The Armor of God

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Our Real Enemy

No one can read the New Testament without realizing that God is not interested in “religion,” but He is tremendously interested in Life! God is not nearly as interested in stained glass windows, organ music, congregation singing, even our prayers or the sermon, half as much as He is interested in producing love filled homes, generous hearts, brave men and women who can live in the midst of their world, keeping their heads and hearts undefiled.

We can only understand “Life” when we see it, as the Bible sees it!

We are continually exposed to illusions mingled with reality in a world, with its commerce and recreation. We are confronted with distorted perspectives, twisted motives, uncertain hope and untested ideas. That’s the reason God gave us the Bible.

When we come to the Bible, we learn the truth. Reality is set before us. We see the world as it really is, stripped of all the confusing illusion. In God’s Word we can find life as God our Maker intended it. We find that it is exactly as the Bible says.

In God’s Word perspectives are set straight, we get our value system righted, our dreams weighed and evaluated as to whether they are “real” or only “make believe.”

We may not always like what we read in the Bible, but we only succeed in deceiving ourselves if we reject it. We are not the authority to correct God’s Word. It is up to us to listen to the words of God because herein lies authority to correct us. God help us to stop trying to sit in judgment upon His insights that are given in His Word. We must reduce every idea we receive to this simple consideration, “Am I to accept this thought as of God?” If it agrees with what Christ says, fine! It is Truth! What I must do is to decide, whether my thoughts agrees with the words of Jesus Christ.

Life is not a “bowl of cherries” The Ephesians received a letter from the Apostle Paul to set forth God’s analysis of Life – especially as it relates to a Christian. The Holy Spirit preserved that letter for you – and for me – to learn about Life!

Paul writes concerning the nature of Life, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:10-13).

God tells us that the basic characteristic of life can be put into one world – “Struggle!” Life is a conflict, a combat, a continual wrestling. No one has to tell this to us, we know it to be true because we experience it.

This thought is embodied in our songs, and stories, For instance:
“We’ll build a sweet little next
Somewhere in the West
And let the rest of the world go by.”

It certainly is not wrong for us to dream.

This romantic ideal seems to be a holdover from the Garden of Eden, God’s original intention for human life. And it will again be a reality, in God’s good order and time.

But Paul is not dealing with that kind of life. He is coming to grips with life as it really is here and now. Life is a struggle, a conflict, and a battle against opposing forces! We would like to draw away from it all and attempt to get away from the struggle, but we find ourselves jarred back into reality. Some unpleasant fact intrudes itself into our beautiful world and refuses to go away. Vacations come to an end and we must go back to work. The death of a loved one shocks us with all its emptiness and loneliness. We remember some pressing decision that we must make – or, maybe, some threat to our income, or our health. Maybe it is some disappointment in some person we loved and trusted. We are constantly drawn back out of our dreams of easy and enjoyment to face the rough, hard realities of life.

Paul writes that life is a fluctuating struggle, “Therefore – put on the full armor of God, so that when the evil day comes, you will be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything – you will still be standing!” (Ephesians 6:13)

Some days are not as difficult as other days. Some are worse, more difficult than others. In the passing of life, there are seasons when pressures are more intense, problems more insoluble – when everything seems to come upon us at once. There are days that Scripture calls “evil day,” when evil attacks you – did I say, “a day?” – sometimes it a week, or even, months!

Thank God that all of life is not that way. We are not always under pressure, not always confronted with overpowering circumstances that call for agonizing decisions. And the reason we are not always under pressure is due to the grace of God.

God’s grace continually operates to restrain the powers that are against us and allows time of refreshment, recreation, enjoyment and blessing. It’s a tragic thing that we sometimes take these times of refreshment, blessing and joy, without a word of thanksgiving or a single thought for the goodness of God that underlies them and makes them possible.

Romans 2:4 says, “Do you presume upon the riches of God’s kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God’s kindness is meant to lend you to repentance?” Paul says that through all days are not always the same in pressure, nevertheless, life is an unending struggle. Days vary in intensity from time-to-time from cradle to grave, but life, in general, is a struggle.

Paul continues in Ephesians 6:12 to analyze and define the nature of this struggle. He says, “This conflict is not against flesh and blood – it’s not against some human problem – it’s not a struggle of man against man – it is a struggle within men – not between men.”

Think for a moment about this question, “What is the thing that gives you the most difficulty in life? Just what does the struggle in your life consist of?” To answer that question we must look further and deeper than the government, our relatives or our job. God’s Word tells us
that we cannot explain life adequately on this level. The Bible tells us that this battle is not
against flesh and blood – but, rather, it is against certain principalities and powers, world rulers
of darkness, wicked spirits in high places [or, in the spiritual realm].”

The enemy we are up against is not those who oppose us, but rather, God says, it is
against “the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness.” This
declaration from Ephesians 6:12 can only be fully believed, and understood, by those who study
God’s Word.

I’m well aware of the contempt the world has for the Biblical teachings of a real Devil
and his cohorts; how they feel about this kingdom of darkness – this “principality” – [a kingdom
ruled by Satan, Satan’s authority] – and “powers of wicked spirits” in the spiritual realm.

The world’s attitude seems to be, “Are you going to insult my intelligence by talking
about a personal Devil? Surely you are not going back to those medieval concepts and tell me
hat the Devil is the root of all our problems?” The world either distorts what God has to say
about the Devil to the point of being ridiculous or, rejects it as unacceptable to the intelligent
mind. Superstition has taken this great revelation of God’s Word and distorted, twisted, and
reduced it to a ridiculous pantheon of goblins, witches, spooks and ghosts. Those who reject as
unacceptable and claim there is no personal Devil, remind me of the story Billy Graham told: “A
certain boxer was being badly beaten in a mach. Battered and bruised, he leaned over the ropes
and said to his trainer, “Please, throw in the towel, this guy is killing me!” The trainer responded,
“Oh, no, he’s hardly laid a glove on you.” The boxer replied, “Well, then you better keep an eye
on the referee, because somebody is sure betting up on me.”

We face the same challenge when we are told, “There is no Devil!” Let me ask, then,
“How do you explain what is going on in the world? How do you explain the entrenched evil in
human affairs?”

If we cannot understand life, how can we understand history? If we reject this proposition
the Apostle Paul present, then what is behind the problems of the world? What is behind the evil
that manifests itself in mankind, if it is not a hierarchy of evil spirits – the Devil and his angels?

God’s Word teaches that there is an organized kingdom of “principles and powers” at
various levels of authority who sit as world rulers of the present darkness – “wicked spirits” in
the spirit realm – and, I believe it!

Someone may ask, “Why don’t you just talk about Christians getting busy, doing
meaningful things?” I ask, what could be more meaningful than putting our finger on the basic
problem in the world today? To ignore this problem would be like doctors rushing around trying
to cure fevers and never stopping to analyze the disease. There is a serious disease at work today,
constantly breaking out in little fevers. Are we going to be content to take an aspirin for the fever
and never once inquire what the disease is?

This is a subject that is relevant. To see what God has to say is to analysis what is wrong
with the world because He tells us what the disease is, and He also tells us what the cure is. That
is what this passage, Ephesians 6:10-18, so vividly and so accurately sets before us.

This gripping disease is growing so desperate that even non-Christians recognize the
inadequacy of their own diagnosis. Carl Jung, Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist, states, “We
stand perplexed and stupefied before the phenomena of Marxism and Bolshevism because we
know nothing about man or, at any rate, have only a lopsided and distorted picture of him. If we
had self-knowledge, that would not be the cause. We stand face to face with the terrible question
of evil and do not even know what is before us, let alone know what to pit against it. And even if
we did know, we still could not understand how it could happen here.”

What a revelation of man’s ignorance of men in the face of life, as it really is!

Listen to a statement by U Thant, when he was Secretary General of the United Nations.
Speaking before 67 distinguished statesmen from 19 countries of the world, convened before an
audience of 2,500 people to speak on, “The Requirements for World Peace.” He asks this
question: “What element is lacking so that with all our skill and all our knowledge we still find
ourselves in the dark valley of discord and enmity? What is it that inhabits us from going
forward together to enjoy the fruits of human endeavor and to reap the harvest of human
experience? Why is it that, for all our professed ideals, our hopes, and our skills, peace on earth
is still a distant objective seen only dimly through the storms and turmoil of our present
difficulties?”

When world leaders face the dilemma of modern life, all they can ask is, “What is wrong?
We cannot understand what unknown element is behind this. We do not know what is going on.
We cannot grasp these things. What is it that is missing?”

God has an answer, so that baffled, bewildered man can understand. It’s the world rulers
of this present darkness! The Devil is the head, together with his fallen angels, and his cunning
cleverness. We are called to ‘wrestle” this power of darkness, daily!

Ephesians 6:10-18 is not an isolated passage. This truth is found from Genesis through
Revelation. Jesus unmasks Satan’s disguises and reveals his true character. In John 8:44 Jesus
tell us that, “Satan is a murderer from the beginning and has nothing to do with the truth,
because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a
liar and the father of lies.” – That’s God analysis of Satan. His true character is that “he is a liar
and a murderer.”

Here in John 8:44, we have the explanation for all that is going on in the world. The
world is listening to Satan and he doesn’t tell the truth, he lies – a very clever, beautiful,
attractive lie – it makes the world drool with desires. The end of the lie is destruction, murder,
and death. This is, death, in all its forms, not only ultimately the cessation of life, but death in its
developing forms of restlessness, boredom, frustration, meaninglessness and emptiness. The
Devil deceives and he destroys.

How do we handle this struggle? “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!”
That’s the way of escape. There is no other way. We are called to combat, “to fight the good
fight.” We are to “be strong in the Lord,” right in the midst of the battle. What a challenge. It is
the greatest challenge your ear will ever hear.

Here is a truth that startles us, prods us and disturbs us. This reality of God’s Word
speaks to us in the midst of our complacency and lethargy and stirs us to see life as it really is.
We’re apt to drift into futile weakness, never lifting a finger against the deterioration of life and
the destruction of our body and soul. God’s Word challenges us to wake up and see “The Lord is our strength.”

Ready to Fight

Note the personal pronoun in 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.” Paul, of course, is referring to “we” Christians, not everyone in general. “We are not contending against flesh and blood.” The world is in a struggle against the powers of evil, victims of an invisible force. But “we” Christians, are not victims, “we” are wrestling against – “we” are victors!

There is an interesting revealing story in the 11th chapter of Luke, (verses 14-45), where Jesus has been “casting out demons.” Many today do not like that statement and attempt to explain it away. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day accused Him of “casting these demons out by the power of Beelzebub.” “Beelzebub” was the Philistine god of flies (2 Kings 1:2). Jews changed it to Beelzebub, “the dung god,” or “lord of the dunghill” – a most contemptuous and vile idol. It was identified as prince of demons (Matthew 12:24-32; Mark. 3:22; and Luke 11:15-19). The actual word, “Beelzebub,” means “god of the flies,” because garbage attracts flies. “Beelzebub” is general referred to as “the lord of the garbage.”

The Jews, listening to Jesus that day, regarded life as a garbage dump.

When the Pharisees accused Jesus of cast out demons by the power of Beelzebub, He answered them “No, you are wrong. If that were true, then Satan’s kingdom would be divided against itself. Satan would be pitted against the demons under his authority. Satan does not fight against his own kingdom. He knows, if he did that his kingdom would fall.”

Any man under the control of Satan has no hope of deliverance apart from outside help, some intervening force. Jesus said in Luke 11:21, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace – his possessions are safe.”

Who is the “strong man?” Jesus is referring to Satan, the Devil! The whole world is his palace.” His “goods” is mankind!

Note three great principles in this passage – Luke 11:21-23:

First, Man against Satan, alone is powerless and hopeless

1 John 5:19 says, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world is in the power of the wicked one.” The world is fallen under the control of Satan. It is not speaking of the trees, mountains, lakes and seas, but rather “world” refers to the organized human society. The whole world is in the power of the wicked one – Satan. It has fallen, with no possibility of an escape apart from an intervention from without.

