
Provision For The Battle

The Armour Of God Provides
Complete Protection
For The Believer

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Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Put on the whole armour 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 armour 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 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6v10-20

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Introduction

All the scriptures are taken from the New King James Version.

'*It is finished!*' What wonderful words declared by Jesus as He hung on the cross at Calvary over two thousand years ago. A declaration of victory as Satan was defeated and disarmed. And yet as every believer knows, there is still a battle raging. Satan may be defeated, his authority stripped from him, but he hasn't given up the fight. As Jesus taught, the enemy still continues to steal, kill and destroy.

The thief (Satan) does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

John 10:10

There can be no doubt that we are in a battle, a spiritual battle, but the good news is God has provided armour for each one of His children that we might be able to 'stand firm'. No soldier requires armour during times of peace but the moment he/she goes into battle, armour becomes essential! Without it there can be no protection.

The very moment a person becomes born again, is the same moment he steps on to the battle field.

Again, the enemy Satan may be defeated but he has not given up the fight. Without any understanding of the battle we are in, there will be little desire to 'put on' the pieces of armour that God has provided.

It is for this reason that the following study is divided into two parts. The first part focuses our attention on the battle itself, and the second part considers the individual pieces of armour that God has provided for every one of His children.

Part One

The Serpent

At the very beginning of the book of Genesis we read about God's creation. At the end of each of the first five days when God takes note of His creative work we read, ***And God saw that it was good.*** When we arrive at day six we read something very special. Something which had not been said on any other day as God brought each 'segment' of His creation into being..... ***Let US make man in OUR IMAGE.*** (*Capitals for emphasis*).

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
Genesis 1:26

In this one verse alone we learn several things:

We get our first glimpse of the Trinity being mentioned as God says ***Let US make man in OUR.....*** (*Capitals used for emphasis*).

Not only do we realise the Trinity being mentioned but it is clear that man is made in the image of God.

Up till this point God has never related any part of His creation with ***Our image***. However when it comes to the creation of man on the sixth day God declares these wonderful words, ***Let Us make man in Our image***.

What was the relevance of God making man in His own image. It was because God created man for fellowship with Himself. No other part of creation was made in the image of God, but man was different, he was created for a special purpose and that purpose was for fellowship with his Creator.

The third thing we notice is that man was given authority. He was to have ***dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth***.

So we realise that the creation of man was completely unique, he was made in the image of God, he was created for fellowship with his Creator and he was given authority to enable him to have dominion over the fish, the birds, the cattle, over every creeping thing and over all the earth. What an incredible privileged position man was placed in that God would instruct him to have dominion ***over all the earth***.

With this in mind it should not surprise us to read a little later on that Satan, in the form of a serpent, makes his move against man.

Notice he doesn't come against any other part of God's creation but man himself. Just as man was created for the purpose of being able to fellowship with God, Satan's one purpose is to break that fellowship and by doing so to gain authority over the earth.

We know from the story in Genesis that God gave very clear instructions to Adam regarding not eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This now becomes the very point of focus for the serpent tempting Eve.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"
Genesis 3:1

This is the first mention of Satan (the serpent) in the bible. From this one verse alone we gain an insight into his character as we consider Satan described as ***cunning***.

According to Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary ***cunning*** means:

skilful, crafty, deceitful and sly.

From one word alone we realise four characteristics of Satan. Certainly we shall shortly see how '*skilful*' Satan was in the way he approached Eve.

We shall also discover him being '*deceitful*' cleverly using words to trick Eve.

And he (Satan as the serpent) said to the woman, "Has God indeed said...."

Notice Satan did not say, "*God has NOT said,*" but instead he cunningly asks the question, "***HAS God said***". With his cunning use of words he attempts to sow a doubt in Eve's mind about what God really did say. With his clever use of words he comes directly against the very word of God in the form of a doubt.

We should not be surprised to find Satan coming against the word of God when speaking to Eve. He used the very same tactic when he tempted Jesus. Jesus had just come up from the waters of baptism when the heavens opened and He heard the Father say to Him, "***You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased.***"

When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."
Luke 3:21-22

Notice the Father declares that Jesus is His beloved Son.

In two out of the three temptations Satan brings against Jesus he begins with the words, “**IF you are the Son of God.**” (*Capitals used for emphasis*).

And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread.”

Luke 4:3

Then he brought Him to Jerusalem, set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here. Luke 4:9

Satan came against the very Son of God in exactly the same way he sought to ensnare Eve, he came against the word of God in the form of seeking to sow a doubt. With Eve he was successful but..... with Jesus he most certainly was not!

