word to you is Paul's word: 'Take, take this helmet! Take this breastplate! Take this belt! Take these shoes! Take the shield! Take the sword! Take all prayer!'. You don't need these things, you take them because they're already made with the finished work, and when you take them you will stand as the battle rages - for the battle doesn't belong to you, it belongs to the Lord.

*'Fainting soldier of the Lord
Hear His sweet, inspiring word:
I have conquered all thy foes,
I have suffered all thy woes.
Struggling soldier, trust in Me,
I have overcome for Thee!*

*Fear not though thy foes be strong,
Fear not though the strife be long:
Trust thy glorious Captain's power,
Watch with Him one little hour.
Hear Him calling, 'Follow Me,
I have overcome for thee".*

Lord, if there are those who have been cowards in this battle, or casualties, we pray that You will make them more than conquerors as they this day put off the old filthy clothes of unrighteousness and put on the Lord Jesus Christ - Christ who is all in all to us. May every soldier in this battle take up the armour and fight for, praise God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, we have won. Amen.

Other Booklets in this series:

“The Morning Watch”

“The Fullness Of The Spirit”

“Temptation”

“Obedience”

“Fruit”

“Guidance”

“Love For The Lord”

“Love For Others”

“Discernment”

“Assurance”

“Worship”

scenario. You see it in the Lord's life when He was tempted, from Deuteronomy three times: 'It is written, it is written, it is written...' - the appropriate verse for the temptation. At the end of it all, what do we read? 'The devil leaveth Him' - the power of the Bible in this battle.

Let me say that every piece of armour on this soldier speaks of God's word. Where do we get salvation? In the word of God - 'As a child', Timothy was told, 'you have learned salvation from the Holy Scriptures'. The breastplate of righteousness, we learn about righteousness and justification in the Scriptures. Truth is God's word, 'Thy word is truth'. Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel, where is the Gospel found? In the Bible. What are we to have faith in? We're to have faith in God's word. The sword of the Spirit - it all speaks of God's word, and God's word is Christ, Christ is the truth, Christ is our righteousness, Christ is our salvation, Christ is the word of God, Christ is our peace, Christ is our faith, Christ is everything! We get the battle through knowing God's word, and through knowing the word of God the Spirit will reveal Christ to us, and that is when we will have the victory.

I love Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. There's a character in it called Valiant-for-Truth. He's fighting the devil, he's fighting with the sword of the Lord in his hand, and he says this: 'I fought till my sword did cleave to my hand, and then they were joined together as if a sword grew out of my arm. When the blood ran through my fingers, then I fought with most courage' - in other words, he had fought against sin and resisted unto blood. Fighting with the word of God!

A Battle Fought By Prayer

If you want to win this battle it's by faith, it's by the Bible, thirdly and finally it's by prayer. Look at verse 18: 'Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints'.

Prayer is, if you like, the energy for this battle. It's the blood flowing through the veins, it's a necessity for every soldier to be in constant communion with headquarters and his Captain and his Commander. It is the breath that the Christian soldier breathes. Without prayer, whoever the Christian is, they will be ineffective and helpless, because prayer brings God into the battle. It is prayer that brings the Almighty onto the field. 'Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees'. Bunyan called this weapon 'all prayer', it's prayer as a way of life - praying always, verse 18, on all occasions. It's a constant communion, it's varied prayer, all kinds of prayer it means. It's Spirit-led prayer, in the Spirit. It's prayer with a watchful disposition, it's a persistent determination, perseverance in prayer. It's a sanctified direction: for all the saints.

First of all there is the coward, the one who runs away from battle. Then there is the casualty, the one who has been injured in battle. And then there is the conqueror, the one we all should aspire to be. Now, effectively speaking, Paul says that we are all conquerors through Him that loved us. Roman 8 tells us: 'Though we are killed all the day long, though we face manifold temptations and trials and tribulations, we are more than conquerors through Him that has loved us'. But though that may be the fact, the experience of many Christians is far from that of triumph. Many are, as the United States Army would put it, 'AWOL' - Absent WithOut Leave. Cowardly, they have left the battlefield for one reason or another. Others are injured, they have taken a battering, a beating in the battle of some kind, and they're just ready to give up and to give in.

