

FOUNDATION OF FAITH!
SPIRITUAL WARFARE
PART 3

This morning in our series Foundation of Faith we are going to finish up our study on Spiritual warfare. Now I realize that some of you might not believe in the spirit world or believe that there are demonic forces out there that are trying to influence our lives. I respect that but you are wrong! The Bible is very clear that there is a spiritual dimension out there and it does have contact with the physical world. Paul makes that very clear in Ephesians 6:12, **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”** There is a spiritual battle that is taking place!

I want to share with you what one person went through, the deception she fell prey to in her book, The Beautiful Side of Evil. The book details the experience of Johanna Michaelsen who had spirit guides, she even had one that said he was Jesus but was not. And the premise of the book, which is an amazing story, is that there is the beautiful side of evil in that these demonic forces transform themselves into angels of light to deceive. This is what she had to say as she was into her fourth and final day of Mind Control Training and it was tagged “Applied ESP”. She wrote,

During the first programming session of that day we counted ourselves down to level. We were told to enter our laboratories and greet our counselors [spirit beings]. I felt afraid as we went down, but tried to relax as the monotonous sound of the metronome began. Surely everything would be fine.

Two figures were in the lab waiting for me, facing the wall. They turned slowly towards me as I entered – I gasped. Both Sarah and Jesus now had werewolf faces. They just stood there watching me, growling softly. I suddenly understood they were not going away; I was going to have to deal with them face to face. After a long moment I gathered courage and approached the two figures. As I did they began changing. The face of Jesus flashed on – shining and loving – then in a flash, the werewolf reappeared. The same was happening with Sarah – on and off – on and off. I forced myself to approach the figure of Jesus and said, “Lord, why are you and Sarah doing this? It frightens me.” Jesus’ faced appeared, smiling and gently.

“Do not be afraid,” he said, “We only want to teach you that not everything that seems to be evil on the surface really is evil down beneath in its essence. When you truly understand this, our werewolf faces will be gone forever and you will ever see us as we really are.”

The words sounded in my mind as clearly as though they had been spoken aloud, but they made no sense to me. Then suddenly it was clear: however frightening these beings appeared, they were not evil. I decided to learn to trust and accept them regardless of the discrepant images they might present. It seemed as though it was all designed to strengthen me and make me grow in spiritual understanding.

The evil faces reappeared, grinning hideously – waiting for my response to their revelation.

“I accept what you have told me. I will try to learn my lesson soon, Lord.” I approached him and he bent to receive my kiss upon his wooly blood matted forehead.

“Thank you, little one,” came a gentle voice.

Tom had counted us up several minutes before, but I hadn't heard him. When I finally opened my eyes I realized everyone else was up and around and looking at me oddly. It was several weeks before I was able to gain enough control of my fear of the beings to warrant the disappearance of the werewolf faces.

About a month later I went through the course a third time. Kim took it with me at the Mexico City house. She also asked for Jesus as her counselor as she had been a committed believer for several years. She had been reluctant to take the course but did so at our urging. When time came to receive her counselors, she said the face of Satan pressed in on her; then, a loud crash and a powerful voice cried out, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me!" as the satanic vision vanished. She was convinced she had seen Satan and that Mind Control was occultic and spiritually dangerous.

Because of what my counselors had told me, however, I decided she simply had not evolved sufficiently to understand what had really happened. Why had she been so afraid? After all, I had seen my horrors and faced them head on. That seemed the only way to handle the situation. No true spiritual progress could be made by running away from what was fearful. It had to be dealt with face to face. "Too narrow minded," I concluded. "She'll never truly grow spiritually.' So I discounted all her frantic warnings.

- Johanna Michaelsen, *The Beautiful Side of Evil*, pp. 76-78

Keep in mind that these events took place in the 1970's and what she went through, the things she talks about is being brought into the church without a care today! Praise the Lord she saw what this truly is, of the Devil and became a Christian; she came to know the real Jesus. But make no mistake about it, this is real and the book goes into even more details of all she went through. This is not a joke, this is not something just to sweep aside, this is real and the Devil is out to destroy lives any way that he can!