Once Satan had got Eve's attention by putting a doubt in her mind he lies to her by saying “**You shall surely not die.**” and then he tempts her by indicating that if only she would eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil she could become like God.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, “Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden’?”

And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ ” Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Gen 3:1-5

At the beginning of Genesis not only do we discover that there is an enemy, but we also realise some of his characteristics as well as his tactics.

Satan's characteristics revealed at the beginning of Genesis:

- cunning
- skilful
- crafty
- deceitfully
- sly

Satan's tactics revealed at the beginning of Genesis:

- lies
- tempts
- sows doubt
- comes against the word of God

How very much can be learned about our enemy right at the very beginning of God's word. The more we understand about his character as well as his tactics, the more we will be able to recognise his '*attack*' when he comes against us.

It is clear that we have an enemy Satan, but where did Satan come from?

The Origin Of Satan

We know from scripture that before the creation of man, God created the angelic beings. We also discover that Satan was originally a very important angel, probably the 'head' angel with the name Lucifer meaning 'light-bearer'. We discover more about Lucifer in the book of Ezekiel before he was cast out of Heaven:

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me, saying, “Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. “You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. Ezekiel 28:11-15

Although at first glance it would seem that the above prophecy was describing a human king in this case the King of Tyre, as we read further it is clear that a human king would not have been in ***Eden, the garden of God***, neither would he have been called ***the anointed cherub who covers***.

From the above verses we not only realise that Lucifer was ***the seal of perfection***, but he was also ***full of wisdom and perfect in beauty***. He was found in ***Eden, the garden of God***, he was covered with ***every precious stone*** and he was ***the anointed cherub who covers***. We are told he was ***perfect*** in all of his ways until ***iniquity*** was found in him.

From the above we realise that Satan is a created being. A being who originally was perfect. But as we shall shortly discover, a time came when iniquity was found in him and he was cast out of Heaven.

Satan was ***the anointed cherub***. God's word describes three classes of angels. They are ***Seraphim, Cherubim*** and ***Archangel***.

Seraphim

In Isaiah the Seraphim are shown to have six wings who serve in the Presence of God:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple.

Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" Isaiah 6:1-3

Cherubim

Cherubim are associated with the glory of God and are mentioned in Genesis as guarding the garden of Eden:

So He (God) drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. Genesis 3:24

Archangel

Archangel is mentioned in Thessalonians and Jude:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words. 1Thessalonians 4:16-18

Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" Jude 1:9

From the above scriptures we are able draw the following conclusions:

- Satan's original name was Lucifer.
- He was one of the Cherubim angels who would have been acquainted with the Presence of God.
- He was beautiful and full of wisdom.
- Satan would have been involved in worshipping God and may well have been in charge of leading it.
- He would have held a high position in the hierarchy of the angelic realm and quite possibly the highest position.

The fact that Satan was able to draw one third of the angels to follow after him plus even the Archangel Michael would not contend with him over the body of Moses, strongly suggest Satan held a very high position if not the highest position:

Yet Michael the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" Jude 1:9

How different everything would have been if Lucifer had been content with his position. However we know from scripture that was not the case. Pride rose up in his heart and he decided he wanted to be like God. We have already seen how the bible describes Lucifer as being full of wisdom, and yet how very foolish for a created being, an angel, to even consider being like God.

We read in the book of Isaiah about the pride that entered into Satan causing him to believe he could be *like the Most High*. Because of this he was cast out of Heaven:

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. Isaiah 14:12-15

Because of the following scripture it is often agreed that one third of the angels were cast out of Heaven along with Lucifer:

And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon (Satan) having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Revelation 12:3-6

As we have just seen, before Satan fell he was called Lucifer a name he no longer holds. The bible does however tell us that he is now called by different names. As we consider these different names in the next section we will gain further insight into his character and tactics.

Names Of Satan

We can now be clear that we do have an enemy who was once a beautiful angelic being in the presence of God. But some time between him being created and Genesis chapter three pride entered into his heart and desiring to be like God he was cast out of Heaven. Ever since the time of his fall he has continued to want to be like God and to be worshipped as God. Throughout the bible we find him wanting to destroy God's people both the nation of Israel and believers.

Just as with an army going to war, the more that is known about the enemy the greater the likelihood of victory. On the one hand we do not want to be so taken up with Satan that we loose sight of our wonderful Lord and Saviour who has won the victory for us. However, neither do we want to be ignorant of his ways:

Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

2 Corinthians 2:10-11

By giving consideration to the different names of Satan, we are able to learn more about his character and the tactics he uses and in so doing avoid being ***ignorant of his devices.***

The following is a list of the different names associated given to Satan:

Accuser

Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, “Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. Revelation 12:10

Adversary

The name '*Satan*' actually means adversary:
Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8

Beelzebub

The name means '*lord of the flies*' or '*lord of dung*':
Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, “This fellow (Jesus) does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons.” Matthew 12:24

Belial

The name '*Belial*' has behind it the idea of '*vileness*':
What harmony is there between Christ and Belial. Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 2 Corinthians 6:15

Devil

This name only appears in the New Testament. The literal meaning is 'slanderer':

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

Matthew 4:1

Dragon

So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Revelation 12:9

Wicked One or Evil One

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.