“When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace.”

There can be no threat from within to Satan’s control.
Here in these verse, Luke 11:21-22, Jesus gives the reason for the continual failure of the usual methods of reform men employ to correct evils and wrongs. Legislation, education, improved environment – these all fail because they do not come to grips with the essential problem. They may appear to for a while, but they merely rearrange the difficulties – stir them up a bit to take a different form. These methods never solve the problem of evil because they do not come to grips with “the power of Satan.”

Writing on this subject, C.S. Lewis wrote, “No clever arrangement of bad eggs will make a good omelet.”

Men’s remedy, “legislation” merely attempts to control of the outward man, and has nothing to do with the inward man. Laws do nothing to change the basic nature of man, they merely restrict him under certain conditions.

Education is probably the worst so-called remedy for a deranged personality. God’s Words tell us, “All of us are born into this world with twisted minds” – (some more twisted than others). To educate a twisted mind does not basically change the person, but only makes them more clever in their wickedness.

Improved environment will not change man, either. You can take him out of the slums and put him into a nicer environment, but it does absolutely nothing for the man himself. He will make his new environment a slum, as well – if not physically, morally.

I am not suggesting that we scuttle thee traditional approaches to reform. They have certain values, but what I am saying is that they do not come to grips with the basic problem. Men who have spent a lifetime with these methods, are now acknowledging they are not working.

Listen to the words of Bertrand Russell, High Priests of the cult of Freethinkers; “The life of man is a long march through the night, surrounded by invisible foes, tortured by weariness and pain, toward a goal that few can hope to reach and where none can tarry long. One by one as they march our comrades vanish from our sight, seized by the silent orders of omnipotent death. Brief and powerless is man’s life. On him and his entire race the slow, but sure, doom falls, pitiless and dark. They are blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way. For man, condemned today is lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gates of darkness, I remain only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day.”

These words certainly catch the sheer despair into which man falls when he departed from God. There is an unconscious realization of man’s helplessness under Satan “A strong man fully armed – his goods are safe” (Luke 11:21).

Luke 11:22, “But when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil.” Who is this strong one? It is, none else, but, Jesus! “When this strong man (Satan) is fully armed and guards his palace, his goods are at peace [secure] – and nothing can be done about it – least of all by the possessions themselves. But, when one who is stronger comes, (Jesus Christ) He breaks the power of Satan.
This brings us to the second principle Jesus is revealing in this passage, Luke 11:21-23: **In the cross and the power of the resurrection, when applied by faith, we, who were born into a society that is under the control of the Satanic mind, discover that the force which ruins us is broken and its power cancelled!**

There is no other answer to the problems of men. There is no other power that can touch the basic problem of human life. There is only one “stranger One” Who has come into the world – has come to grips with the power of this dark spirit – and has broken his power over human lives. Not only prostitutes, alcoholics, and drug addicts, and others who are gripped by the power of evil habits, but also those who have been held by the power of evil attitudes, temper, lust, self-righteousness, bitterness and pride. The strongest chains are not those around the body, but those around the mind!

2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “The god of this world [Satan] has blinded the minds of the unbelievers.”

Romans tells us that the antagonism against the gospel does not come from the uneducated but from the educated – those who “thinking themselves wise, become fools and change the glory of God into a lie” (Romans 1:22-23).

1 John 3:8 says, “Jesus Christ came to set men free – and to destroy the works of the devil.”

Colossians 1:13 says, “He (God) has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

Jesus said to Paul in a vision on the Damascus road, “I have delivered you from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.” (Acts 26:18).

That is what the Gospel is all about. It has no other purpose! Don’t attempt to channel it into some smaller area of life, such as social concerns. The Gospel will ultimately find its way there, but its first impact must be upon the basic problem of human life. Mankind is in the grip of a power in which he is helpless to do anything about. The only One who can deliver him is Jesus Christ. He has already done so by the cross, and through the power of His resurrection.

What anyone accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior, he commits himself to Christ and the Gospel begins to become practical in his life. However, it is only the beginning of the battle. The new born Christian becomes away of evil forces at work to destroy him. If he goes no farther, in his new life, then to believe his sins are forgiven, he will remain in bondage to those sins, living a life of conflict and frustration. The battle is fought on the grounds of apply God’s Word: That we have been brought from the dominion of darkness and brought out of the power of Satan into the kingdom of God!

In Luke 11:21-23 we saw where man, alone, is helpless against the power of Satan; and, we also saw the liberation that is available through belief in Jesus Christ, Who destroyed Satan’s power.
Now, there is a third truth, another principle in this passage. Verse 23 says, “He who is not with Me is against Me and he who does not gather with Me scatters.” Jesus said, it is not possible to take a neutral stand. Mere profession is not sufficient.

Some say, “I understand something of the Gospel. I believe there is much of value in the Christian faith. I am a friend of Christianity. I believe that it has a great moral impact to bring into our world. I do not care to go as far as personally receiving Christ. I think I will remain neutral.” Jesus said that is impossible. There can be no neutrality. He said, “He who is not with Me is against Me.” If you do not receive deliverance, you still are under the bondage and control of the dark powers of Satan.

How can one tell if he is either “OF” Christ- received Him, knows Him, loves Him, has partaken of His life – OR – he is “AGAINST” Him!

**BY THE INFLUENCE OF OUR LIFE**


However, there is a force that “scatters” – and “divides.” That force scatters and divides by producing self-centeredness. The most divisive force known in human life is self-centeredness. The thing that splits people apart is their vested concern in their own affairs. They are self-centered!

Let’s ask our self, “What is basically the character of my life?” Is it self-centeredness or self-giving? Am I WITH Christ or AGAINST Him? Am I gathering with him in a healing, wholesome manner, or, am I a divisive factor? Does my influence split people up, or cause them to quarrel with one another?

What about my own family/ Are my children drawn closer to Christ, or are they walking away from Christ because of me?

Oh, hear this, Jesus cuts right to the core of life in His teachings. Life is absolutely laid bare. We are judged finally on the basis of our relationship to Him. The evidence of that relationship is the influence that we exercise. We must realize that we are helpless to do anything about this our self. Nothing we can do in our self can ever change this situation.

We are not free! We are not able to carry out our own decisions except in a limited are. It is our illusion of freedom that makes us imagine that we are free and unrestrained individuals. The Bible tells us that apart from Christ we are under the unbroken absolute control of an evil force that is controlling our thoughts and reactions. We are absolutely helpless to do anything about this – until that power is broken by the acceptance of the One who has come to destroy the works of the Devil. If you have not known deliverance you can know it not!

You must admit that you are under the power of Satan. But, now the Gospel has come to you with its message. In a moment of time you can pass from death into life. It only takes a moment to make a commitment – to trust in Jesus Christ and His work on Calvary – no longer
reckoning upon anything you are trying to do to make you good enough. Simply say, “Lord, here
I am, save me!” You can pass in that moment from death to life. That’s what “conversion” is.
You open the door that permits Christ to do His saving work in you.

**Satan’s Strategy**

God has made full provision for us to fight these great and powerful forces that hold the
world in their grip. It would be a mistake to begin discussion with an examination of the armor
of God.

Before we begin a discussion of an examination each article of the Armor of God listed in
Ephesians 6:11-17 we need to look at the “Armor” as a whole. In order that the figure of the
Armor doesn’t become blurred and appears to have a sense of unreality, we need to take time to
see what it is that is opposing us.

The Armor of God is for defense. We need to find the value of these pieces that are
designed for our defense and realize what the Armor is defending us against. When we realize
something of the cleverness – the cunning williness – of the forces against which we are battling,
we will begin to appreciate the armor which we have been provided.

Ephesians 6:10 says, “Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand
against the wiles of the Devil.”

The first step for any soldier in training is to be introduced to the strategy and weapons
that the enemy will use against him. As one reads the Bible that will see that the person of God –
saints – prophets – patriarchs – great and glorious kings of Israel – they were all defeated at one
time or another by the Devil. The wisest and greatest men were absolutely helpless in attempting
to outwit the Devil by themselves. Yet, the Bible tells us that it is possible to walk in victory.

James 4:7 states, “Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.”

Thank of that. This clever, cunning strategist who has held the world in defeat for
centuries, whom no man is able to outmaneuver, will flee from you, when you learn, like Paul,
“not to be ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

- What is the strategy of the Devil?
- How does he plan to destroy us?
- How does he keep the world in such bondage?

The only One in all the history of the human race ever consistently defeated the Devil.
Jesus defeated the Devil, not only in His life but in His death, as well. He put His finger squarely
upon the strategy and tactics of the Devil when He said, “The Devil is a liar and a murderer from
the beginning” (John 8:44).

**The strategy of the Devil is to “murder.”**

**The tactic by which he accomplishes this is to “lie.”**

How does the Devil oppose the work of God in this world? – He does so by murdering
and by destroying!
One of the names given to the Devil in Scripture is “Apollyon,” which means, “Destroyer.” What does it mean to destroy? It means to create chaos, to lay waste, to ruin, to make desolate. There, you have it! You have the explanation for the whole tragic story of human history. A “destroyer” is at work among men.

God is a God of beauty, harmony, order and perfection – of love, light and grace. There is still enough evidence left in the world of nature, including our own being, the see the marvelous symmetry, beauty and perfection of God.

The world was created orderly, including man, but the “destroyer” came upon the scene and it was his delight to smash, mangle, twist, mutilate, disfigure, darken and blast. The Devil never offers anything positive to man. He can never makes anything. He never made anything and he will never make anything. All he can do is destroy what God has made. His power is totally negative. He is completely destructive in every way.

What are the tactics the Devil employs?

How does he destroy? He destroys by deceiving, lying, distorting, counterfeiting, play-acting, masquerading, illusion and fantasy.

Paul tells us that this is, “The wiles of the Devil.” As you read through the Bible you see how many times the work of the Devil is referred to in this manner: “the snares” – “the trap” – “the illusions” – “the stratagems” – “the wiles” – of the Devil!

Look closely at the tactics the Devil employs in your life to defeat you, to keep you in weakness, to ruin you, to lay waste your life. The Bible makes clear that the tactics of the Devil fall into two major divisions. The Devil attacks mankind (1) directly; and (2) indirectly. The Devil is capable of both a direct confrontation and an indirect approach. Through these two avenues he maintains world-wide control over mankind.

The Bible speaks of a fallen hosts of angels, called “demons,” whom Paul refers to here as “the principalities and powers, the world rulers of this present darkness, the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.” The phrase, “the heavenly places,” does not, of course, refer to heaven, but “the invisible spirit realm of life.” The Devil and his hosts are not visible.

Satan’s Strategy

If you find yourself a victim of a state of confusion, uncertainty, discouragement, defeat, or an indifferent, callous attitude toward life, or others, rest assured you are pray to “the wiles of the enemy” and there is hope for you. You do not have to be thus because Ephesians 6:10-13 describes God’s adequate defense against the devil’s tactics.

We are urged and encouraged to “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might!” It is possible to stand – and to overcome! God’s Word is every encouraging to us, however, it alone is not enough. It tells us that there is an answer.

The question is, “How exactly does one become ‘strong in the Lord and in the power of his might?’”
Paul tells us that the answer to this question is, “Put on the whole armor of God!” That is how one becomes “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might” (Ephesians 6:14-17).

This passage of Scripture is highly figurative language. These entities are but symbols of something real. In order to understand them one must look behind the figures to the reality. The armor is the way to be, “Strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”

The “armor” is nothing more than a symbolic description of the Lord Himself! The armor is Christ and what He is prepared to be, and to do, in each one of us. When Paul speaks of the various pieces of the armor, he is speaking of Christ, how we are to regard Him.