And thus, Paul's warning to us on how to deal with this spiritual warfare is given to us in Ephesians chapter 6 where Paul tells us beginning in verse 10, **“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.”**

Ephesians 6:10-18.

Now some of you may not like it, but if you are a Christian you are in this battle! There are none who sit on the sidelines and are out of the battle! Thus, we need to be prepared and that is why we are looking at the spiritual armor that God has given to us. And last week we covered the first three pieces of spiritual armor that God has given to us to thwart or prevent the attacks of the enemy.

And please remember that the first three pieces of armor are permanent, they are never to be taken off. We are never to be without the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness or having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Paul uses the word “**having**” in verse 14, which is in the Greek aorist tense, and that speaks of never being without them!

Let me just quickly go over the first three pieces of armor and then we will conclude with the last four. The belt of truth is the first piece of equipment and all the other pieces were attached to this belt. Paul’s point is that the Word of God is our source of truth and that we are to be truthful. It is speaking of an attitude of truthfulness. You see, the word “**gird**” was a common expression that was used to put ones self in readiness, prepared for anything that might come their way, any service that might be required. So we need to know the truth of God’s Word and we need to speak the truth so we do not get tripped up by the Devil or by our lies!

The second piece of armor that God has for us is the breastplate of righteousness. Paul is speaking of the practical righteousness of daily living. By living lives that are filled with unrighteousness, by having your Christian character flawed by immoral behavior, you are leaving a gaping hole in your breastplate. It is really just conforming our will to God's will, and yes, I just said "just" but that truly is an area that we struggle with but we do need to do it, surrender and conform to His will! Yes, the imputed righteousness of Christ is given to every believer and it is the key to practical righteousness or how we live out our faith. One is given to us by faith – imputed righteousness. The other is one we must walk in – practical righteousness. You see, it does matter what we think, what we say, how we act. God wants us to be holy as He is holy!

And lastly, we looked at having our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Paul is saying that we are to literally wrap our feet with the Gospel of peace. The word that Paul uses for "**preparation**" is the Greek word HETOIMASIA, (het-oy-mas-ee'-ah) and it speaks of a "prepared foundation." It speaks of a readiness, stability, surefootedness! You see, the Gospel message gives us stability; surefootedness because it is built upon the Rock, Jesus Christ and that fact can't be shaken. No matter what the enemy throws at you, your footing is secure in Christ. A good pair of boots allows the soldier to be ready to march, climb, fight, or do whatever else is necessary. Christ demands the same readiness of His people.

Now let's look at the last 4 pieces of spiritual armor that God has given to us. In this section we see the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit and prayer. These pieces of armor are to be at our disposal at all times, ready to use and comfortable using them.

4. THE SHIELD OF FAITH – EPHESIANS 6:16

Paul tells us that we are to take up the shield of faith. In other words, we need to have it at our side; we need to be ready to use it at a moments notice. It is something that you used in close combat.

Now this shield that Paul is speaking of here is the THUREOS, and for the Roman soldier it was another vital piece of his armor. This shield was about 4½ feet high and 2½ feet wide, with a slight curve to it. It was made of wood and covered with metal or heavy oiled leather.

As these Roman soldiers moved toward the front lines they would interlock their shields forming a long wall of shields that could extend for a mile or more. As the enemy would fire their spears and flaming arrows, their shields would protect the Roman soldiers and they would continue to advance towards their enemy.

To give you an example of how strong these shields were, these Roman soldiers would at times go into a tortoise formation. What that means is that 27 men, in 4 ranks would gather together. The first 6 would hold their shields vertically, side-by-side, interlocking them. The next 3 rows of 7 soldiers each covered the parameter and roof with their shields locked. Looking at it would give you the impression of a tortoise shell, and that is how strong it was.

What was the purpose of doing this? They obviously were not hiding under these shields so the enemy could not find them. The reason they did this is the enemy could fire their flaming arrows all day but they would not penetrate the shield. In fact, they would run chariots over them as a test of strength. It was a terrifying formation for any enemy because of its effectiveness against penetration.