The Strategy For Success

We're asking from Ephesians 6: is there a rallying cry for battle-bruised and shellshocked Christian soldiers? For those who are in the battle, and feel that the Christian battle is overwhelming them, or the battle with this world and the system of it - is there a strategy for victory, a method of success, and if there is, what is it? Praise God, I have the privilege of announcing to you from God's word: yes, there is a strategy for success, and Ephesians 6 is exactly what it is. But before we look at the individual pieces of armour, there's one thing that we need to learn right away before we start to put this armour on. First and foremost: we must know who our enemy is. Verses 11 and 12 outline for us the type of enemy that we have, the devil, the methods and wiles of the devil: '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'. You will know that an Intelligence Corps is extremely important in the fighting of any war, you've got to have information about your enemy. Paul said: 'We ought not to be ignorant of his devices', his wiles - the word is 'methodias', it means his methods, his stratagems, his deceitful plans and ploys and plots. One of them that Paul outlined in 2 Corinthians 11 is to masquerade as an angel of light, even as a supposed minister of the gospel of Christ.

So it is very hard to observe the devil, to find him out, especially when the fact is that he dresses up as ministers of Christ on occasion. Verse 12 literally speaks of evil spirits, these principalities and powers, spiritual beings in the heavenly places. Many scholars, and I believe they're right, say that this is a hierarchy of disciplined chain of command, a bit like that which is reflected in the hierarchy of angelic beings. You've heard of cherubim and seraphim, and archangels and ordinary angels - well, this is a similar chain of command, only it's in the kingdom of darkness. Satan has all these emissaries all over the globe working his wiles, particularly in the life of the Christian soldier - that is what we are up against. He has had millennia of experience in tackling and overcoming the children of God.

Imagine studying mathematics for 100 years - I found it a chore studying it for about 14 years or so in school, I'm sure some of you are the same - but imagine studying it for 100 years. Imagine for 1000 years reading the theories of Einstein or Newton - well, Satan has had thousands upon thousands of years studying humanity in detail, looking at the human disciplines, how we are made up, how we work. His prime motive is to subvert our race through the study of how he can overcome us. We only see flesh and blood. We look around us at countries and nations, we see rulers, hostile world systems, kings and potentates and presidents, but what we don't see is what is behind it. We don't wrestle against these things, that's why a Christian's chief role is not to be in politics - although I don't rule it out - the fact of the matter is that Satan is whom we wrestle against, Satan and his spiritual emissaries.

Now you will know I hope, at least, that Satan is not omnipresent - he can't be everywhere at once. He is not omnipotent, that means he doesn't have all power. He is not all knowing and omniscient, so he has to have a network in order to find out things about us, in order to work his influence, darkly speaking, over this whole globe. He has that, verse 12, this is the way he effects change throughout our globe. He can't be everywhere at once, so he has these spiritual beings working his will. Luther faced it in the Reformation, and he wrote that great hymn: 'A mighty fortress is our God', and one of the verses goes like this:

*'For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe.
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate
On earth is not his equal'.*

This is our enemy, second to none apart from God. Are you defeated by him? It would be easy to be such. Are you a coward who has run away from the battle? You find the devil too great, or what is expected of you as a Christian too strong, and you have run to the world like Demas who forsook Paul 'having loved this present world'. Maybe you're not a coward, but you're a casualty, you have been injured. You've taken Satan on face-to-face and come off the worst. Martin Luther once doubted the goodness of God, and he wrote these words: 'For more than a week I was close to the gates of death and hell' - have you ever felt like that? That God has forsaken you, that you're in dire trouble and darkness, you're in the thick of the battle, you're even contemplating running from the battle - well, you need to hear this message from God's word, here it is: 'Put on the whole armour of God, and then you will be able to stand'.