Matthew 13:19a

Prince of the Power of the Air

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 2:1-2

Ruler of this world

I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

John 14:30

Ruler of demons

But the Pharisees said, “He (Jesus) casts out demons by the ruler of the demons.”

Matthew 9:34

Satan

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them. Job 1:6

Tempter

Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, “If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” Matthew 4:3

There is no question that Satan tempts people to sin. In the garden of Eden Satan successfully tempted Eve into eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. When Satan came against Jesus in the wilderness we find him trying to tempt Jesus into turning stones into bread. He was unsuccessful!

The above is not an exhaustive list of the names given to Satan in the bible but it is quite apparent many different names are given to him. Why is this? By appreciating the different names for Satan we gain insight into different aspects of his character so that we might not be ignorant of his devices.

The following list provides a greater understanding of some of the different tactics he uses against the believer:

- *Accuser* - Constantly bringing accusations.
- *Adversary* – The name suggests an enemy who fights determinedly, continuously, and relentlessly.
- *Deceiver* - There can be no doubt that deception is an extremely powerful '*weapon*' in Satan's armoury.
- *Liar* - Satan lies! At times the lie may be 'coated' with truth as in the case of deception, at other times it is an outright lie. A good example of an outright lie is found in the following scriptures when Satan in the form of the serpent lied to Eve:

Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you SHALL surely die.” Genesis 2:15-17 (Words in capital for emphasis).

Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will NOT surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” Genesis 3:4-5 (Words in capital for emphasis).

There are many different ways Satan comes against God's children but they all have the same purpose; to kill, steal and destroy:

The thief (Satan) does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

John 10:10

Not only do we have an enemy called by many different names, but as we are about to discover, he rules over a well organised hierarchy of evil beings who follow his commands.

The Spiritual Battle

In his letter to the Ephesians we find Paul describing the battle we are in. In the space of just a few verses in chapter six, the curtain is drawn back and we are able to 'see' into the spiritual realm:

Put on the whole armour 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. Ephesians 6:11-12

Firstly we are told to stand against the *wiles of the devil*. The word '*wiles*' representing Satan's cunning methods. He is crafty and scheming. He has expertly planned strategies he uses against the believer many of which include deceit and trickery to bring his purposes about.

Next we are informed that *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*. In other words our battle does not originate in the natural realm (*flesh and blood*) but originates in the spiritual realm.

This shouldn't surprise us because Satan is a spiritual being and the fallen angels are likewise spiritual beings. Satan will often use people (*flesh and blood*) in order to achieve his purposes but we must be alert to the reality that this is not where the battle originates.

In the above verses Paul uses a very interesting and helpful word in describing the nature of the fight. He uses the word '*wrestle*'. Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary describes the word wrestle in the following way:

'To contend, by grappling with, and striving to trip or throw down, an opponent; as, they wrestled skilfully'.

No doubt most of us at one time or another have seen a boxing match and have also seen a wrestling match. They are two very different ways of fighting. With boxing it is the speed and accuracy of the punch that counts. A punch that only has contact with the opponent for a split second. However, with respect to wrestling, this is much more a fight of *engagement* with one opponent holding the other opponent for a period of time. In boxing the punch may only last a split second but in wrestling the opponent may be pinned down for some time with the aim of weakening and eventually defeating the opposing wrestler.

In other words, just as with a wrestling match there is physical engagement, so Paul is telling us that we are in a spiritual battle where there are times when the enemy attempts to bring about a *spiritual engagement*. He seeks to hold us in his lies or to hold us in doubt or to hold us in a period of continual temptation. There are many ways Satan will try to engage us as he uses the evil beings under his command:

.....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.

Ephesians 6:12

In the above scripture we are informed that Satan's 'army' is divided into four categories. The four categories would suggest it being extremely well organised and divided into different positions of authority. This is not some disorganised, confused enemy haphazardly attacking us now and again. This is an enemy who has under his authority spiritual beings who are organised into different positions of authority with well prepared plans to come against the believer, the church and even against nations particularly the nation of Israel!