These shields were used to protect the soldiers from the fiery darts or the flaming missiles that the enemy would fire. What the enemy would do is he would take his arrows and he would wrap pieces of cloth around them and soaked them in pitch. Then, while in battle, just before the arrow was shot, the enemy would light the tip and launch it towards the enemy. Upon impact the pieces of burning material would spatter for several feet, causing anything flammable it touched to become ignited. Not only was the arrow dangerous but also these burning arrows could cause serious burns to the soldier. With these burns, besides being very painful, they could become infected and thus, remove the soldier from battle, even causing death.

With the shield made of metal or leather that had been soaked in water it would deflect these arrows away from the soldier or it would extinguish them, thus protecting the soldier from any harm and enabling him to continue on in the fight.

Now, for the Christian, his shield is that of faith. John tells us in I John 5:4-5, **“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”** Our faith in Jesus will put out those fiery darts that Satan is launching at us. Without faith the enemy has us defenseless!

We all have faith in something and we exercise faith every day of our lives and yet, for some, when it comes to faith in God they can't accept that! That is foolish. And for us as Christians, the enemy can discourage us, tempt us, play mind games with us, and oppress us to cause us to take our eyes off of Jesus. He wants us to lose our faith in the One who loves us and died for us, Jesus! Satan continually bombards God's children with temptations to immorality, hatred, envy, anger, covetousness, pride, doubt, fear, despair, distrust, and every other sin. Thus, faith, the shield of faith is able to put out those fiery darts that Satan launches at us!

Let me share this with you because it will help show you how important faith truly is. When John Paton was translating the Bible for a South Seas island tribe, he discovered that they had no word for trust or faith. That is a problem when you try to share with people about Jesus and you can't use the word "faith." Then one day a native who had been running hard came into the missionary's house, flopped himself in a large chair and said, "It's good to rest my whole weight on this chair." "That's it," said Paton. "I'll translate faith as 'resting one's whole weight on God.'"

That is what we need to do, rest our whole weight on God. Now some may say that is just being co-dependant. I disagree with that, I am not co-dependent upon Jesus; I am fully dependant upon Him! I hope that clears that up! And remember what Paul said in Hebrews 11:6, "**But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.**" Faith is needed for salvation, faith in Jesus as your Savior and faith is needed as we live out our lives!

We are told in Proverbs 30:5-6, **“Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.”** Here’s the thing. We need to trust God, put our faith in Him and what He has told us in His Word. If we don’t, if we add to God’s Word or even take away from God’s Word we are wrong and that just opens up our shield so the Devil can fire one of those flaming darts at us! God is a shield to us if we put our trust, if we have faith in Him!

We see this same thought in Psalm 18:30 as the Psalmist tells us, **“As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the Lord is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him.”** God’s word is proven, it has been tested, and thus we can trust in what God has said and if we do, He is a shield for us to protect us from the fiery darts of Satan that he launches at us!

Also, this shield that the Roman soldiers had that locked together, what does that mean to us as Christians? I think it speaks of us standing in faith together as a body of believers and as we do, the Devil will not be able to roll over us, he will not be able to defeat us. There is no such thing as the Lone Christian just as there was no such thing as the Lone Ranger, he had Tonto! We do need each other especially when the battle heats up!

Listen once again to what Paul said here in verse 16 of Ephesians chapter 6, **“above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.”** Did you notice where the battle, this struggle is at? It is not against people it is against the Devil and his demonic forces. May we remember that!

Thus, take the shield of faith because it is this faith in God, faith in the Word of God and faith in the promises of God that protects us from all the fiery darts the Devil launches at us. And keep in mind that there is no protection on the backside; he is open for a fiery dart if he flees. Thus, we are to forge ahead in this battle and not turn around! Take up ***THE SHIELD OF FAITH!***

5. THE HELMET OF SALVATION – EPHESIANS 6:17a

The next piece of armor that we are to take up on a moment's notice, to have ready at all times is the helmet of salvation. The Roman soldier wore a helmet that was basically made of thick leather that was covered with metal plates. Other types of helmets that were worn were made of heavy molded or beaten metal. Some also had cheek plates that helped to protect the face.