How are we to “lay hold of Christ” as our defense against the stratagems of the Devil? It is not that Christ is available to us, but rather, that Christ is actually appropriated through our lives!

In Romans 13:14, Paul clearly declares this concept. He writes, “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” He also writes to Timothy and says, “You, then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). That is the source of our armor – Christ is our defense! Therefore, wouldn’t it be wise to study this “armor” and learn how to “lay hold of Christ” in a practical way?

General truth will not help us very much. It would be easy to speak in empty generalities about Christian living, but that will not help in this struggle we are in. It would be grossly improper to try and just pick out certain phrases out of Scripture and attempt to employ them in some kind of magic defense.

“Christ is the answer!” Yes, of course He is. But, how is He the answer? That is exactly what we need to know. This is what the “armor” in our text describes. Jesus Christ is the answer, as a specific defense against specific things.

There are two general divisions, or classifications, of the pieces of armor. There are indicated by the tenses of the verbs that are used. The first division, covering the first three pieces, something the Christian has already done in the past:

1. Having girded your loins with truth, and
2. having put on the breastplate of righteousness (verse 14)
3. Having shod your feet with the equipment of the Gospel of peace” (verse 15).

The second division includes those things which we are to put on, or taken up, at the present moment –

1. Taking the shield of faith (verse 16)
2. take the helmet of salvation – and
3. the sword of the Spirit” (verse 17).

We are to “take up” these aspects of Christ again, and again, whenever we feel we are under attack.
Another thing to take notice about this armor is, as it is described in the text, is the order in which the pieces are given to us. One should not alter the order in any way, if they are to receive just what the Holy Spirit is imparting.

For instance, the reason many Christians fail to exercise the “sword of the Spirit,” is that they have never, first, “girded up their loins with truth.” You cannot do it in reverse order. Scripture is very exact in this.

Let’s look at the first three items which constitute the first division of this armor:

1. “Having girded your loins with truth” – that is always the place to start.

Whenever one feels under attack – discouraged – defeated – uncertain – confused – downcast – depressed – indifferent – the place to start is to “gird up your loins with truth.” What does that mean?

Officers in the Roman Army wore short skits, very much like Scottish kilts. Over these “skirts” they had a cloak (tunic) that they secured at the waist with a girdle. When they were about to enter into a battle, they would tuck the tunic up under the girdle, leaving their legs free and unimpeded for the fight.

The phrase “girding the loins” was a symbol of readiness to fight. That is why this must be first! You cannot do battle until you first “gird up the loins with truth.” When threatened by discouragement, coldness or similar moods, how do you fight back? We are to remember to “gird up your loins with truth!” What does that mean?

Precisely this. It means to remind our self that in coming to Jesus Christ we found the “Truth” behind all things. We find Him, Who is Himself the truth – the key ot life – the secret of the universe – the final reality!

 Ephesians 4:20-21, “You did not so learn Christ [speaking of uncleanness and licentiousness, etc] assuming that you have heard about Him and were taught in Him, as the truth is in Jesus.” Jesus is Truth – He is reality – He is the Key to life!

 Colossians 2:3 says, “…in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

You say, you have accepted Jesus, but have you accepted Him as the authority – without any evidence to support it? That’s blind faith!

Everyone live by an “act of faith.” It may be by accepting some principle, or, as the final authority in life, some religious leader, some scientific method, or, perhaps nothing more than, living by, “What I feel is right.” The distinctive thing about Christianity is that Jesus Christ has demonstrated more clearly the right to be accepted as authority more than anyone else, or any other principle. The Christian bets his life, in a sense, that Jesus Christ is the real authority, the true revelation of things as they really are. He has objectively demonstrated it and subjectively confirmed it to those of us who are Christians.
The Whole Man

I heard of a mental hospital that had devised an unusual test to determine when patients were ready to go back into the world. They would bring a candidate for release into a room, where a tap was turned on and water was pouring out over the floor! Then, they would hand the patient a mop and tell him to mop up the water. If the patient had sense enough to turn off the tap before mopping up the water, they figured he was ready to go out into society! But, if he started mopping up the water while the tap was still running, they knew more treatment was needed.

We laugh! I'm afraid we are laughing at ourselves. Each Christian facing the personal world in which he lives has been given a mop - The Mop of Truth - and told to use it! But, we can only help in that world, if we have enough intelligence to conquer the evil, which is pouring into our own hearts from a world. This is what Bible calls: "The rulers of this present darkness!

That is what Paul is urging us to do in Ephesians 6:10-13! We can be of no help in the solutions the problems of those around us as long as we remain part of the problem. This whole passage of Ephesians 6 is designed to awaken us and to call our attention to the need for understanding the nature of the problem.

It is through the channels of "the world," "the flesh," that the Devil makes his indirect And most insidious attacks upon us. The "world" is human society, blindly accepting false values, shallow concepts, deluded ideas of reality, and desperately insists upon conformity to their standards and insights. The "flesh" is the urge within us toward total independence, being our own god and running our world to suit ourselves. It is this continual drift toward self-centeredness and selfishness that keeps us from being completely His.

This struggle of the influence of the world and the flesh is not something that is remote from us, nor is it something that just occasionally comes into our lives. This is a battle, which we all face and is engaged in every moment of our lives because the "flesh," this inner arena of battle, accompanies us everywhere we go. We cannot escape it, nor can we run away from it, Therefore, we must begin our battle at this point.

Someone may say, "I thought that when I became a Christian, I was set free from the kingdom of Satan and that the Devil no longer could touch me. I figured that I would have nothing to do with the Devil anymore!"

If that is what you taught, you couldn’t be more wrong. When you became a Christian, the battle only started. The Devil will make your miserable, defeat you in as many ways as He can, make you weak, barren and unfruitful, if he possibly can. The devil is especially interested in defeating Christians. Why should he be interested in the unredeemed, they are no problem to him. They may be quite sincere in their pathetic efforts to solve their problems through legislation, education, and change of environment. That doesn't bother the Devil! He is quite content to let them go on rearranging the pieces of puzzle, without every solving it.

It is the presence of the Christian in the world that bothers him a great deal. WHY? It is because each Christian is a potential threat to the solidarity of the Devil's rule over the rest of
mankind. If the Devil did not oppose the Spirit of God, every Christian, without exception, would be a powerful force to destroy the Devil's kingdom of darkness. Leading others to escape the "unconscious control" of the world of darkness.

The Church is to be a corridor of liberty, a beam of light, dispelling the darkness of world. The Devil will not let that happen, if he can help it. So, Satan particularly attacks the Christian. He marshals all his forces against Christians. Sometimes he comes in like a "Roaring lion" in some catastrophic circumstance that seems to knock us off our feet. Other times he is as an "angel of light," alluring and appealing, offering something that seems to be just right. He will take control whenever can.

Those who are motivated by strange unexplainable passions, assails through the world, With its pressure to "keep in line, don't be different." Ostracizing any who attempt to swim against the stream.

Most often, however, Satan comes through disguise of flesh, our inner self, with his subtle, suggestive "wiles." This is what the Apostle was warning against in Ephesians 6, "the wiles of the devil." Take a close look at "flesh" within us. We live in a temporary state before the resurrection of our "body."

The "body" is the "Seat of sin," or "flesh." It is speaking of the "self-centeredness" in each of us. We might as well face it: this "flesh" going to be with us for life. We will never escape it, until wonderful day of resurrection of body.

The spirit is the seat of God-consciousness
The soul is the seat of self-consciousness
The body is the seat of world consciousness

The spirit is where God dwells
The soul is where self dwells
The body is where sense dwells

Our "body" is dead because of sin. We live in our body for life. Our body, soul and spirit are tied together. Where does the "soul" live in body? Who can locate it? Even man’s "spirit" is beyond comprehension. They are inextricably tied together. The "flesh" is linked to the body. And touches the whole of our being

The Devil can influence the "soul." His channel is the "flesh" Put another way: We are subject to the influence of: `Rulers of this present darkness’ through our mind, our feelings and our deeds – our intelligence, emotions, and will.

Satan makes his appeal through the channel of our mind (our intellect), and he makes appeal through the channel of emotions (our human pride) and he works on our fears. He makes his appeal to pleasure, in the realms of deeds, the things we do and say.

First time Satan tempted man in the Garden of Eden, Scriptures tells us "Eve saw the fruit that it was good for food." It offered the pleasant sensation of eating, an appeal to the body. It was a "delight to the eyes," awakening to a sense of beauty. It was an appeal to the emotions, "to make one wise." The forbidden fruit was an appeal to the pride of the mind (the intelligence)
because of "love of wisdom," Eve took the forbidden fruit and ate it. These are channels through which Satan moves. God and Devil, both work thru same channels.

"If the Devil and God both work by the same channels - what is the difference?" The difference is simply this: The Devil moves to create an imbalance, to bring about an extremist. God moves toward balance, harmony, and beauty! The difference is not how they work, but, rather, the direction in which they move.

The "Gospel" appeals to the whole man. It fills all of man's life. It explains all the history of mankind and provides a framework for every science, every endeavor to investigate and every event of history.

The "Gospel" is not content just to adjust a few problems within man. Men, often come to Christ asking Him to resolve some immediate difficult situation. However, God does not stop there. He knows us and He knows, if He solves "small" problem here and there, that He has only touched a part of our life, while the rest remains out of balance. So, God’s “Gospel” makes its appeal to "whole man" and touches every part of his life.

As one reads the Gospel, he see what a marvelous" balance" there is in Jesus' life, the perfect poise He exhibits in every circumstance. He says things, which absolutely challenges the greatest thinkers of His time. They listen with astonishment to His words and are intrigued with His insights. "No man ever spoke like this man!"

However Jesus was not just intellect, making an appeal to philosopher alone. As one reads, they begin to see that He is also warmly human! constantly expressing compassion, and human concern.

**Jesus manifests both INTELLIGENCE and EMOTIONS.**

Jesus was not content merely to "feel" certain things, or to "talk about" certain great truths, but, rather, these find their ultimate expression in practical deeds and actions of unforgettable events.

**Marvelous balance is maintained throughout the Bible!**

God’s Word ministers to the "whole" man, to the needs of his body, soul and spirit. Nothing is out of balance, everything kept in a delicate equilibrium. Everything is in harmony, the mind, the heart, and the will. The all move together. When God gets hold of a man, He begins to touch every part of his life. Any other Gospel does less. It is an incomplete message, a mere fragment of what man needs.

Hymn move on my emotions. Take the hymn: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross..." It causes me to think about the cross, to give intelligent consideration to what it means, to think of all that was involved in that supreme hour when Jesus hung between heaven and death,

When I sing, “On which the Prince of Glory died,” my intelligence is captured; I see the deep and marvelous things about this event.
"My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride" These words move me. My emotions are immediately involved. F does not move you, then you don't understand.

**Truth is designed to reach the heart, to move it, to involve it!**

As we go on in this hymn, we see how marvelously emotions are involved. "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small..." Here is a sense of grandeur of the work of cross, the extent of it, the glory of it.

"Love so amazing, so divine..." Love does what? It demands. Here is the “will” being impelled to action. "Demands my soul, my life, my all." The whole man is totally engaged. That's the way God works.

What does the devil do? He creates imbalance, builds up one element of man's nature at expense of others. He pushes to extreme, turns man into a person characterized by only one thing. Grotesque caricatures of what God intended.
Who’s Our Enemy?

The Bible, from beginning to the end, states that all human beings, without exception, and regardless of how clever, educated or cultured they may be, if they are without Christ, they are helpless victims of Satanic control. Those without Jesus Christ are under the control of Satanic forces and are unhappy. However, they are completely unable to escape by any wisdom or power of their own.

The Good News is that some have been set free, delivered!

In Luke 11, Jesus calls the Devil, “the strong one.” However, Jesus, referring to Himself, speaks of the coming of a “Stronger One” – and states that He came “to destroy the works of the Devil.” Through the power of the Cross and resurrection, Jesus has broken the power and bondage of Satan over human lives. Those who individually receive Him as their Savior and Lord are set free – free to live in freedom as children of God! They have not been “set free” to live as they please, or unto themselves.