The four categories are:

- ***Principalities***
- ***Powers***
- ***Rulers of the darkness***
- ***Spiritual hosts of wickedness***

Paul mentions principalities and powers earlier on in his letter to the Ephesians:

To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him. Ephesians 3:8-12

We also find Paul mentioning principalities and powers in his letter to the Colossians:

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. Colossians 2:15

Although we don't find these four categories mentioned in succession in any other scripture as we do in Ephesians, nevertheless we can be confident that all four are part of Satan's army.

How can we be certain they are four different categories?

After Paul makes it clear that our fight is not against flesh and blood he could simply have stated, “.....*but against principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age and spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places.*”

But he doesn't say that! The words he actually uses are:

.....*AGAINST principalities, AGAINST powers, AGAINST the rulers of the darkness of this age, AGAINST spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.* *Ephesians 6:12b (Words in capital for emphasis).*

By using the word '*against*' before each one of the four categories, Paul is emphasising that these are distinct separate categories or regiments of evil spiritual beings and that our fight is against each one of them.

We could well be justified in asking the question; “*How do we know that these four categories form a hierarchy of groups of satanic beings under Satan's rulership?*”

Although Paul does not mention anything about there being different levels of authority between each group, the mere fact that he specifically names four different categories of spiritual beings rather than 'lumping' them altogether would strongly indicate that this is what he is referring to.

We have now seen that we have an enemy and that we are in a battle, a spiritual battle! In considering Satan and his army of spiritual evil beings, it is always good to keep firmly fixed in mind that Satan was disarmed and defeated as Jesus hung on the cross at Calvary:

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.
Colossians 2:13-15

Jesus not only died but He was raised up far above all principality and power:

.....He (God) raised Him (Jesus) from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. Ephesians 1:20- 21

Satan may well have four categories of spiritual beings under his control but how wonderful to know that God has raised Jesus ***far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.***

As we move into the next two chapters we discover two potentially effective tactics Satan uses against the believer.

Two Effective Tactics – Discouragement

There can be no doubt that there are a multitude of different ways Satan will use to come against the believer. I believe it is worth spending a little time considering two tactics Satan uses which can be extremely effective in knocking the believer off course. The first tactic being considered is *discouragement*. The book of Nehemiah provides us with an excellent illustration of this being used:

Nehemiah had the job of cup bearer (a very important position to hold,) for King Artaxerxes in the Persian royal court. He had remained in Persia after the exiles had been allowed to go home. During this time Hanani one of Nehemiah's brethren along with other men from Judah visit him. Nehemiah asks them about Jerusalem and out of concern for his brethren the Jews, he also asks about their welfare:

The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. It came to pass in the month of Chislev, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the citadel, that Hanani one of my brethren came with men from Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews who had escaped, who had survived the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said to me, “The survivors who are left from the captivity in the province are there in great distress and reproach.

The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.” Nehemiah 1:1-3

Upon hearing the above words, Nehemiah mourns, fasts and prays many days, repenting both for his own sin and the sins of the Jews. As a result of his intercession, God puts in Nehemiah's heart the desire to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. After gaining permission from King Artaxerxes Nehemiah visits Jerusalem to view for himself the state the walls are in only to find that they in ruins:

So I came to Jerusalem and was there three days. Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me; I told no one what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem; nor was there any animal with me, except the one on which I rode. And I went out by night through the Valley Gate to the Serpent Well and the Refuse Gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem which were broken down and its gates which were burned with fire. Then I went on to the Fountain Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal under me to pass. So I went up in the night by the valley, and viewed the wall; then I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I had done; I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, or the others who did the work.

Then I said to them, “You see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.” And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king’s words that he had spoken to me.

So they said, “Let us rise up and build.” Then they set their hands to this good work.

Nehemiah 2:11-18

The walls may have been in ruins, but God had put a vision in the heart of Nehemiah to see them rebuilt. When Nehemiah says to his brethren ***“come and let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach,”*** their immediate reply is ***“Let us rise up and build.”*** And so the work of restoration begins.

All would have been well except for the fact that the 'enemy' did not want the walls to be rebuilt:

But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?” *Nehemiah 2:19*

It is worth noting the 'enemy' did not appear on the scene when Nehemiah was viewing the state of the walls but Sanballet, Tobiah and Gesham appeared on the scene when the work of restoration had begun! Why is this significant? Satan is not too concerned when a believer realises the call of God on their life but doesn't do anything about it. However, when the believer begins to fulfil the call.... that is a totally different matter!

The work on the walls of Jerusalem began. As we continue to read the account we find repeatedly Sanballet along with others appearing on the scene for one purpose only, to cause the work to cease. Many different tactics are used in an attempt to stop the work, unsurprisingly one of the tactics used is *discouragement*.