The obvious purpose of the helmet was to protect the head from being injured as the enemy swung the large double-edged, two handed broadsword called RHOMPHAIA in the Greek. This sword measured some 3 to 4 feet in length and it just was swung to take off the persons head! Paul is telling us that our spiritual helmet is that of salvation. Again, keep in mind that the helmet is used to protect the head or mind against the attacks of the enemy.

Many times the Devil gets us to doubt our salvation or the security we have in Christ. And yes, Scripture supports that fact of our security regarding our salvation as Jesus said in John 5:24, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”** And John tells us in I John 5:13, **“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”**

And like the enemies of the Roman soldiers, Satan has a double-edged sword that he swings at us to destroy our faith. That double-edged sword is doubt and discouragement. And one of the areas that Satan loves to attack us is in the area of our salvation as I have said. He wants us to doubt our salvation. “You mean that little prayer saved you?” “How can you be saved, look at what you just did?” “Did God really mean that?” And I think you get the idea because you probably heard it all before in your head as Satan tried to get you to doubt your salvation and to discourage you in your calling!

The key is that we can know we are saved as Jesus and John wrote and once we trust in what God has said, the enemy will not be able to get into our minds to discourage us and get us to doubt our salvation! This is a big issue for many today and we need to listen to what God has said and not what Satan is whispering in our ears!

I like the way John MacArthur put it as he said, “The helmet of salvation is that great hope of final salvation that gives us confidence and assurance that our present struggle with Satan will not last forever and we will be victorious in the end.” Amen to that!

I like what Paul says in Philippians 4:6-7, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”**

Here’s the thing. As we bring our concerns before the Lord He fills us with His peace. What if you don’t feel His peace right now? Maybe it is because your mind is not focused upon Him but upon the situation or situations you are in right now. In Isaiah 26:3 we are told, **“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You.”**

This is not a peace from the storms of life but a peace through the storms of life. It is a peace that is from God, not based upon our efforts, it is beyond our understanding that we can be at peace in the midst of a storm and yet God has given that to us if we would only receive it by faith. You see, His peace guards our hearts or our emotions. We are not anxious, fearful and-so-on because His peace is guarding our hearts. That can be related to the breastplate of righteousness where we place our faith in God, rest in Him.

Also, His peace guards our mind or our thoughts, the enemy can’t mess us up because our thoughts are upon the Lord and based in the truth of His Word! It is as Peter is admonishing us in I Peter 5:7, **“casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.”** And I think this relates to the helmet of salvation. God saved us not because we were so great and we deserved it. He saved us because He loved us sinners. Thus, we have done nothing to be saved, the work was done by Jesus and He has given us the free gift by faith and we need to rest in that. We need to rest in the finished work of Jesus because the Devil loves to mess us up in this area!

Jesus said in John 14:27, **“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”** Jesus also said in John 16:33, **“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”**

Now let’s think this through. If you doubt your salvation then you are not at peace. That just makes sense, how can you be at peace when you doubt your salvation? How can you be at peace when you doubt the promises of God to you? The reality is you can’t! That is why the Devil swings that double-edged sword of doubt and discouragement and if our helmet is not on, he is going to mess with our mind!

In John chapter 6 Jesus said, **“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. . . . This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.”** John 6:37, 39. Do you believe that? Do you believe that Jesus will lose no one? Do you think that applies to you? You must believe it because it is God’s promise to you, that He will not lose you!

Absolutely no circumstance - no failure, shortcoming, or sin, no matter how serious - can cause either Jesus or His Father to disown a person who is saved. Nor can any other person or thing ever snatch them out of the hand of the Son or the hand of the Father. That is Paul’s point in Romans 8:38-39, **“For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”**

Here is the question for you. “Can anything or anyone separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus?” Paul tells us that it is impossible for anyone to take us away from our Lord, to separate us from His love. In other words, it is impossible to lose our salvation! That should give to each of us a security of our salvation!

Spurgeon put it this way in regards to the love of God as the great men and women of faith had. He said: “They did not speak of Christ’s love as though it were a myth to be respected, a tradition to be revered; they viewed it as a blessed reality, and they cast their whole confidence upon it, being persuaded that it would bear them up as upon eagles’ wings, and carry them all their days; resting assured that it would be to them a foundation of rock, against which the waves might beat, and the winds blow, but their soul’s habitation would stand securely if founded upon it.” May we not forget that! If God is for us – who can be against us? Absolutely no one! You need to believe that, you need to put on the helmet of salvation!