Christ came by way of the Cross to set “whosoever will” free from the things that bind, and ruin, them, set free to – do battle! That is the call to all Christians. They have been set free, not to enjoy themselves, but to do battle! The Christian is engaged in a fight, first, to overcome in his own life and, second, to become channels by which others are set free.

Let’s give out attention to the actual conduct of battle. Since this conflict is the basic problem of life, how much depends upon us in fighting this battle? How do we accomplish victory?

Paul tells us that the answer is, “Put on the whole armor of God.” Full provision has been made for us to win. This is an amazing truth that we must learn and take serious. The Devil’s activity is in the realm of the invisible reality of life – the “spirit realm.” It is the very same territory where God works, as well!

A HISTORY OF THE DEVIL

The Devil and his demons were originally created as angels of might and strength – beauty and power! His name was “Lucifer.” His heart was lifted up with pride and he chose to rival God – to take God’s place. He was “cast out of heaven” and became the Devil. Scripture tells us that he drew one-third of the angels with him. This is what constitutes “the principalities and powers,” the organized kingdom of darkness, opposing the Kingdom of God. It is through these hosts of wicked spirits that the Devil is able to make a direct assault upon mankind.

The Bible speaks of those whose human personalities are controlled by the power of wicked spirits, referring to this as, “demon possession.” They can be involved in such activities as soothsaying, occultism, spiritism, related black magic arts, astrology, horoscopes, voodooism, fortune telling, etc. –
A word of warning, there is much chicanery, and deception, in the whole field of black magic. There are charlatans at work making a living off the superstitious fears of people. They engage in deceptive tricks that give the impression one is dealing with the occult. It is, sometimes, difficult to tell the difference between the demon activity and deceiving scam. My advice would be to stay as far away as possible from anything that even hints at the occult. The Bible consistently warns against even beginning to “dabble” in these things. God’s Word strictly forbids anything to do with wizards “that peep [whisper] and mutter” – or any attempt, whatsoever, to make contact with the dead, or to experiment at all in the world of the occult. Even exploration of any kind into this realm is prohibited because it lays one open to the powers of the spirit-world and makes possible the influence of these evil forces beyond the will of the individual investigating. It is a dangerous ground and can lead to outright, “demon possession.”

People may say, “Surely, in this 20th century, you don’t believe in that stuff anymore. You’re not telling us that there are such things as demons today, are you? You know, when the Bible was written, people believed in that type of thing, but we are better informed now. What once was called ‘demon possession’ we now know was only ‘mental illness.’ We can treat it with drugs, or other therapy, today.”

My answer to that is that the Bible is not a primitive book and it is as good of man today as it was 2000 years ago. God, in His Holy Bible, is very careful to distinguish between mental illness and demon possession. As you study the Bible, you realize that the writers were aware of this distinction. Luke, a physician, in his writings, is acquainted with the distinction between physical diseases, mental illnesses and demon possession. (Read Luke 4:40-41) Matthew is very careful to make a distinction between those who were afflicted with diseases and those who were demon possessed (Read Matthew 4:24). It is important to note that the Biblical cases of demon possession do not conform to the clinical pattern of known mental diseases, as they are known in this day and age.

There are diseases of the body and there are diseases of the mind. Diseases of the mind, like those of the body, present standard clinical patterns that are recognized. As one examines the Biblical accounts of demon possession he will find that these cases in Scripture do not fit any of the standard pattern of mental diseases as they are known today – they are not the same thing because they do not conform. These incidents in Scripture of demon possession produced a debasing element – an uncleanness – a moral degradation. Also, there was recognition by the demon of the character and identity of the Lord, Jesus Christ – crying out, “What have we to do with You, Thou Son of God?” The victims, who were not acquainted with Jesus, used titles of Jesus, as the demons, who were familiar with Jesus, spoke through these victims. They had a recognition of the authority of Jesus Christ. There was a totally distinct, different personality from the victim involved.

When Jesus sent His disciples out, He gave them authority to “cast out demons.” Jesus was not simply accommodating the thinking of those of that day, but rather, He, as always, corrected misconceptions. On one occasion He said, “If it were not so I would have told you!”

Missionaries describe how that demon possession is commonplace in many parts of the world. Wherever Christian teaching spreads, the direct assault of evil powers upon human life is kept in abeyance. As our nation, America, grows more godless, and more secularized, it will find an increasing tide of demonic manifestation creeping into our culture. There is no power in man to stand against it!
Scripture warns that whenever Christians are confronted with demon power, they are called to prayer – concerted, persistent prayer!

Some ascribe every common problem of human life to some manifestation of demon activity. To keep balance in our perspective, I must say, “That among some Christians there is altogether too much apprehension concerning the matter of demon possession.” Demons, of course, are a dreadful reality. However, to attribute every problem we face to demon commotion is unscriptural. The Devil, of course, is originally, and indirectly, behind all of man’s troubles, but there is illness, physical and mental, which may be caused by demonic intervention, but certainly many caused by physical agents. There are seventeen (17) places in the Gospels and the book of Acts where Scripture distinguishes between one who is demon possessed and other kinds of illness. Seventeen times in the New Testament where the person is made whole by different means other than exorcism.

It is unscriptural to speak of greed, lust, laziness or hatred – these habit patterns motivated by one’s sin nature – as “demons.”

The Christian has two natures, his old Adamic carnal nature and his new nature in Christ Jesus. He can yield to his “carnal” nature, providing an opening for demonic temptation. David’s pride made him susceptible to the Devil’s temptation. Judah’s greed made him susceptible to the Devil’s temptation. If a Christian makes a practice of yielding to sin he will find that he becomes less and less able to resist temptation.

When we attempt to explain one’s behavior in terms of demonic forces, we:

1. Removes the responsibility of recognizing, and confessing, sinfulness.
   1 Corinthians 10:13 states, “God will not allow us to be tempted beyond that we are able to withstand.”
   When we sin, we are responsible for our actions!

2. View our self as a battleground, where forces of good and evil alternately rampage without any volitional, or control, without our “will” involved.
   This view robs one of the capacity to develop spiritually and causes them to fail to make needed changes in their life because they believe that changes are beyond their control and without volitional influence.
   We must, by the power of the Holy Spirit, suppress these sinful urges and, instead of explaining our sinful nature as “demon control,” recognize our sinful nature and confess our rebellion.

   The Christian matures, and grows strong spiritually, as a result of temptations. God’s Word never gives warrant to explaining one’s sinful behavior by the notion, “The Devil made me do it!” To grow spiritually one must conquer his sinful inclinations, confessing them to the Lord.

   The writers of the New Testament, in the Epistles, seldom mention any direct attacks of the Devil against human beings. There are very few instances of this being mentioned throughout after the Lord physically left the world. By far, throughout the Epistles, the majority of the attacks of the Devil against the Christian were not direct, but rather, indirect. It was “the wiles of
the Devil” [“wiles” are the “cunning” – “devices” – “schemes” – “methods” – or – “stratagems” of the Devil] that Christians were warned against – Satan’s deviousness – something that was not so obvious!

It is important that we keep in mind the fact that the major attacks of the Devil, his powers against human life, is not generally by direct means, but by indirect means – by Satanic suggestions and through the natural and commonplace events of life.

This indirect approach comes largely through two channels – the world and the flesh.

Ephesians 2:1-2 states, “And you did He – [Jesus Christ, the Stronger One Who came to set us free] – make alive, when you were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air [the Devil], of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience.”

Paul writes, “You Christians should never forget that you, once, were also “under the control of this world, in the grip of the prince and power of the air [the Devil], the evil spirit which is now at work in all the children of disobedience.” Then Paul proceeds in verse 3, “We too, all of us were once of their company; our life was bounded by natural appetites.”

Perhaps you were not aware that you were under any control of the Devil and that you were only doing what you felt like doing – that you were living only fulfilling the desires of your body and mind, responding to what is called “natural stimuli.”

I have a mind-boggling concept to share with you – truth, taken straight from God’s Word: We were all doing these things, following the course of this world under the direction of the prince and power of the air. And, in obeying the impulses of the body and mind, we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

The Bible consistently presents this picture! The most basic channel of approach to subverting the Christian life is what Scripture calls, “the flesh.” When the Bible uses the word “flesh,” it is not speaking of flesh in the context of our body. The word “flesh” is not referring to meat, blood and bones of a person’s physical life. As one grows older, he does have trouble with too much flesh! But, the word, “flesh” in the Bible refers to the “self-centeredness” within each of us – the distortion of human nature which makes us want to be our own god – that proud ego – the uncircumcised self that sits in willful defiance and rebellion, against authority.

We are all born with this nature. You don’t have to go to school to learn how to be self-centered. No body taught us how to take care of number one, be proud, bitter, rebellious, defiant and self-centered. We never had to take classes to learn that, did we? We were all experts in these characteristics by the time we are ready for school. We are born with this “flesh” nature. It is the presence of this “flesh” nature that makes us sinners. Jesus calls this flesh nature, “earthly, unspiritual, and devilish [of the Devil]”

The Devil attacks indirectly, through the essential character of our human nature. Man’s nature has been distorted, twisted and changed from what God originally intended. Satan is still continues to do everything he possibly can to distort and twist man’s nature.
Romans 3:32 states, “Everyone has sinned and has missed the beauty of God’s plan.” [Phillips Translation]

The word that is translated as ‘world,” here in Ephesians 2:2, is a corporate expression of all the flesh-centered individuals who make up the human race. “Flesh,” as it is used here, refers to everyone in the world who is acting devilish, sensual, and earthly. “Flesh” is a combined expression of each being that constitutes the world and determines the philosophy of the world.

It is that tremendous pressure of the majority upon the minority to conform, adjust, keep in step, don’t digress or be different.

But God said, “Be not conformed to this world,” – or, as another translation renders it, “Don’t let the world squeeze you into its mold.” – why? – Because the world is “flesh-centered and flesh-governed.”

Jesus said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” In order to be changed, the flesh must be “born of the Spirit.” This world, human society, insists on Satanic value judgment, its philosophy is guided by Satanic pride. The world is totally unaware of it, nevertheless, it is under the control of Satanic philosophy. The aim of Satan in his clover stratagem by which he has kept the human race in bondage is to destroy, ruin, and make waste.

That is his purpose for you – and me! We have been called to battle, not only for ourselves, but for others, as well.
The Armor of God

The Girdle of Truth

What is meant by “Girdle?”

Forget about the girdles sold in ladies undergarment department at the clothing store to support the abdomen and hips. This refers to the Roman Armor sash, or wide-heavy belt to protect the mid-section of the Roman soldier. He put around his waist this wide belt which was the holder for a lot of equipment. There was a loop, for example, for the scabbard for the machaira sword. There were loops on the belt for darts. The belt was tied in several places to stay in place, so that no matter how the soldier moved about, fell down, climbed hills, etc., the belt was always in place with weapons at the ready.

The Devil is the “father of lies” and does his best to lie about God – about the nature and character of God – about the attitude of God toward you – and – about God’s attitude toward sin. We need to have truth. The truth about God, His sovereignty, His almighty power, His immediate presence with us, His unchangeableness, His infinite knowledge and wisdom, His total opposition to Satan, and His prophesied judgment of Satan. All that the Bible tells us of God is absolute truth. We can stake our lives upon that. This truth girds our waist so that we are ready to do instant battle.

How did Jesus demonstrate that He was the Truth? To find out just read the incomparable things that Jesus said. What Jesus taught was the clearest insights on what human life is all about ever offered in the hearing of men. Even His enemies had to admit this. No one ever saw so clearly or probed as deeply as He did in His teachings. He put His finger precisely on the elements that make up human life and thinking.