As the Jews were working on rebuilding the walls we read that Sanballat, Tobiah and Gesham laughed at them and despised them. As we read the account it is almost possible to hear in their laugh the words: *“What do you think you are doing, you will never manage to rebuild these walls. Just look at them they are in ruins. The work is too great you will never manage it. You may as well give up now!”*

But when Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they laughed at us and despised us, and said, “What is this thing that you are doing? Will you rebel against the king?” Nehemiah 2:19

Again what was the purpose of the opposition, it was to cause the work to cease.

As the story continues, and after much work on the walls had taken place, Sanballat and Tobiah appear on the scene again. The first attempt of discouragement had not worked so another attempt is made:

But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?”

Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.”

Nehemiah 4:1-3

Sanballat ***mocked the Jews***. The verb 'mock' means to '*tease or laugh at in a scornful or contemptuous manner*'. Although we are not told the exact words spoken by Sanballat as he mocked, I think it is fairly safe to assume that the mocking words had the intention of bringing discouragement.

When he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria there is no question of his words being discouraging. When Tobiah joins in the conversation his words are equally discouraging:

“Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.”

Why is discouragement such a potentially powerful and effective 'weapon' that Satan uses against the believer. One of the reasons is because we do not always identify the subtle whisper in our mind of being that of the enemy seeking to discourage us with his words. Neither do we always immediately recognise discouragement when it comes in the form of words spoken to us by other people.

Discouragement is indeed powerful and very effective. We have only to look back on our walk with the Lord to no doubt identify many times when we became discouraged. During times of discouragement it becomes extremely difficult to follow the call of God on our lives but becomes very easy to want to give up.

The aim of discouragement is always the same. To cause the work to cease, to make us weak and ineffective. It will always direct our vision in one of two ways. Either inwards causing us to realise our faults and inadequacies or it will direct our vision to our circumstances to see how overwhelming or impossible they are.

There is one place that discouragement will NEVER direct our vision towards, and that is to the Lord Himself and to His word. No wonder the bible says:

Therefore comfort each other and edify (encourage) one another, just as you also are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Again why is discouragement so powerful? Because it is subtle, it is not easily recognised and when it does appear it has the potential to 'stop us in our tracks'.

How can we overcome discouragement? By looking to the Lord, looking to His word and getting alongside other believers who we know are able to bring encouragement back into our lives.

Satan loves to bring discouragement but as we are about to find out, there is also another potentially effective tactic he loves to use.

Two Effective Tactics – Deception

The second very potentially effective tactic Satan uses against the believer is deception. Satan as the serpent in the Garden of Eden succeeded in deceiving Eve into believing that if she ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil she would be like God knowing good and evil.

Let's just take a moment to think about this. Eve was created perfect. There was no sin in her and she walked in unhindered fellowship with God enjoying His Presence in the garden. Not only was Eve herself perfect, but her environment at this time was also perfect. If Satan therefore managed to successfully deceive Eve how much more should we be on our guard against his deceptive ways! Not only is Satan quite capable of bringing deception into a believers life, he is also quite capable of bringing deception into the church. To believe that we CANNOT be deceived is to be deceived!

Why is deception so powerful? Because a bit like discouragement, we do not always recognise it when it appears. Knowing the Lord and knowing His word, if an outright lie were to be presented to us, it is highly likely we would immediately recognise it for what it is, a lie! The problem with deception is that it is a mixture. A mixture of a great deal of truth with a small amount of lie.

It is because of the large amount of truth that if we are not on our guard, we can easily miss the lie which is craftily hidden within the truth itself.

When Jesus is speaking to His disciples in Matthew 24, the word *deceive* (or variations of it,) is used four times. Why does Jesus make a point of emphasising this to His disciples? It is to warn them to be constantly on their guard. That warning may have been given over two thousand years ago but is just as relevant for us today:

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you.

Matthew 24: 4

For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many.

Matthew 24:5

Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. Matthew 24:11

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Matthew 24:24

When speaking about false prophets Jesus has a very interesting thing to say which is recorded earlier in the book of Matthew:

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. Matthew 7:15

Notice how Jesus describes the false prophets; *ravenous wolves in sheep's clothing*. What is significant about the language used here? It is quite obvious. If a wolf were to appear we would straight away recognise it as a wolf. If a sheep were to appear, likewise we would immediately recognise it as a sheep. But.....if a wolf appears in sheep's clothing this is a totally different matter. In other words it is a complete deception! It is a wolf disguised as a sheep. Likewise, when deception comes upon the believer it will come as a lie disguised truth and it will come from Satan himself. If we don't recognise it for what it is and thereby immediately deal with it, the deception will bear fruit and it will always be bad fruit. Sadly, all too often it is only when the fruit is manifest that it becomes apparent that what we thought to be true was actually a lie cunningly 'clothed' in truth.