Make no mistake about it, Satan loves to swing that double-edged sword of doubt and discouragement, trying to get us to stumble and make us ineffective as Christians. He can’t take us out of the Father’s hand, out of the hand of Jesus, but he can make us weak and insecure in our actions and ineffective in our walk. He can get us to doubt our salvation and discourage us. Thus, put on the helmet of salvation so Satan will not be able to strike you with doubt and discouragement, stand strong in the Lord. Take up ***THE HELMET OF SALVATION!***

6. THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT – EPHESIANS 6:17b

The sixth piece of armor that God has for us is the Sword of the Spirit and once again we are to be ready to take it up and use it in a moments notice. Obviously the sword was an important piece of the soldier's armor. Now there were two types of swords that were used and the one we spoke of so far was this broadsword that was a double-edged sword some 3 to 4 feet long. Paul is not speaking of the broadsword here, that is not the Greek word that he uses for this sword.

The sword that Paul is speaking of is the MACHAIRA, which had a length of six to 18 inches and was used in hand-to-hand combat. The sword was carried in a sheath which was attached to the soldiers belt, and thus, always ready for use.

For us as Christians, Paul tells us that the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit and it is powerful as Hebrews 4:12 tells us, **“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”** It cuts right to the heart of the matter if we would let it. It will also accomplish what God has sent it to do in our lives as Isaiah 55:11 tells us, **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”**

Paul tells us that this is the sword of the Spirit and it is the Holy Spirit that opens up to us the Word of God, He is the Spirit of truth, (John 14:17). It is the Holy Spirit that teaches us all things but we must also be diligent in our study of the Word of God.

We are living in a time where the church is downplaying the importance of the Word of God, negating the Word of God. But Paul is very clear as he tells us that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. This is the first of two offensive weapons and we have allowed Satan to remove our sword or replace it with a rubber sword that is ineffective in the battle we are in!

The Scottish pastor and writer Thomas Guthrie said, “The Bible is an armory of heavenly weapons, a laboratory of infallible medicines, a mine of exhaustless wealth. It is a guidebook for every road, a chart for every sea, a medicine for every malady, and a balm for every wound. Rob us of our Bible and our sky has lost its sun.”

And let me say this. When Paul speaks of the sword of the Spirit being the Word of God, he is not using the Greek word LOGOS. This word means general statements or messages. Paul is not talking about general knowledge of the Scripture. Paul uses the Greek word RHEMA, which refers to individual words or statements. It is not a general knowledge but having a precise understanding of the Scripture. In other words, we need to be able to expound on the specific truths within the Scriptures. Are you comfortable using the Word of God? You should be, it is our first offensive weapon that we as Christians have. Dig into God’s Word, meditate upon it, get to know Him and His Word more!

Let me show you what I mean. In II Samuel chapter 23 we see the mighty men of God that assisted David in the work, men who were at his side. And in II Samuel 23:9-10 we are told, **“And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David when they defied the Philistines who were gathered there for battle, and the men of Israel had retreated. He arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The Lord brought about a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to plunder.”**

I know, some of you are wondering where I am going with this, but hang in there, you will see how this applies to what we are talking about. In this story of this mighty man of God we are told that the Philistines gathered against Israel and all the Israeli soldiers retreated except for one, Eleazar! And this mighty man of God fought against the Philistines, by himself, with the sword and by the time he was done, and this victory was assured, his sword cleaved to his hand. In other words it had become a natural extension of his body, part of his life. It was as if his sword was glued to his hand and it was because of that relationship we see the enemy defeated! And after the battle was over, the people returned and took the plunder of this victory.

What does this mean to us as Christians? We have seen that one of our offensive weapons is the sword of the Spirit. God's Word should become a natural extension of our lives so that as Satan comes against us, as he tries to distort the Scriptures to cause us to sin, to doubt our faith, we can have solid assurance that what he is saying is not what the Lord has said to us!