The Battle For The Man

It strikes me that many do not even know that there's a battle on. The nature of this armour, I believe, shows us the type of battle that is raging. Look down at it. First of all I

can be set alight from the very fires of hell. We can be set alight through covetousness, envy, strife, malice, hatred, all sorts of passions can well up in response to a dart from Satan. What Paul is saying is: if you want to overcome these things in your life, the only thing that will protect you is the shield of faith.

'What is this shield?', you might say. Well, I believe it's just God - I don't mean 'just' God in a bad sense, I mean it in the sense of that's all that is needed. Abraham was told: 'I am thy shield', the Lord said, 'and thy exceeding great reward'. This shield of faith is simply faith in God, to believe Him rather than to believe the devil. 'Oh', you say, 'I would never believe the devil'. Do you know why so many believers are in the anxious predicaments of mind and heart that they are? It's because they listen to the devil's lies, rather than listening to God's truth - standing firm in the liberty wherewith Christ has set them free. Jesus said: 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free'. John said: 'Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith'.

*'We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender,
We go not forth alone against the foe.
Strong in Thy strength, safe in Thy keeping tender'.*

A Battle Fought By The Bible

Faith is what will give you the victory, and faith in God. Secondly, it is a battle to be fought by the Bible, verse 17: 'Take', not just the helmet of salvation, but 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God'. It is a two-edged, cut and thrust sword that is spoken of here that was wielded by the heavily armoured legionary. It's distinct from a broad sword, it's more like a big dagger - but this is the sword of the Lord! This is like Goliath's sword, there is none like it, because this is God's word that has been inspired by His Spirit. This sword is to be used for our defence, it is to be used for our attack, and as a physical sword wears with use, this sword sharpens with use. It is the sword of God's word, or more literally of God's utterance, His spoken word. Most of you will be familiar with John chapter 1, where the word 'logos' is used in Greek for 'the word'. This is not the word in Greek that is used here, it's another word 'rema'. It speaks not of the living word or the written word, it actually speaks of the spoken word. What Paul is saying is, when the enemy comes in like a flood against you, what you ought to do is throw your Bible at him!

Is it the whole Bible? Well, if you get a temptation this afternoon and start reading the whole Bible to him you'll be there for a wee while! Harry Ironside says that the word of God is more like an armoury with many many daggers in it, different daggers, every one powerful, every one two-edged, but every one for a different circumstance and situation - and it takes wisdom and time in God's word to learn which dagger to use for which

your feet shod with a joyful readiness to propagate the gospel of peace'. The reason being, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians, there are millions across our globe that have been blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the Gospel shines unto them and they believe.

So there is a battle on for lost souls, and we as Christian soldiers are to have a promptness and a readiness to help them. Paul said: 'Beautiful are the feet of them that take the good news, of them that publish peace'. 'Be always ready', Peter said, 'to give an answer to anyone who asks a reason for the hope that is within you'. It is easy to be dull to the condition of the lost in this world today, is it not? I wonder has Satan won the battle in your life and mine concerning our witness to the lost?

A Battle Fought By Faith

Now we must move on, because there are those who know they're in the battle - those first points: the battle for the man, the mind, the heart, and the lost are for those who perhaps doubt they're in a battle - but many of you're in the heat of it, and you know full well that there's a battle being fought, but you don't know how to fight it. These points are for you. These pieces of armour show us that this battle is to be a battle fought first of all by faith. It is a battle to be fought by faith, verse 16: 'Take, above all, the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked'. 'Above all', or 'in addition to', take the shield of faith. The thought here is, this is a very important piece of armour, but it covers all the other pieces of armour, it is literally put above them all in its nature. It will meet all the onslaughts of the evil one.