Having described false prophets, Jesus in the next verse makes it clear how we will know them;

You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Matthew 7:16

How will false prophets be recognised? They will be recognised by the fruit that is manifest. This principle can also be used with deception. How will we know that we have swallowed the pill of deception, it will be by the fruit it brings forth. In the above verse Jesus emphasised the importance of looking at the fruit. Grapes do not come from thorn bushes neither do figs come from thistles. To emphasise the point even further Jesus states:

Therefore by their fruits you will know them.
Matthew 7:20

It is the fruit which will evidence whether deception is at work. The fruit that comes from deception will *always* be bad, nothing good can ever come from it. This is because the author of deception is Satan and nothing good can ever come from him! We may not always immediately be aware that we are being deceived, but one thing we can be very confident about, it will produce fruit and the fruit itself will reveal deception is at work.

The following is not an exhaustive list but illustrates the fruit that comes from deception:

- Division amongst believers.
- Confusion
- Lack of peace
- Lack of joy
- Evidence of control at work.
- A feeling of heaviness.

- The focus is on a man or woman rather than on the Lord.
- A single truth takes 'centre stage' at the expense of other truths within the Word of God.
- A move away from living a life pleasing to God to one of licentiousness.
- Questioning the validity of God's Word.
- Christians believing they have a special revelation from God that is not available to others within the body of Christ.

Deception is certainly a very powerful and effective tactic that Satan uses against the believer. Its purpose is to move us away from believing the word of God to believing the truth coated lie. Deception is always contrary to the word of God. If ever we believe anything which contradicts God's word we have been deceived! When deception comes inbad fruit will *always* follow.

Having looked at two tactics Satan uses, we now come to look at one of his favourite areas to attack.

The Bulls-Eye

Anyone who has played darts knows that sooner or later the bulls-eye will become the focus of attention. Careful aim is taken before the dart is thrown with the hope that it will have been thrown skilfully enough to hit the intended spot, the bulls-eye.

There is one particular area of a Christian's life that becomes the bulls-eye for Satan to relentlessly shoot at.....and he never misses! In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul has this to say:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments (imagination) and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6

Although ***we walk in the flesh*** Paul goes on to state that ***we do not war according to the flesh***. In other words, the war we are in is not a natural war but a spiritual war and for a spiritual war spiritual weapons are required.

Not only does Paul make clear that *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (natural) but mighty in God*, he also goes on to explain their purpose:

- Pulling down strongholds.
- Casting down arguments or imaginations.
- Casting down every high thing (or thought) that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.
- Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

When we consider the above list we quickly recognise the bulls-eye Satan repeatedly aims for:

Where are strongholds formed? - *In the mind.*

Where do arguments or imaginations originate? - *In the mind.*

Where are thoughts which seek to exalt themselves above the knowledge of Christ formed? - *In the mind.*

Where do we take captive every thought? The answer is obvious – *In the mind.*

From the above verses we have now realised Satan's favourite area of attack.... it is the believers mind! Why is the mind so significant? Because it is the '*control centre*' of our lives. If Satan can influence our thinking (which takes place in our mind,) he can influence our actions. Why? Because actions are proceeded by thoughts. To the degree that Satan has influence over our minds will be the degree that he is able to affect our actions.

Not only that but thoughts affect emotions.

Therefore if Satan can influence our thoughts he can also affect our emotions.

Because both our actions and our emotions can be influenced either positively or negatively by our thoughts, it should be no surprise that a large proportion of the spiritual battle we experience takes place in our mind. No wonder Paul encourages us to take *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*.

Let's look a little more deeply at each the four categories Paul mentions in the above verses:

Strongholds

A stronghold could be considered to be a fortified defensive area. Impenetrable would probably be a good way to describe it. When we think of the Lord as our stronghold it is truly something wonderful:

I will love You, O LORD, my strength. The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

Psalm 18:1-2

However, when we think of a stronghold in our mind, that is certainly not a wonderful thing but is something that must be pulled down!

We may ask,

“How are strongholds formed in our mind?”

I believe the answer to that question can be explained this way:

When we repeatedly and habitually think negative unbiblical thoughts, over time a stronghold becomes formed. For instance, if I was to repeatedly think the following:

“I'm not worthy and God does not love me.”

By repeatedly thinking these words rather than taking them captive a stronghold would be created.

To think such thoughts occasionally would not cause a stronghold to be formed but when the same thought becomes an habitual pattern of thinking, then a stronghold will be created giving Satan a foothold in our minds.