You see, we are not to go around swinging God's Word and cutting off people's heads, like the double-edged broadsword would do, not a good thing to do. But we are to do hand-to-hand combat you might say and like a surgeon use God's Word in such a way that it cuts to the heart of the matter. Yes, the Holy Spirit does that but we must speak forth God's Word, we must know God's Word.

Listen to these words regarding the Scriptures. We are told:

There are words written by kings, by emperors, by princes, by poets, by sages, by philosophers, by fishermen, by statesmen, by men learned in the wisdom of Egypt, educated in the schools of Babylon, and trained at the feet of rabbis in Jerusalem. It was written by men in exile, in the desert, in shepherd's tents, in green pastures, and beside still waters. Among its authors we find a tax-gatherer, a herdsman, a gatherer of sycamore fruit. We find poor men, rich men, statesmen, preachers, captains, legislators, judges, and exiles. The Bible is a library full of history, genealogy, ethnology [The science that analyzes and compares human cultures, as in social structure, language, religion, and technology], law, ethics, prophecy, poetry, eloquence, medicine, sanitary science, political economy, and the perfect rules for personal and social life. And behind every word is the divine author, God Himself.

- Source Unknown

Now, was this an easy task for Eleazar to do? Absolutely not! He was weary and yet he forged ahead in the work. The same is true for us as we study the Word of God. We must take the time to dig into it, to study it, to make it a part of our life so that it naturally flows from our life! Peter put it like this in I Peter 3:15, **“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”** May we be able to give a defense for our faith, may we be able to stand strong upon God’s Word!

Did you also notice that as this battle heated up, those that were not prepared for this battle fled for their lives? Any soldier who is not prepared for battle will not put his life on the line. The next time we see these people who retreated is when the battle was over and it was time to collect the spoils of victory. That is a sad picture and as much as they gained, they missed so much more. They missed out on seeing God bring these victories in their own lives and for those that don’t know God’s Word, they miss out on the joys of seeing that what God has said come to pass in their lives. They miss out on that stability that God’s Word brings to our lives. They miss out on the victories that come from knowing God’s Word! They miss out on knowing God more intimately through His Word!

Thus, God’s Word needs to permeate our lives. It needs to sink deep down into our hearts and change our lives. We must be like Eleazar and use our sword as a precise instrument for the glory of God. The Word of God needs to be a natural extension of our life because it too is a quality of a mighty man of God!

Paul reminds us in II Timothy 3:16-17, “**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.**” And Satan wants us to doubt God’s Word, to move away from the truths of God found in the Word of God. And one of the ways he does that today is that he comes up with translations of the Scriptures that distort what God is saying, they deny the deity of Jesus, they deny His virgin birth, they deny His atoning work on the cross of Calvary and-so-on. The Scriptures we have before us have been breathed from the mouth of God and Paul tells us that they are profitable to us to live out our lives and prepare us for the work that God has for us. And if you want more information on why we can trust God’s Word, then check out our Foundation of Faith series on the Bible and you can get the notes and audio files for free on our web page. We went into great detail why we can trust God’s Word and if you have any questions I encourage you to read or listen to those studies!

Listen to what John Wesley wrote regarding the divine authorship of the Scriptures, “The Bible must have been written by God or good men or bad men or good angels or bad angels. But bad men and bad angels would not write it because it condemns bad men and bad angels. And good men and good angels would not deceive by lying about its authority and claiming that God wrote it. And so the Bible must have been written as it claims to have been written - by God who by His Holy Spirit inspired men to record His words using the human instrument to communicate His truth.”

That means no believer has the excuse for not knowing and not understanding God's Word! If you are saved then you have the Holy Spirit within you and He is the teacher of God's Word. Our task is to read, to study and to submit to His instructions. You can't plead ignorance or inability; those are just excuses for disinterest or neglect!