Now this shield that Paul is talking about is not the small shield that is commonly called in scripture 'the buckler', it is literally 'a door shield'. It's a great oblong shield of about two and a half feet by four feet, and he's telling us to take this great shield of an accomplished warrior, fully fitted soldier, this great shield of our faith - and it alone will be able to quench the fiery darts of the evil one. What a dangerous weapon in ancient warfare a fiery dart was. It was an arrow tipped with pitch and set alight, and the only thing that could extinguish it was this oblong door shield. It was made up of two layers of laminated wood glued together, and then covered with linen and tough leather hide, then it was bound top and bottom with iron, and there was an iron ornament on the front of it. Immediately these fiery darts penetrated it, they were naturally extinguished there and then. Paul is saying that the missiles of the evil one will only be extinguished by your faith.

I hope, perhaps, to take one whole week on the subject of faith in the life of a believer, but this will suffice at least for today: Satan has thousands of flames and darts that will set us alight, and we have to remember that even as Christians we are flammable. We have a sinful human nature, and there are many things that set us alight with lust, our tongue

want you to see from verse 14 that it is a battle for the man. Verse 14 describes to us: 'Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth'. This is the belt of truth, commonly called. But what I believe this tells us is that Satan's battle is for the whole man. This belt was worn by a Roman soldier, and incidentally Paul was in prison as he writes this epistle looking at a representation, a physical personality with this armour on him. He sees around the Roman soldier's waist this belt. You see, a Roman soldier commonly wore a long flowing robe, and that was not conducive to battle. Therefore whenever the battle started to rage he would tuck up under his belt this robe in order to allow him to run and fight. If you like, the tucking up of the robe into the belt was the prelude for battle. When he tightened his belt, he was ready to fight - a bit like pulling your socks up in the football match or tightening your boots, you're ready to go.

Paul likens this belt to the belt of truth. This belt, according to the Roman soldier, girt up other pieces of the armour. The breastplate would be set in place, the sword would be fitted into this belt, and his robe would be tucked under it - so it had many uses. If you like, it bound together all of the armour for this Roman soldier. Paul's thought is, spiritually speaking, that there's no point in using any of the pieces of armour like the sword or the shield if your life is not bound up in the truth of God. In other words, if I could put it like this, there's no point in using God's truth, if it be the sword of the spirit, the word of God, there's no point holding it in your right hand if God's truth does not hold you.

Now it should be no revelation to you that Satan is interested in the whole man, body, soul and spirit. He wants to corrupt all of our nature. But it is the same with God: God is also interested in the whole man. Of course, you know that Satan's desire is to continually counterfeit God's methods. E.M. Bounds says in his great book 'Power through Prayer': 'Men are God's method. The church is looking for better methods, but God is looking for better men'. In the same way as God is looking for men to do His bidding, Satan also wants the whole man - he wants to influence and control the whole of our being, and that is why in this armour there is not an inch that is exposed, not an inch of the body that is open to attack except the back. That is a warning to all of us who are cowards.

The fact that this armour covers all of the man speaks especially, I think, in this piece of armour, the belt of truth, of how in the battle it is a Christian's testimony that is under attack. The devil is interested in undermining your testimony, he wants to loosen the belt of truth upon your life so that your whole armour and your whole soldiership should fall to pieces before his wiles.

The Battle For The Mind

Now the preferred channel of attack on the man begins with the mind. The battle is a battle for the whole man, but I want you to notice secondly in verse 17 that this is where

he starts the battle: the mind - 'Take the helmet of salvation'. This was a bronze helmet with leather attachments, there were bands to protect the forehead and plates, bronze plates to protect the cheeks, and it extended protracted down the back of the neck to protect the vitals around our brain and so on and blood vessels. This was to protect the most important organ that any man has, because the deadliest wounds in battle would come toward the head. You see, a soldier - you would have to be a good one mind you, but it is quite possible - is able to fight on with the loss of a limb. If he loses an arm, or perhaps loses a leg, but he cannot go on if he loses his head. It is the head that Satan attacks first. How Satan attacks the minds, not only of all humanity, but particularly the mind of believers!