Jesus said that what He spoke was the truth – in fact He said, He was “Truth.” But, beyond all this, Jesus demonstrated the truth by what he did. The New Testament is a record of the amazing accounts of the mighty deeds and historical events of Jesus’ life. Jesus preformed miracles as evidence of the power of His spiritual kingdom – showing and displaying a visible realm of an invisible reality. Then, Jesus capped it all when He proved that He had solved the one problem that no other man could ever solve – the problem of death! He rose from the dead! No one ever did anything like that!

I know Jesus Christ to be Truth – and you can know Him to be Truth as well! You can know Him to the Truth, not only by what He said and did, but also by what His is now! As I think back over my life, and realize how I have been delivered and set free. I become conscious of the chains He has broken in my life, how He has been my Friend and brought me into balance and harmony with life – I can’t help but cry out, “Jesus is Truth!”

Look at the politicians, ask them to help you – and nothing happens! Search the writings of men – the thousands upon thousands of “Self-help” books that line the shelves of bookstores and libraries – science, with its marvelous discoveries – all the philosophies of all the ages – and
none of it helps one iota, when it comes to eternally solving the problems of life. Men and women today are in a desperate plight, calling for help! The only Help Giver is Jesus Christ! And, deliverance has already come – Jesus is Truth!

All men’s ideas and philosophies will be tested at some point. The test – “Is it true?” Many philosophies can do something, help temporarily in some area. Even when it is basically wrong, it may help is some area of a person’s life – help somewhere – accomplish some good. But, that is not the mark of “Truth.” Truth must be tested in all points. Trust is complete in its entirety! Truth is reality – viewing all things are they really are. Truth is the explanation of all things. You know you have found truth when you find something that is wide enough, deep enough and high enough to encompass all things. **That is what Jesus Christ does!**

**Truth never changes!**

Absolute truth never requires updating and it never needs to be modernized! What was truth yesterday is truth today and will remain truth tomorrow. If something is truth ten thousand years ago, it is still truth today!

The story is told of the music teacher who had a student flippantly ask, “Ah, what is truth?” The old teachers walked across the room and picked up a tuning form and struck it. As the sound filled the room, he said, “That is an ‘A’ It is an ‘A’ today, it was an ‘A’ a thousand years ago and it will be an ‘A’ ten thousand years from now! The soprano upstairs sings off-key; the tenor across the hall flats his high notes and the piano downstairs is out of tune . . .” He struck the note again and said, “That’s an ‘A’ and that is truth!”

Jesus Christ is unchanging. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. That is how you can know truth. Whenever you feel defeated and doubts come flooding into your mind – “Gird up your loins with truth!”

“All Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand!”
Breastplate of Righteousness

The second piece of armor is the “Breastplate of Righteousness” – verse 14, “…having on the breastplate of righteousness;”

The “breastplate” was attached to the belt and provided protection for the upper torso, front and back. The breastplate consisted of layers of cloth, sometimes with metal greaves attached. The Greeks introduced a bronze breastplate, with bronze plates covering vital areas of the torso, held together with leather or cloth connections. Some Samaritans noticed that horses’ hooves, cattle horns, etc. were made of very hard material, so they began to use horn sewed to cloth to protect from blows.

The Romans had the ideas for armor design which provided light weight combined with ease of movement and protection from blows. The best type was called the qwrac stadiaV (thorax stadias), or “breastplate which stands by itself.” This breastplate was attached to the belt by leather thongs passed through rings on the bottom to keep it solidly attached. It was anchored to the belt, and it was above the belt. Note: the belt had to be put on first, then the breastplate.

The righteousness of God is basic protection for the believer. The belt of truth combined with the breastplate of righteousness is the basis for the edification of the Christian.

Jesus Christ is our Righteousness – the ground of our “righteous standing” before God. Any “righteousness” we could possibly have is the “Righteousness” of Jesus Christ – and our commitment within our heart should be to do that which is right before God. We need a commitment to do the right thing. Not just to decide on a matter, but to have a determination to live the right kind of life.

Righteousness constitutes the “right action” toward those around us. Unrighteousness is not doing the right thing toward others.

- Godliness is my relationship with God
- Righteousness is my relationship with man!
Feet shod with preparation of the Gospel of peace

We now will look at the third piece of the Armor of God – “Having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15).

Josephus writes, “In Paul’s day the soldiers wore strong leather boots with the soles thickly studded with nails.” Such boots would give firm grip in fighting and durable protection on long marches. The warrior could spring instantly into action. Wars have been won or lost because of footwear.

A barefoot soldier

Shoes are absolutely essential to fighting. Imagine a soldier clad in armor from head to foot – but no shoes! How quickly the rough ground would tear and bruise his feet. Despite the fact that he had all the equipment he needed, if he didn’t have shoes, he would be out of combat. Without shoes, his feet would render him unfit to fight. However, with a stout pair of shoes, he would be ready and equipped to fight.

This is what “equipment” means – “readiness!” The King James Translation renders this phrase, “feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace,” meaning, “The feet shod with readiness produced by the Good News of peace.”

It is peace in the heart that makes the believer able to fight. What does that mean? Again, it is Christ Jesus within. However, this time, Christ the believer’s “Peace,” or, “Source of Calm,” the One who provides a sense of well-being.

As we notice the relation of each piece to the others, it is important that we keep in mind the order in which God gives them as well. The first piece tells us that Christ is the “Truth,” the ultimate of reality. Here is the “key of life.” We must understand this, grasp and believe it with our whole being. We must realize that when we stand before God it is on Christ's merits. We “put on the Breastplate of His righteousness.” We come before Almighty God on the basis of what Jesus Christ has done NOT anything that we have done, or do.

What is result? Our hearts have peace. Romans 5:1, “Since we are justified by faith we have peace [calmness and courage] with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” To use a modern term, we have “morale” – our moral is high and we are ready for anything. No ground too rough for Christ and we have Christ, therefore, we have good morale.

In the dark days in England, during the blitz bombers raining their bombs down, day after day and night after night, the situation was desperate. People's hearts were filled with defeat and discouragement and almost ready to quit. One man's voice ring out and the nation would take heart. Their “morale” was strong because Winston Churchill would speak on the radio.

That is what Christ does, He able to speak “peace to our hearts!” We are not engaged in a battle against people, it is a “spiritual battle” – a battle in the realm of the thought life, a spiritual warfare of attitude. It is a battle in realm of our outlook upon the situation in which we find our self.
This is the place to start – “Gird up your loins with truth.” Remember that we are in Jesus Christ and no man can equal that anywhere in world. Here is another “Key to Life!” Believe Him! Here is One Who is worth listening to.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as the “One” Who has the explanation for life, then believe what He says and act on it. That is the “Girdle of truth!”

The “Breastplate of righteousness” protects the emotions. We don’t have to be discouraged. Of course, we will fail sometimes. Christ came to understand that. He knows about our failures – and our struggles. He knows our life will be up-and-down. He knows or out times of battles, and even that we may lose some. He says, “I have taken care of all that for you. You do not have to stand on your merits. You can stand on Mine! Do not be discouraged. Do not be defeated! We will win!” I know what I am doing! I know how to lead you! I know what circumstances to bring you into and I will bring you through!”

Third requisite is to have the feet shod with the preparation (readiness) and a sense of peace.

We must remember who we are, what we are and, above all else, Whom we have. We are commanded to “Be strong in HIS strength and for His sake!” Remember we belong to Christ’s family. He is not ashamed to call us “brothers.” God is not ashamed to be called our God! “Be strong for His sake!” We need to get away from the negative questions such as, “What is going to happen to me?” and “How do I feel?” Remember that God has vested His honor in us.

By putting on these three pieces of armor the battle is almost won. We will have very little difficulty overcoming evil if we start there.

Our feet are to be “in readiness of the Gospel of peace” [actual meaning].

Many have lives that are filled with strife. The atmosphere of homes, schools, work places and neighbors are place of discord and dissension. Trying to dominate one another. There is no real love involved. People arguing over ridiculous things and won’t give in to other’s. They have to have the last word.

God commands us to live in peace with each other and with Him. Peace with God and peach with men gives a firm foundation, like boots with cleats that will not slip or slide.

This piece of armor emphasizes that successful fighting depends on character and we must realize how important these things are in our prayer warfare against the enemy!

Paul writes, “As far as your responsibility goes, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18 – Phillips Translation) – The Weymouth Translations renders, “If you can, so far as it depends on you . . .”
The Shield of Faith

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Ephesians 6:16).

“Faith,” called “The shield of faith,” alone would enable the believer to overcome anything that life might hand him. It can extinguish all of Satan’s flaming missiles of doubt, confusion, disillusionment and fear. However, God has given the believer still more defensive equipment so that he will become “more than conquerors.”

The believer is expected to give intelligent consideration to the process of overcoming and in learning how to counteract the attacks of the Devil.

Before progressing to the consideration of the remaining pieces of armor I would like to suggest another perspective that, I believe, will increase our understanding of the significance of this armor of God

Paul declares, “I a IN Christ.” It is the “whole armor of God” that makes this possible. The armor is figurative in explaining what Jesus Christ is to us. “Putting on the armor of God” makes this truth a reality in our life. The depiction of the armor is an expansion of Jesus’ words in John 14:20, “You in Me and I in you.” That is our defense – “Christ in us and we in Him!” Could any sentence in the English language (or any other language) be simpler? Each word is a one syllable word – “You in Me and I in you.”

Any child can understand that – and yet, it is so profound that I wonder if any of us can even remotely begin to understand all that is involved in these simple words.

The first three pieces of the armor:

(1) Girding our loins with the girdle of truth
(2) Putting on the breastplate of righteousness
(3) Our feet shod with the equipment of the Gospel of peace
   – are all a figurative way of explaining, and expounding, the phrase, when Jesus said, “You in Me.”

The Christian is “IN” Christ. When the believer comes to Christ – he is IN Christ Jesus. He now has a different basis of living. He has found Christ to be the ground of all Truth – the Key to life. He also discovers that he is invited by Almighty God to rest upon Christ’s Righteousness.

At the cross of Calvary
God transferred our sin to Christ
and
He transferred Christ’s righteousness to us!
This is the ground of our acceptance before God and the answer to the problem of human guilt from which we suffer. It is when we learn that “Christ is our Peace,” that we receive a sense of calm, and well-being.

CHRIST IN ME!

The last three pieces of the armor describe what it means for Christ to be “IN” the believing Christian. Christ appropriated, applied, to the Christian’s actual life.

The last three pieces are very practical and highly important to every believer. With “the shield of faith” we can “quench all the flaming darts of the evil one.”

The reason we so often experience weakness is that we do not use “the shield of faith.” We attempt to muddle through our problems on our own strength and ability. We do not “take the shield of faith” as God commands and apply our faith in God and His Word.

This piece of armor, “the shield of faith,” refers the believer’s faith and confidence in God to enable him to “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

Satan is constantly attacking the believer, but his faith in God’s power and ability to overcome is Christ working IN him. The believer can stand against these attacks using the “shield of faith.”

Saving faith is absolutely essential, of course, however, this element of faith goes beyond salvation to a faith that is used in spiritual conquest and warfare. It is a faith for action – for attacking the fortresses of Satan – for taking the prayer offensive to drive Satan back. This faith God desires every believer to use and will gladly supply. It is a faith that seizes the promise and wields it like a weapon. It is faith that quenches every flaming arrow of Satan. He is the false accuse of God and of Christian brethren, and even you and I.

Satan wants to disable us by doubts. He accuses us of weakness. He can agree with him – that we are, indeed, “weak” – but we are to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!” (Ephesians 6:10) Satan churches us with ignorance – we agree “the Lord is our wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:30; Colossians 2:3 and 3:16). The Spirit is our guide and counselor. Satan charges us with not knowing how to pray – we agree for the Spirit “helps our weakness” in not knowing how to pray and “makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).

Our shield of faith is immense and adequate to “quench every flaming arrow Satan shoots at us.”