I like the way that H. P. Barker gives to us a graphic illustration that point's us to the need for both knowing and applying the Bible's truths. He wrote,

As I looked out into the garden one day, I saw three things. First, I saw a butterfly. The butterfly was beautiful, and it would alight on a flower and then it would flutter to another flower and then to another, and only for a second or two it would sit and it would move on. It would touch as many lovely blossoms as it could, but derived absolutely no benefit from it. Then I watched a little longer out my window and there came a botanist. And the botanist had a big notebook under his arm and a great big magnifying glass. The botanist would lean over a certain flower and he would look for a long time and then he would write notes in his notebook. He was there for hours writing notes, closed them, stuck them under his arm, tucked his magnifying glass in his pocket and walked away. The third thing I noticed was a bee, just a little bee. But the bee would light on a flower and it would sink down deep into the flower and it would extract all the nectar and pollen that it could carry. It went in empty every time and came out full.

- A. Naismith, 1200 Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes, p. 15

The point he is making is this. Some Christians, like that butterfly, flutter from Bible study to Bible study, from sermon to sermon, and from commentary to commentary, while gaining little more than a nice feeling and some good ideas. Others, like the botanist, study Scripture carefully and take copious notes. They gain much information but little truth. Others, like the bee, go to the Bible to be taught by God and to grow in knowledge of Him. Also like the bee, they never go away empty. That is what God wants us to do, to dig into the Scriptures and allow the Holy Spirit to teach us the truths of God found in the Word of God!

And yes, the battle is intense but God never said we would fight this battle alone. He is with us, but we must follow Him. If you doubt that, then listen to what D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote of Martin Luther. He wrote,

Luther was held in darkness by the devil, though he was a monk. He was trying to save himself by works. He was fasting, sweating, and praying; and yet he was miserable and unhappy, and in bondage. Superstitious Roman Catholic teaching held him captive. But he was delivered by the word of Scripture – “the just shall live by faith.” From that moment he began to understand this Word as he had never understood it before, and the better he understood it the more he saw the errors taught by Rome. He saw the error of her practice, and so became more intent on the reformation of the church. He proceeded to do all in terms of exposition of the Scriptures.

The great doctors in the Roman church stood against him. He sometimes had to stand alone and meet them in close combat, and invariably he took his stand upon the Scripture. He maintained that the church is not above the Scriptures. The standard by which you judge even the church, he said, is the Scripture. And though he was one man, at first standing alone, he was able to fight the papal system and twelve centuries of tradition. He did so by taking up “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

- D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Christian Soldier*, p. 331

If we are going to effectively use the Word of God then we have to know the Word of God. That just makes sense. A soldier who never used his weapon would have a difficult time in the heat of combat trying to figure it out. And I think many Christians struggle with the Word of God because they have never studied it, used it, allowed God to teach them from it. It was William Tyndale’s vow that every English plowman and every boy that pulled a plow would one day be able to read and understand the Scriptures, and to that end he devoted his life to translating it into the English language. It is essential for the Word of God to be known, and loved, and practiced if we are to win the battle against Satan. ***THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT IS THE WORD OF GOD!***

7. PRAYING ALWAYS – EPHESIANS 6:18

Our seventh piece of armor and our second offensive weapon is prayer and I truly believe it is part of our spiritual armor. Some don't put it in with our spiritual armor but prayer is like the heavy artillery that is launched against the enemy and then we go in to pick up the spoils of victory. Paul speaks of "**prayer**" or PROSEUCHE (pros-yoo-khay') in the Greek and it speaks of general requests. Then he speaks of "**supplication**" or DEESIS (deh'-ay-sis) in the Greek and it speaks of specific requests. Praying always is an important part of our spiritual armor.

Let me show you what I mean by going back to II Samuel chapter 23 and looking at another mighty man of God. We are told in II Samuel 23:8, "**These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Josheb-Basshebeth the Tachmonite, chief among the captains. He was called Adino the Eznite, because he had killed eight hundred men at one time.**"

Adino was one of David's mighty men and he killed 800 men at one time! Listen to how the King James Version puts this, "**he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time.**" I think the picture that the Lord is painting for us here is one of prayer. That Adino lifted up his hand 800 times in prayer and didn't stop until the enemy was wiped out!

To show you why I feel this way, that Adino's actions are a picture of prayer; listen to what Paul tells Timothy in I Timothy 2:8, "**I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.**" It has been said that prayer is striking the winning blow and our service is just going in and taking the spoil or cleaning up afterward. It is our heavy artillery.