Let me give you one example of this: Satan cannot take away your security in Christ. He cannot take away your identity in the Lord Jesus, but what he can do is he can take away your peace and assurance that accrues from salvation. That is why Paul says you need to put on your head, on your mind, the truths, the knowledge and the assurance of salvation's helmet. That's why Peter says: 'Gird up the loins of your mind', tighten that helmet upon you. That's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians that we are to take captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ all our thoughts. The long and the short of it is: if Satan gets into your mind, he'll take your head off. This is where the Christian battle, I believe, more than anything else, is won or lost: in the mind.

Paul tells us that Eve was deceived through the subtlety of Satan in her mind. He implored the Corinthians that they would not be deceived in the same way. Paul says in Philippians 4:8 that that is why we ought to think on good things. We ought to put good input into our computers in order to have good output coming out in our lives. But though Satan starts with the mind, the mind is the gate to the heart.

The Battle For The Heart

Though this is a battle for the whole man, and he begins this battle in the mind, it is a battle that he takes - if he gets into the mind - to the heart. Satan's battle is a battle for the heart, because the heart is the vital organ and also around this area where the breastplate is found you have all the vital organs. Verse 14: 'Put on the breastplate of righteousness'. This breastplate is to protect our vitals from the fiery darts of the evil one, these deadly darts that are shot towards the heart.

Satan is the accuser of the brethren, the Scriptures tell us - in fact, that's what his name means 'to throw at', and he continually throws at believers - and if you are one you'll know exactly what I'm talking about - accusations. 'You're not worthy to be called a child of God! You did this, you did that', and he digs up all the dirt, brings out all the skeletons of the past in order to take away our security, our assurance in Christ and our victory. That's why Paul says: not only do we need for our minds the helmet of salvation,

to know of assurance what we have and where we are in Christ, but we need this breastplate of Christ's righteousness to realise that it doesn't matter how much Satan throws at me, I stand not in my own righteousness but the righteousness of God in Christ. His breastplate of righteousness is an impregnable covering for the soul, the righteousness of God. Wasn't it Isaiah said that our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags - imagine what a breastplate of filthy rags would be like, it wouldn't serve any purpose at all! But praise God, through the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, His efficacious, propitiatory work on Calvary's cross, we have a breastplate that is not our own - 'I may my great accuser face, and tell him Thou hast died'.

Solomon said in Proverbs 4 to guard your heart: 'Keep thy heart, for out of it are the issues of life'. Christian, do you guard your head with the helmet of salvation? Do you guard your heart with the breastplate of righteousness? Many Christians are wrecked with restless fears and anxieties, troubles, distresses, and the majority of them come from the evil one himself, because he seeks to bind us! He seeks to make us useless in the battle! Maybe you're a coward, or maybe you're a casualty, and you don't realise that you've succumbed to the plan and the scheme of the evil one. Oh, that your mind and heart would be at peace today. Isaiah said: 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee'. Paul said: 'Be anxious for nothing, but in all things by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known unto God; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall rule in your heart and mind through Christ Jesus'.

The Battle For The Lost

Well, fourthly: the battle is for the lost. The battle is for the whole man, the battle is for the head, the battle is for the heart, and the battle is for the lost. A Roman soldier wore sandals, but they weren't like Moses' sandals, they were like hobnailed boots that would give the Roman soldier a better footing; and they also protected him when he was marching along, and perhaps stood in a trap, from getting trapped. They weren't like a flip-flop, they were firm shoes. They had two straps that would be wrapped three or four times around his lower leg. The two thoughts that Paul has in this image of this soldier's shoes is first of all with these hobnailed boots, nailed to the ground with spikes, we are to stand firm in the victory that Christ has given to us. We are not fighting for victory - and this is the key to winning the Christian battle - we are fighting from victory! Christ has accomplished victory on the cross, and through His glorious resurrection, and through His life within us. It's when we stand on that that we win! That's what the devil wants to push us off.

Then the second thought is the readiness to go into enemy territory, and invade with the gospel - this is the thought of the preparation of the gospel of peace. Our feet shod, verse 15, with the preparation of the gospel of peace - a Spanish translation puts it: 'Having