We are always exposed to Satan’s doubts. We constantly have attacks on our faith. We get feelings that Christianity is not a sure and certain, as it once seemed. We sometimes feel, “I’ve lost my faith or I wouldn’t think things like this. What is the matter with me? How can I be a Christian and have such thoughts?” We say to our self, “I know it is wrong to feel like this,” and we push the thought down into our subconscious mind. But it is still there, lurking underneath, making us feel dishonest because we are not willing to look at our doubt and face it.

It will take its toll in physical ways as well as the mental and emotional strain we go through. We feel uncertain and confused because we are convinced that the opposite of faith is
doubt. We’ve listen to the false teaching, “If you doubt you can’t have faith because if you really have faith you wouldn’t have any doubts. Therefore, I can’t be a person of faith, if I have doubts.” **We fail to recognize this is a lie of the Devil!**

Satan’s fiery darts are always an attack upon Christ – Who is our girdle of Truth – our breastplate of Righteousness and Peace that prepares our feet for action. Satan’s arrows are always insinuations of doubt in these matters. They attack us in areas of faith!

This is the way of the Devil. Didn’t he say to Eve, “Has God said unto you?” – or – “Did God say that?” The implication is one of doubt.

The Devil said to Jesus in the wilderness temptation, “If you are the Son of God, then turn these stones into bread.” “If” – There is the insinuation that these things were not true. That is the way Satan raises doubts – “IF!” He creates quilt and arouses fear by these doubts. We must recognize these doubts as an attack of the evil one.

Note the Bible does not say, “The shield of belief!” We remind our self of belief when we put on “the girdle of truth – the breastplate of righteousness – and – readiness of the Gospel of peace” – That’s our belief in what Christ is to us! But **FAITH** is much more than that.

It is important that we realize that “faith” is acting upon our “belief.”

Faith is decision – it’s action – it’s resolution! Faith is saying, “Yes, I believe Christ is the Truth – He is my Righteousness – He is my peace – therefore, this, and this, and this, must follow.” Faith is working out the implication of belief! When we say, “therefore,” we move from belief into faith! Faith is particularizing – it is taking the general truth and applying it to the specific situation. Faith says, “If this be true, then this must follow!”

**This is the “Shield of Faith!”**

We ask, “How do I use the shield of faith when doubts come?” We must start with the Truth – Jesus Christ is Truth – He is the basic revelation of things as they really are. Jesus demonstrated Truth when He lived among men. Therefore, I cannot accept any thought that Christianity is a hoax. I cannot believe that Christ is Truth and believe my doubts at the same time. They both cannot be truth! I have committed myself to Christ because I am persuaded He demonstrated Truth – fully! I stand on that ground and I reject all Satan’s insinuations. Christ is Truth! I will not accept any philosophy that exalts man – or – that makes God unnecessary in human affairs. When doubts come, since Christ is Truth, I will reject them all!

I cannot trust my feelings that Christianity is unreal, but regard them, as Christ said, as “from the Devil!” Jesus said, “Satan is a liar from the beginning,” therefore these doubts are lies and I reject them!

Do you want to know what our problem is? It is that we have become so accustomed to believing our feelings that we begin to accept them as facts. We don’t examine them. We don’t take them and look at them and ask, “Is it true?” We simply say, “I feel this way, therefore it must be true!” This is the reason so many are constantly defeated. They accept their feelings as facts. – But, **Christ is Truth!**
And, “Christ is our Righteousness!”

We are linked to Him, one with Him. His life is our life and our life is His life! We are married! Therefore, I cannot believe this lie that these evil thoughts are my thoughts. They come because of another force. They are not my thinking at all. They are the “Devil’s fiery darts.” I don’t even like them, I reject them.

I use the shield of faith and refuse to feel condemned or guilty. God loves me and He says so. He says that nothing will separate us – nothing I do, or fail to do can separate me from Him.

I cannot entertain the thought that God loves me, and the thought that God does not love me. I cannot accept both; therefore, I accept the fact of His love for me.

Christ is also my Peace!

He promises that He will take the responsibility to take me through this situation. I will not accept fear and anxiety that seeks to grip my heart. I will not believe that these fears and worries are from me. They have been sent to shake my confidence in Jesus Christ – an attempt to destroy my peace. However, Christ is adequate for even this.

James 4:7 tells me to “Resist the Devil and he will flee from me,” therefore I “take the shield of faith and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” I refuse to believe Satan’s lie – the lie that if you have doubts you cannot have faith. That’s a lie!

Doubts will always attack faith. 
The fact that I have doubts – proves I have faith!

Doubts and faith are not opposites, but rather, doubts are proof of the reality of faith. Therefore, I will reexamine the ground of my faith – reassess it – and remember that feelings are not necessarily facts!

James 4:7 really says, “Keep on resisting the Devil...” again and again every time an evil thought (or doubt) comes our way. The “shield of faith” is refusing to give up our thinking.

As we hold on to our beliefs, sooner or later our doubts will clear up – our feelings will change – the attack will cease – and we will be back in the sunshine of faith, experiencing the love and joy of our Heavenly Father.

What Paul says to, “take the shield of faith,” to enable us to “quench every fiery dart of the evil one.” We can be, not only “conquerors,” but “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37). We can win victoriously, triumphantly and abundantly. God intended us to do more than, just barely make it into heaven. He designed our Christian walk to be triumph – to be fearless – to be not only unconquered – but “inconquerable!” That’s what it means to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.”
Expect to be under attack

The Word of God invariably points out that the mark of a Christian - one who has learned to BE a Christian – is one who “Rejoices in everything” and “Gives thanks in all things.” There is nothing that more surely indicates one has already succumbed to the “wiles of the Devil” than to complain about what happens to him.

God’s Word does not say we are to “enjoy” everything that happens to us – nor does God want the Christian to pretend to “rejoice in everything.” Few things are as ghastly as the forced smiles people put on in the midst of difficulties, or the flippant answers they give, simply because they believe that that is what Christians ought to do.

It is possible to genuinely “rejoice” through tears. There is nothing that more surely indicates that one fails to understand what it means to be a Christian than a whining, complaining, griping attitude toward what happens to one in life.

We should not be surprised at the Devil’s attacks. It is his character to attack the Christians – That’s his nature, so don’t be surprised when he sends his attack. The clear revelation of Scripture is that God allows him to do so. God permits Satan’s attacks because we need them. We would never develop spiritually, or grow properly, is we were never attacked. They can ultimately accomplish God’s will in our life. The whole outworking of God’s scheme could never be brought to pass where it not that God permits the Devil to do his work today within the limits of God’s overriding will. Never forget that God allows these things to happen. All the writers of Scripture agree to this.

1 Peter 4:12 states, “Do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you as through something strange were happening to you.”

Jesus Himself, in John 16:33, “In the world you have tribulation.” Then He adds, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

We are to expect trials. That is most of time exactly opposite than the way we feel. When we are attacked, we feel that it is “strange,” – that something most unusual in happening to us. We feel that no one has ever gone through what we are going through – that no one has ever had to undergo the depression of spirit that we feel.

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man, but God is faithful…” so, stop complaining about what has happened to you. It is God’s will for you!

Let’s face it. Instead of a fretful, peevish, whining attitude, let’s do what the Word of God says to do. What is that? “Put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.” There is no other way to handle it, no other solution to these basic human problems.
Note, that we do not start with “peace.” When we get troubled, or upset, when attacks come, we are not to start by attempting to make our heart feel peace. We are not to conjure up some kind of feeling of peace within. If we try that, we will only succeed in upsetting our self even more. No, we don’t start with peace – we start with the Truth!

We work our way through Truth – “our loins girt about with truth” – then realize that any worthiness comes as a result of Christ’s righteousness – by “having on the breastplate of righteousness” – and – then, and only then, – we will have peace – “our feet shod with readiness of the Gospel of peace.”

To set our heart at rest we must remind ourselves of these great truths

There are times when we are depressed and filled with doubts, for no seemingly good reason. We just wake up in a “blue-mood” – even though we were happy when we went to bed the night before. We cannot think of any no good reason for our depression.

It is true that physical elements of our life can have a great bearing on our feelings, but there is nothing physically wrong with us. We just “feel” depressed. What is happening? The truth of the matter is that we are experiencing what Paul calls, “the flaming darts of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16). These stratagems of Satan come in various forms. Evil thoughts and imagination intrude suddenly upon our thinking. Maybe we are even reading the Bible, or bow’d in prayer, thinking of something entirely different, when all of a sudden some selfish, unkind, hatred – or even some filthy, lewd thought – flashes into our mind. What is it? Where did it come from? It is one of the fiery darts of the evil one. We need to recognize it as such.

Sometimes these “darts of the Devil” are doubts, or even something that seems like blasphemies – or – we sudden have feelings that perhaps this business of Christianity is nothing after all but a big pipe dream. We have been told that it can all be explained psychologically – that we are victims of self-delusion. And we wonder if maybe the world is not what God’s Word says it is.

Ever experience these kinds of doubts?

All Christians have had sudden feelings that perhaps Christianity is perhaps all a fantasy. They have felt these “darts of the Devil.” Or, it just may be that these “fiery darts of the Devil” come in the form of sudden fears or anxieties. We have these fleeting sensations, and feel that things are all wrong. We can’t seem to shake them off. These feelings, whatever the form, come from the same source – they are “the fiery darts of the wicked one.”

We are the biggest fools on earth if we do not see them in that light and deal with them as such. Because they seem to come out of our own thoughts, right out of our inner self. We say, “It is something I am thinking.” It is a shocking thing. It doesn’t seem like me. Well it isn’t! It is the Devil is whispering, influencing. In our ignorance and innocence, we blame our self. We say to our self, “If I am a Christian, how can I think a thing like that? Can a Christian have such thoughts as this? Can I really be a Christian if I think like this? I must not be a Christian after all!”

That is exactly why the Devil sends these thoughts to us, he wants us to think that way. God’s instruction is, “Put on the whole armor of God that we will be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.”
Helmet of Salvation

“And take the helmet of salvation…” (Ephesians 6:17a).

Verse 17 gives the last two pieces of the armor of God that the believer is to “put on.” The “helmet of salvation” is listed next. The figure of the “helmet” suggests something designed to protect the mind – the believer’s ability to think and reason.

As we saw, the breastplate is protection of the believer’s emotional life. The most common ground of disturbance to emotions is guilt and unforgiveness. Because the child of God feels guilty, he gets emotional upset and depressed. The breastplate of righteousness is figurative of putting on Christ’s righteousness, assuming our position in Christ Jesus, which protects us from any sense of guilt, or unforgiveness.

The shoes protect one in the area of his will – figurative of putting on “the Gospel of peace.” Christ is our peace! To “shod one’s feet with the Gospel of peace,” speaks a readiness, or willingness, within the believer for a life of peace. It is the believer’s motivation that is spoken of here. Christ is our peace – He motivates us and makes us ready to face life.

The “helmet” is on the head – protecting the mind! Following through consistently in the armor’s application, this piece of armor represents something Christ is presently doing within the believer – and through him in the world.

“The Helmet of Salvation” – What is that? The helmet is protection that keeps one’s thinking straight in the midst of a very confused world? Paul answers the question of what is the helmet in one word – “SALVATION!” This helmet can keep one’s thinking straight and preserve him from mental confusion and darkness.

As you look at the world around you, is there anything more desperately needed, or more relevant to the situation to which we find ourselves, than something to keep our thinking straight? Was there ever a time when men are more bewildered than they are in our day, or when leaders of nations are more openly confused?

Even the intelligent confess to being utterly baffled in dealing with problems that our society is confronted with, and confounded by. Think of the staggering complexity of the issues of our day. The mind is simply overwhelmed by the insolubility of the problems that our society faces – and which you face!