A good example of this is seen in the life of Jehoshaphat, the King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, a godly king. And during his reign there were 3 nations that rose up against the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Moabites, the Ammonites and the Edomites, who were all blood relatives of Israel. His back was up against the wall and what would the King of the Southern Kingdom of Judah do?

Listen carefully to what takes place as we read in II Chronicles 20:3-12, **“And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord; and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. Then Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, and said: ‘O Lord God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven, and do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations, and in Your hand is there not power and might, so that no one is able to withstand You? Are You not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it to the descendants of Abraham Your friend forever? And they dwell in it, and have built You a sanctuary in it for Your name, saying, “If disaster comes upon us — sword, judgment, pestilence, or famine — we will stand before this temple and in Your presence (for Your name is in this temple), and cry out to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save.” And now, here are the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir — whom You would not let Israel invade when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them and did not destroy them — here they are, rewarding us by coming to throw us out of Your possession which You have given us to inherit. O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no**

power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You.”

Do you see what Jehoshaphat did? He got the nation together and they brought this situation before God in prayer! How did it turn out? Again, listen carefully. We are told in II Chronicles 20:22-29, **“Now when they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushes against the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah; and they were defeated. For the people of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir to utterly kill and destroy them. And when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they helped to destroy one another. So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped. When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much. And on the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Berachah, for there they blessed the Lord; therefore the name of that place was called The Valley of Berachah until this day. Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat in front of them, to go back to Jerusalem with joy, for the Lord had made them rejoice over their enemies. So they came to Jerusalem, with stringed instruments and harps and trumpets, to the house of the Lord. And the fear of God was on all the kingdoms of those countries when they heard that the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.”**

You see, it is the power of prayer for as they prayed God gave them the victory and it was such a great victory it took them three days to gather the spoils of this victory! And that is what we see here with Adino, a mighty man of God, a man who was persistent in prayer, lifting up his hands unto the Lord some 800 times, and again, he did not stop until the battle was complete and the enemy defeated.

We have to remember that as Christians we are in a war, a battle, not a physical battle but a spiritual one. You see, we tend to fight against abortion, pornography, the movie industry, the ACLU and-so-on, but the war is spiritual and it must be fought accordingly. These are just how this spiritual battle manifests itself, in the physical. Now I am not saying we don't stand against these things, but we must understand who the battle is with! You can't fight these battles using physical weapons and yet, isn't that the way we tend to fight them most of the time? Prayer is our spiritual weapon that strikes fear into the hearts of the enemy and yet it is something that is not often used!

E. M. Bounds once said, "It was claimed for Augustus Caesar that he found Rome a city of wood, and left it a city of marble. The pastor who succeeds in changing his people from a prayerless to a prayerful people has done a greater work than did Augustus." He also wrote these words, "What the Church needs today is not more machinery or better, not new organizations or more novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use - men of prayer, men mighty in prayer." That was Adino and we need to follow his example! May we be men and women of ***PRAYER ALWAYS!***

As I bring this study on spiritual warfare to a close let me give some final thoughts. Paul warns Timothy and us in II Timothy 2:3-4, **“You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.”** This gets into the “mindset” or “attitude” of a soldier of Christ. God has given us everything we need to win this war. But we must have the “mind of Christ” and not a “carnal mind” in love with this world! Too many Christians are AWOL when it comes to spiritual warfare. They are not fighting the good fight of faith. They are double minded, trying to serve two masters, God and the world and that will never work!

May we put on the belt of truth! May we put on the breastplate of righteousness! May we put on the sandals of the Gospel of peace! Those first three are never to be taken off once we put them on!

May we take up the shield of faith! May we take up the helmet of salvation! May we take up the sword of the Spirit! And may we take up prayer! These four are to be at our side, ready to use at a moments notice. They are the spiritual weapons that God has given to us and we need to use them!

May God give to us the grace to keep our mind focused on Him and our life fully committed to Jesus, so that when we come to the end of our lives we might be able to say as Paul did, **“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”** II Timothy 4:7-8.