A good illustration for a stronghold is riding a bike along a track of the sort that are typically found in woodland areas. Whilst riding the wheels go into a rut. As soon as this happens the natural tendency of the bike wheels is to follow the course of the rut. If the rut goes to the right the wheels will follow accordingly. Likewise if the rut turns to the left the wheels will follow the same direction. The direction of the bike wheels are no longer being determined by the cyclist but by the rut itself. Depending on how deep the rut is will affect how easy it is to turn the wheels in order to get out of the rut.

In a similar way habitual, negative and unbiblical patterns of thinking will create a 'rut' in our minds. As a result of this we will find it is much more natural to continually *follow the same negative train of thought* and it will become quite difficult to think to the contrary. This is a stronghold which must be pulled down!

So how do we pull down strongholds that have formed in our mind? To successfully pull down strongholds takes discipline on our part. They are pulled down using prayer and renewing our mind with the word of God by using scriptures which are appropriate to the pattern of wrong thinking. For example, if a stronghold has formed giving rise to us continually thinking and believing we are unworthy, we need to use scriptures which speak about God having made us righteous.

The more we meditate on the word as well as speaking it out the weaker the stronghold will become until eventually it is completely pulled down.

Casting down arguments (or imaginations) (KJV)

We have all no doubt experienced times when it is as if an argument is going on within our mind. We think one way about something to quickly find an 'argument' has arisen against the very thing we have just thought. This is not the same as sensibly *reasoning* something through. When we engage in reasoning something through we have *total control* over our thoughts as we weigh up one idea or decision against the other. Arguments in our mind are very different and come against the truth of God's word. For instance we may implicitly believe in our hearts that God has forgiven us and yet it seems as though there is an 'argument' taking place against the very thing we believe. It could go something like this:

“ I know God loves me because that is what the word says.”

“God couldn't possibly love you, just look what you have done!”

“God does love me, I have confessed my sin and because of the blood of Jesus I am forgiven.”

“You may think you are forgiven, but you keep failing how could God keep forgiving you!”

And so it goes on. Unlike reasoning something through where we have complete control over our thoughts, it's as though thoughts which we do not want are filling our mind as Satan 'argues' against the truth of God's word. Satan seeks to weaken us, to make us ineffective and one way he attempts to achieve this is by creating an argument in our mind.

When such a battle arises it is very important that we do not try to deal with it by *natural* means. We cannot deal with something which is spiritual by using natural methods. When a battle or argument arises in our thoughts which we recognise to be demonically initiated we need to deal with it spiritually by once again using the word of God and prayer.

Casting down every high thing

We are told to cast down ***every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God***. Simply put, anything which exalts itself and seeks to become greater than God in our thinking we are to cast down and not to allow it to take root. For example, we may be experiencing increasing debt. All we can see in our mind (imagine) is that the debt is going to get worse with disastrous consequences. This pattern of thinking has *exalted* itself against the greatness of God.

It has taken a place in our thinking whereby the problem of the debt has become greater than knowledge of God's love, care and provision for us. What is the answer? We are to cast down anything and everything which would seek to exalt itself higher than the greatness of God. How do we know how great God is? It is by having *the knowledge of God* gained from the truth of His word.

Bringing every thought into captivity

We are told to bring EVERY thought into captivity. Why is that so important? Because as we have already seen, the mind is like the control centre of our lives. It can affect our actions and our emotions. Satan seeks to greatly influence what takes place in our mind (the control centre) in order to fulfil his devious schemes and to bring defeat, discouragement, weakness and every negative fruit in order to makes us ineffective.

We know from the book of proverbs how powerful thoughts are:

*For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Proverbs
23:7a*

In other words there is a direct connection between how we think in our heart and the resulting fruit.

When our thoughts are in line with God's word the fruit will always be good fruit. Likewise when our thoughts are in agreement with Satan and are therefore contrary to the truth of God's word, the fruit will always be bad fruit. What is the answer..... to bring *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.*

Conclusion

There can be no doubt the moment an individual is born again they immediately step onto a spiritual battle field. The enemy is Satan himself with a hierarchy of fallen angels including demons under his command. Satan's one purpose in fighting against the believer is to make his walk with the Lord ineffective. At times Satan will come *like a roaring lion*, at other times as *an angel of light*:

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

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works.
2 Corinthians 11 :13-15

Without the realisation that we have an enemy who seeks to steal, kill and destroy, we will never fully appreciate the need of 'wearing' the armour of God.