It is imperative to realize that Paul is not speaking of the salvation of conversion. He is not looking back at the salvation of the new-birth. He is not speaking of salvation as a past decision that was once made, but rather he is looking to the future. He is speaking of a “future” salvation, a future event.
Note that Romans 13:11 speaks of a, “Salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.” “When we believed” is the “salvation” of conversion. Paul speaks of a “salvation” that is near – but future.

1 Thessalonians 5:8 teaches of this “helmet,” when it states, “But, since we belong to the day [that is, we Christians] let us be sober [self-disciplined] and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet – the hope of salvation.”

Paul speaks of a “salvation” that is a hope, something yet future, something not yet possessed or entered into fully.

The tense of this “salvation,” in Ephesians 6:17, is in the FUTURE. It is described in a number of passages. One being Romans 8:22-25, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”

What is Paul speaking of? Is he referring to the day of resurrection, or the day of Christ’s return to earth? What Paul is referring to, is the day when creation will be delivered from its bondage by Christ's return to establish His kingdom?

This “Helmet” is the recognition that all human schemes to obtain world peace, and harmony, are doomed to fail, but, through these failures, Jesus Christ is working out His Own plan that will culminate in His appearing again and in the establishment of His Own reign of righteousness. THAT is the “Helmet of Salvation” that will keep our thinking straight in the hour of utter confusion!

This principle that “God is at work,” working out His plan, is declared over and over again throughout Scripture, written for all to read.

God declares, “No flesh shall glory in My presence,” (1 Corinthians 1:29) simply meaning that nothing man can boast of will contribute one iota to the final solution of the human dilemma. It is all of God. He will establish His Kingdom and not human wisdom or any of man's vaunted knowledge, or scientific discoveries. None of this will contribute one thing to the ultimate solution.

According to Scripture, all that man can boast of will crumble into dust and those things which can be shaken shall be shaken, only things cannot be shaken will remain (Hebrews 12:17). The things that cannot be shaken are those “things of God,” the things that are eternal, spiritual and heavenly. “No man shall glory in His presence!”

This is true, but it is not the “whole” idea expressed here. If one stops here they would be guilty of the extremism by which the Devil keeps one off balance, and eccentric, in their thinking.

God is working through these events of history, working out His purposes on a basis totally different from the aims and goals of men. This is the “helmet of salvation” – that God is at
work, working out His salvation of the whole universe. We are not to be taken in by the unreal, groundless expectations of the world. But, there is more to it – we are not to withdraw from the world and isolate ourselves. We need to get involved with what going on in world, but for entirely different reasons. We must be involved to accomplish God's desire to confront men everywhere, at every level and in every enterprises of life with Good News of salvation in Christ Jesus.

If we can see that, we will save ourselves much heartache, delusion, disappointment and confusion – as we read the Newspaper, or listen to the news on television.

The Dean of Melbourne of the University in England wrote of H.G. Wells, “He hailed science as a panacea for all ills and the goddess of knowledge and power. In a series of popular scientific romances he visualized the luminous Shape of Things to Come,” In “Food of the Gods” he described a future of bigger and better men. He spoke of a planned world, of eugenics, of mechanized labor, of scientific diet and scientific educations.”

We can still hear these phrases tossed about. These thinkers built their grandiose dreams on a cloud that turned out to be a cobweb – a shimmering illusion. It changes shapes, as illusions do, but eventually their "castles in the clouds" come tumbling down. There is a repeated pattern of history – men building upon shifting, fleeting, temporary things that can be shaken, instead of on the unshakable things which will always remain and to which the Scriptures give testimony.

We have “a helmet of salvation” – hope for the future – an understanding that God is working out His purposes, therefore, we are not disturbed when human programs go wrong and everything fails.

The Christian has learned to expect wars, and “rumors of war,” unto the very end. He expects false teachings, false philosophies, cults and heresies to abound. He is told that this will happen. It is a part of the program, a part of the total overall plan and the moving of God in history. The Christian knows wars are unavoidable, even though every effort is made to avoid them. He knows that we are living in a mad world, a world that is deluded by subtle, Satanic lies, that are deliberately designed to end up in the mangling and mutilating of men. He knows that he is living in world where the innocent and the weak will suffer. He knows that the blame lies squarely on man's stubborn refusal to believe “the true nature of the problem,” and the remedy that God's love has fully provided. The Christian knows the demonic forces are behind the scene of the world and that human efforts against them will fail.

Well, then, what shall we do?

Do we withdraw from life? Do we give ourselves to building our own little air-tight capsule of life and look forward to retirement? Do we rise up and fight the enemies of America, or do we let world go to hell? God forgive us, too often that has been the answer of Christians today.

“The Helmet of Salvation,” not only tells us that these things are happening, but it also tells us what will happen – that there’s a certain, sure, SALVATION coming “and is even now at work.” This is what we need to know. Not merely that it will finally end right, but that the ending is being worked out now! History is not just a meaningless jumble – it has a controlled pattern. Jesus Christ is directing these events. He is the Lord of history!
God is at work in the selfsame events that we look at with such horror and confusion!

While we must not identify ourselves with the methods of the world or even with their aims, however, we need to listen to them and show our concerned about them as people. While not necessarily advances causes, we still must be interested and concerned with people around us to be their friend.

As involve ourselves in life around us we can expect two possible reactions; either they will persecute us or they will listen to us. Jesus said in John 15:20, “A servant is not greater than his Master. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.”

There are, of course, causes that Christians can join with, aims that they can wholeheartedly endorse. We a called to help the weak; minister to sick; help those who are old; those in prison or those burdened in any way. We must always be ready to further good government. Scripture tells us that, “Governments are of God,” even the worst of governments. Romans 13:1 states, “The powers that be are ordained of God.” We must be ready to alleviate social evil.

“Honor all men” – “Do good to all” – “Honor the king” – “Obey your masters” – “Provide things honest before all men” – “Feed the hungry” – “Clothe the naked” – “Heal the sick” – These are all practical exhortations from Scripture. A good question to ask our self is, “Would Jesus have joined social causes if He were here today?” However, it is important to remember that we do not do these things just to advance our own purposes.

All this possible only if put on “the Helmet of Salvation.” The return of Jesus Christ to this earth is not preached much these days, however, we must remind ourselves to “watch and be ready for that hour.” We must live daily in this hope, and anticipation, of Christ’s return.

Remember that the Battle is not ours – it is the Lord's! It is not a private fight we are engaged in, it is a great struggle against Satan – “against the principalities and powers, against the wiles of the Devil.” Satan attacks us where we live, in home or offices, in our relationship with other fellow human beings. But, the battle is not ours. We are individuals fighting in a great army – and the ultimate cause is sure, the end is certain.

We do not have trouble our self about all the things happening on the face of the earth because our Conqueror has already won the war. We may be hard pressed in our immediate realm in this battle, but the cause is never in doubt. The end is absolutely certain; the outcome is sure – the battle is the Lord’s! Ultimately this is not a struggle between the Devil and us, it is a spiritual warfare between God and the Devil – and Jesus has already won the victory!

We must keep in mind that God is always at work in human life, and in society. He is at work through His body, the Church, – [every born-again believer] – to heal, help, love and suffer “until the morning without clouds dawns, the day breaks and every shadow flee away.”

Are you frightened by world prospects? It seems to be getting worse all the time. Scripture teaches that in the end time, “Men's hearts fail them for fear because of the things that are coming o pass on the face of the earth.”
You think it is hard now, what to you think it will it be like when the darkness increases? If these things throw you for a loss now and causes look hopeless, the Bible tells us that things are going to get worse.

That is the hour that we need “The helmet of Salvation” to protect our mind.

Hebrews 2:8-9 says, “Thou [God, the Father] hast put all things in subjection under His [Jesus Christ] feet. For in that He [God, the Father] put all in subjection under Him [Jesus Christ], He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not yet all things put under him, [various translations verify that this “him,” mentioned here, is referring to man] But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

The meaning here seems to be, we do not yet see everything in subjection to “man” – the Body of Christ, however, we do see Jesus, Who suffered, died and rose again – and is at work today.

Here in America we do have much to be thankful for. We are relatively free from much of the distresses that Christians are undergoing in other parts of the world. They are not permitted to express their faith openly. Satanic darkness is far greater in many places that it is here. However, forces of wrong are striding unopposed and seem to be triumphing, nothing seems to stand in its way. What are Christians to do?

What can we do? We can “Put on the Helmet of Salvation!” It will keep our thinking straight – direct us – give us counsel where to put our efforts and where to make investments. We are not to succumb to delusions of the world. The answer to our problems is not human intelligence- but God’s Word. The Bible teaches, “Man, in his fallen condition, is unable, absolutely and totally unable, to work out his problems. But, in the strength of “the hope of salvation” we can keep our minds, and hearts, calm and undisturbed in this day of battle.

Just beyond the horizon everything will be alright!
The Sword of the Spirit

We have come to last piece of the Christian's armor, "the sword of the Spirit." This piece of armor also speaks of Christ's life.

Christ is our life!

Christ is made available to us in a very practical way through the sayings of His Word. Many have a vague sense of following Christ. They are, what one might call, "Christians" in general, rather than specific. They do not know exactly, in specific terms, what means to be a true follower of Jesus Christ. That is why the Word of God was given to man to show him what being a follower of Christ – a Christian – really means.

Christian truth, as a whole, is more than man can handle. However, the individual promises of God's Word that makes Christianity manageable.

Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Paul is indicating that the authority of Jesus Christ, and the authority of the Scripture, is one and the same. Many challenge this today! Many voices tell us we must follow Christ and accept His authority, but we don’t have to accept the authority of the Bible. However, Paul calls the Scriptures, “the word of Christ.” We cannot separate the two.

A professor spoke on “Science and the Christian Faith” and, after he finished he allowed those who were there to ask questions. One student said, “I can accept the Bible as a witness of certain men to what they thought of Jesus Christ. But you seem to go further. You have used the word ‘inspired’ on several occasions in your paper and that seems to suggest that in your opinion the Bible is more than the views of men, that it has divine authority. Is that true?”

The professor answered, “My answer may sound to you very much like Sunday School propaganda, but I can only put it this way: The center of my life is Jesus Christ. I have found Him to be the key to everything that I desire in life. And yet I could know nothing about Christ if I did not learn it from the Bible. The Bible presents Christ and Christ defines the Bible. How can I make a distinction between the two?”

How true! The authority of Scripture is the authority of Christ. They are indivisible. To attempt to distinguish the two is like asking which blade of a pair of scissors is more important. We know Christ through the Bible. We understand the Bible through the knowledge of Christ. The two cannot be separated. “The Sword of the Spirit – which is the Word of God.” This is the great, supernatural weapon placed in the hands of the believer.

Perhaps you have at one time been reading a passage from God’s Word and suddenly it comes alive. It seems to takes on flesh and bones and leaps off page at you. It seems to almost grow eyes and follow you around everywhere you go – develops a voice that echoes in your ears. You can't get away from its influence.
A moment of temptation and doubt comes like “flaming darts of the evil one,” and immediately a passage of Scripture, like an arrow, supplies the answer that comes flashing to your mind.

You are asked a question that catches you off guard and you are about to say, “I don’t know,” when suddenly, there’s “a moment of illumination.” A word of Scripture comes to your mind that gives the answer to the question. God's Word has a strange, powerful effect on you and greatly moves you. You give an answer to a deep and permanent decision.

The Holy Spirit calls these truths to our remembrance, however, they are the Words of Jesus Christ. These “words” originated by Jesus Christ. He is the Author!

What was Christ's answer to the attack of the Devil – the same one who comes to discourage us? Each time Satan tempted Jesus, Jesus answered, “It is written . . .” and uses God’s Word, like a sword, to ward off the attack of the Devil.

The Holy Spirit brings “a Word” to our mind, it is the “sword of the Spirit” that we can use to thrust the Devil with.

A sword is both for defense and for offense. It defends and protects. It pierces hearts and it destroys the lies of the Devil. Our “sword,” the Word of God, is our only proper offense. We need to proclaim it. We do not need to defend it, or attempt to support it with long, extensive, arguments. There are places for that, but not in an encounter with those who disbelieve.

Hebrews 4:12 teaches, “For the Word of God is living and active...[energetic - alive and full of power]...sharper than any two-edged sword...[more cutting than any knife with two edges]...piercing to the division of soul and spirit...[penetrating deeply, making a distinction between the soul and spirit]...not the joints only but the very marrow...[innermost intimacies of a man's being]...and able to discern the secret thoughts and motives of man's heart.”

It is because of this quality that explains why the Bible is so continuously under attack. The Devil does everything he can to destroy the Bible. Why is the Bible so continuously under attack? The enemies of the Gospel and prompted by the Devil. He seeks to destroy the very existence of the Bible and destroy its significance. With clever words and subtle arguments, he speaks through men of prominence and intelligence to destroy the testimony of the Scripture. Men themselves are not necessarily hypocritical. They are not deliberately, knowingly destructive of God’s Word. Many sincerely attempting to be what they call being, “honest.” Yet, they attempt to disprove the “historical facts” of the Biblical records, particularly anything in relation to supernatural events. They cannot accept the idea of an invisible realm, which the Bible calls the “Kingdom of God,” invading our commonplace realm of space and time. Such a concept is distasteful to them, so their attacks are aimed at making Bible accounts appear incredible and, therefore, unreliable, to the extent that many no longer take the Bible seriously. Even theologians mislead, thousands.

The effect is that they have kept many from reading Scriptures. The Devil goes to all this trouble and makes this fantastic effort because he knows the power of Scripture. Satan's aim is to keep people from seriously, thoughtfully, reading the Scripture.
What is the answer? The answer is for people to read Scripture in a thoughtful, serious manner.

To illustrate: There is nothing more basic, and central to the Bible, than the Christmas story. The way an infinite God became a man. A baby in a manger; angel's song; a brilliant star; shepherds and wise men – the simple beauty of that ancient story transforms the world, at least for a brief time, every year. And has done so for 2000 years. Yet, many today treat it as if it was nothing more than a myth, a pretty story. It’s been put in the same category as Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer; Frosty, the snowman and Santa Claus. No attempt made to disprove the supernatural claims of the Biblical story, but to merely dismiss it all with a wave of the hand as unworthy of modern intelligence.

Implication clear. Those who believe in this story are in a class with those who still believe earth is flat.

Why?

If we accept this story as a historical fact, then we must face the indisputable fact that this event can only be explained by the explanation which Scriptures gives. And that is that man was in a lost condition and God invaded the earth so that He might accomplish a work of redemption, at an extremely great cost to Himself – the death of His only begotten Son!

What is the answer to the false claim that this account of a supernatural event? Is it merely a myth? Simply reading what the Bible has to say will answer that question. Read the Christmas story as told by Matthew and Luke. As you read the familiar tale, see how simple and uncontrived it is presented. There is no attempt to garnish, or bolster, it with arguments, or theological explanation. It is simple story of what happened to a couple on their way to Bethlehem, what occurred when they arrived, and what happened in the immediate days following. As you read the Christmas story in its setting in the Bible, you begin to see how fitting, natural and unforced it all is.

Wesley wrote, “Hark the Herald Angels sing
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of the Virgin's womb;
Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see;
Hail the Incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.”

Wesley captured the simple, uncomplicated story. It needs no artificial support.

This story was accepted and proclaimed in 1st century, along with story of cross and the resurrection. It was a story that changed the world. No Christian in Scripture denies it. No apostle, even Jesus, ever questioned this event or, even suggested that it did not take place exactly as it was recorded.

1 John 4:2-3 warns, “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is


come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.”

The purpose of God's Word is to compel belief, in the face of distortion of truth. The “sword of the Spirit” enables one to defend against that which would undermine and attack the authority of Jesus Christ.

How many times temptation comes and that seems so logical, reasonable and widely practiced? We are allured by it and at verge of disobeying, when God's Word stops us because we recall some passage of Scripture, or are arrested by some verse that we remember.

Everything that seems “logical” is not necessarily right. We are not as rational as we think we are. We need to defend against depression.

A man, in grip of terrible depression, came for counseling. He was in utter desolation of his mind that had lasted for weeks. Recovery came as he began to quote a passage of Scripture. Slowly, like the sun coming up, light began to dawn and change came into his life. He became normal and was set free by the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

If you do not read Scripture, you will be terribly exposed to defeat and despair. If you neglect the reading of Scripture, you are in direct disobedience to will of the Lord.

When Holy Spirit brings a Scripture to our minds, what do? We must take it, heed it and obey it. The Holy Spirit brought it to your mind for a purpose.

If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior, the place for you to begin is to become a child of God. The Word of God can bring no comfort; it has nothing to say to encourage you until you become a child of God. The only way to escape the allurements and deceitfulness of Satan is to, first, become a Christian. Then, you will be delivered from Satan's kingdom by the power of Jesus Christ!

Then, “Put on the whole armor of God.”
How Does the Devil Attack?

Whenever anyone accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior, he is set free, however he is not set free to do as he pleases, but rather, he is to do battle. As a child of God he is engaged in a fight to overcome. Ephesians 6:10-17 tells of the armor that God has given us as a defense.

In John.8:44 Jesus tell us the “Devil is a murderer and a destroyer.” Satan seeks to destroy, to create chaos and to ruin everything he can. God makes everything beautiful; He brings harmony and order. Satan, as a “Destroyer” seeks to mutilate, disfigure and destroy. Satan does this by deceit.

Jesus also said, “The Devil is a liar!” He distorts, masquerades, seeks to produce illusions and fantasies in the minds of mankind.

The Devil can attack by direct confrontation, however, God has given every man “a will” to make his own decisions for his life, therefore, Satan, by far, attacks are indirect. Paul calls these attacks of Satan, “The wiles of the Devil.”

These indirect attacks can come through the world – the pressure of society around attempts to get us to conform to their way...[really Satan's way]...of life. Or these attacks can come through what Scripture calls “the flesh” – our carnal nature within.

The “armor” given in Ephesians 6:10-17 is highly figurative. It is a description of the Lord, Jesus Christ, Himself.

Christ our defense against stratagems of Satan.

However, we must appropriate this armor. This is God’s command for us!

Romans 13:14, commands us to “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Timothy 2:1 commands us to, “Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

Paul’s description of the “armor,” given in Ephesians 6:10-17, shows how the believer can “lay hold of Christ” in a very practical way.

You will note that there are two divisions given of the armor.

1. First three pieces of armor – Already done!
   “Having girded your loins with Truth” – verse 14
   “Having on the Breastplate of righteousness” – verse 14
   “Having your feet shod with the equipment of the Gospel of peace” – verse 15

2. The last three pieces of armor – Something we must do!
   “Take the shield of faith” – verse 16
   “Take the helmet of salvation” – verse 17
   “Take the sword of the Spirit” – verse 17

   It must be remember also, that the armor must also be taken “in the order” in which God gives the pieces.
We must start with “our loins girt about with Truth” – that is, final reality. That’s a key to the secret of life. Jesus spoke truth; He demonstrated truth by what He did, His mighty deeds and, finally, He rose from the dead.

After gritting our loins with Truth, we must “put on the breastplate of Righteousness” – that is, we stand before God in Christ's merits.

Then, “our feet are shod with the readiness of the Gospel of peace” – that is, Christ is the Source of our Peace. He brings a sense of calm and well-being. Romans5:1, tells us that, “We have peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ.”

**CHRIST IS TRUTH - RIGHTEOUSNESS - PEACE**

What do we do when attack comes? First, we take the “shield of faith,” by which we are able to “quench all the fiery darts of the Evil One.” Satan attacks in the area of our Faith. Satan attacked Eve by saying, “Did God really say?” And, he tempted Christ by saying, “If you really are the Son of God?”

In the same way, Satan attempts to get us to doubt. What do we do? “Take the shield of faith with which you can quench ALL the flaming darts of the evil one!” We either believe, and accept, Him, Who is Truth, or our doubts. We cannot trust our feelings. We must not accept these fears, worries and guilt. We can quench, extinguish, all flaming missiles of the Devil because we are “more than conqueror.” We can have a victorious, triumphant and abundant entrance in the Kingdom of God.
Pray in the Spirit

The believer is commanded to “Be strong in the Lord,” and this is accomplished when we “Put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.” However, there is another step. Verses 18 through 20 states:

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; 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.”

We must note the relationship between, “Putting on the armor of God” and “Praying.” These two belong together. In fact, one grows out of the other. It is not enough to “put on the armor of God,” we must also pray; and, it is not enough to “pray,” we must also put on the armor of God.

Have studied about “putting on the armor of God,” and see that it is far from just being merely figurative – that it is an actual thing we do. It is remembering what Christ is to us; thinking it through the implications of that relationship in terms of our present struggle and experience – and applying these truths to our life.

“Putting on the whole armor of God” is essentially done in the realm of our thought-life. It is an adjustment of the attitude of our heart to reality, to things as they really are. It is thinking through the implications of the facts revealed in God’s Word. The problem with life for a great many Christians is that they do not see their Christian life as it really is. They suffer from strange illusions. That is why they desperately need, and must have, the revelation of facts as revealed in Scripture.

Life is what God has declared it to be. When the believer faces life on that basis, he discovers the revelation with God, with himself, and with others is right and accurate. The Bible describes what is happening. It tells us why things are happening and it tells us what lies beyond them.

All of this is a part of “Putting on the armor of God,” appropriating Christ to our life in terms of our present situation. It is done in the realm of our thought life.

For instance, What is “putting on breastplate of righteousness?” It is as we think of Christ and what His righteousness means as it is imparted to us.

“Take up the Sword of the Spirit.” What does that mean? It means we give heed to the flashes of Scripture, the portions of God’s Word, that comes to our mind and apply it to the situation we are facing.

DONE IN THE REALM OF OUR THOUGHT LIFE
At first, it takes time to work this out, but, as we learn to do it, the process becomes much more rapid, until almost instantaneously we think through this line of approach to the problems we are facing.

What Paul means in 2 Corinthians 10:5, “Take every thought captive to obey Christ,” is not to just think about these things and never bring them into action. He is referring to action of “bringing our thoughts into captive to obey Christ,” and then, doing what Christ commands. We are made to do both: “think” and “do” – in that order. We receive information, first, assimilate it, correlate it, think it through; then, act upon what we have both thought and felt.

Our emotion and our mind, working upon our will, bring us to activity. This is the normal, proper, procedure of human living. Our doing grows out of our thinking!

People speak of “thoughtless actions.” We say of someone, “They acted thoughtlessly.” But, is that really possible? Cannot anyone act “thoughtlessly?” What we really mean when we say that is that they acted with very superficial, shallow thinking. They certainly may not have thought for very long or didn’t take into consideration what they were going to say, or do. But, it is impossible to act without first having some thought. But, it is certainly possible to “think” without “acting.”

What Paul is bringing us to in 2 Corinthians 10:5, is, “Take every thought captive to obey Christ.” To think, without doing, is inevitably frustrating. It’s like cooking, and never eating. Imagine how frustrating that would be.

So the complement to “putting on the armor of God” and the activity that results from it, is to pray! Do not reverse this. We sometimes try to pray before “put on the armor of God,” and the result is a feeble, impotent prayer life!

There’s great practical help here, if we follow carefully the designated order of Scripture. Most of us, if we are honest, must confess that we not really are satisfied with prayer life. We feel that it’s inadequate and infrequent. At times, we struggle to improve the quality, and the quantity. We adopt schedules, attempt to maintain and develop long lists of names and projects to pray for. We discipline ourselves to a greater prayer-life. In other words, we begin with “doing.” When we do that, we are starting in the wrong place. We are violating our basic human nature. The place to start is not with “doing,” but in “thinking.” Then follow it up by “doing!”