Put another way, the reason we do not daily equip ourselves with the armour is because we do not fully appreciate that we are daily in a spiritual battle. At times all may appear quiet on the 'battle field' whilst at other times it feels as though the war is raging around us in every direction. The more we seek to go on with the Lord increasingly desiring that God will use us according to His will, the more the enemy will seek to hinder us.

We may have an enemy and we may be in a spiritual battle, but how wonderful to know that God has provided spiritual armour in order that we might stand firm and not be defeated. In Part Two we will discover that God has provided different pieces of armour each one with a specific purpose.

Part Two

Finally

'Finally'..... It may appear very strange to begin Part Two with the word 'finally' but that is exactly how Paul begins the section about the armour of God in his letter to the Ephesians.

Towards the end of his letter to the Ephesian church Paul is about to instruct the believers regarding putting on the armour of God. As this is the last topic of instruction he gives, it makes perfect sense to begin with the word '*finally*':

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Ephesians 6:10

I believe it is important to spend a little time considering Paul's use of the word '*finally*' in the context of his letter. It may only be one word but as we are about to see, has an important relevance with regard to the armour of God being effective.

Prior to using the word '*finally*' Paul has spent the first three chapters of Ephesians explaining our position in Christ which can be summed up as follows:

- *Chosen by God*
- *Adopted as sons*
- *Made us accepted*
- *Received forgiveness of sins*
- *Obtained an inheritance*
- *Sealed with the Holy Spirit*
- *Made alive*
- *Raised up with Christ to sit in heavenly places*
- *Created in Christ Jesus for good works*
- *Brought near by the blood of Jesus*
- *Members of the household of God*

Although the above is not an exhaustive list, we can immediately see that Paul has been careful to make sure the Ephesians were in no doubt as to their position in Christ and all of the wonderful things that had been bought for them because of the shed blood of Jesus. (*This of course applies to every born again believer*).

When we move into chapters four through six we find a change in the letter. Paul has just spent the first three chapters explaining our position in Christ, in the following three chapters he provides instruction with respect to our walk with God. In other words how we should conduct ourselves.

Our walk with God can be summarised as follows:

- *Walk worthy of your calling*
- *Endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit*
- *Put off the old man and put on the new man*
- *Do not give place to the devil*
- *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit*
- *Be kind to one another*
- *Forgive one another*
- *Submit to one another*
- *Wives submit to your husband*
- *Husbands love your wife as Christ loves the church*
- *Children obey your parents*
- *Fathers do not provoke your children to wrath*

After Paul has finished explaining our position in Christ followed by instructing us regarding our walk with the Lord, he is ready to provide explanation about the armour of God. As we have already seen, he begins this section by using the word '*finally*' and is thereby connecting all that he has said previously with wearing the armour of God.

In other words, if we are to fully appreciate the effectiveness of the armour of God we cannot separate the wearing of it from all that Paul has said prior to this section in his letter to the Ephesians.

Unless we realise our position in Christ wearing the armour will be less effective in the battle. Likewise, even though many times we may fail, unless our walk with the Lord is in line with Paul's instructions in chapter four onwards, wearing the armour of God will again be less effective in the battle.

For instance, if we are knowingly at odds with a brother or sister and are refusing to put it right, the armour will be less effective. If we are constantly giving place to the devil or if we refuse to forgive, the armour will be less effective. Why, because we cannot separate wearing the armour from all that Paul has said previously.

Hopefully we can now understand why Paul used the word '*finally*' before beginning his teaching about the armour. In the next chapter we will discover that being weak in ourselves can cause us to be strong in the Lord.

Strong in the Lord

Now that we have considered Paul's reason for using the word '*finally*', we are ready to look at his following words in the same verse:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

Ephesians 6:10

Before discussing the pieces of the armour, Paul makes it very clear that we are to ***be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might***. We are in a spiritual battle with a very real enemy! Because of this it is important to realise our need of being ***strong in the Lord*** and *not* in ourselves. Our own strength and our own power are no match against Satan. We cannot fight a spiritual battle with natural means and yet how often do we attempt to do so. How often do we believe that because we feel weak we will experience the most defeat and yet this need not be the case. In fact the times we are at our weakest can be the very times we are at our strongest in the Lord. This is exactly what Paul discovered:

Paul was a man who knew first hand the experience of the battle raging around him. Everywhere he went he was persecuted. When we read the list of all he went through in 2 Corinthians it is almost overwhelming:

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?

2 Corinthians 11:22-29

I think we would all agree that the trials we often go through do not come anywhere near the experience of Paul. And yet because of all he experienced, Paul discovered a wonderful truth which can be a great encouragement to us during times of feeling weak:

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Because of all that he suffered Paul discovered this wonderful truth, when he was weak he was in fact strong! How could he make such a seemingly contradictory statement. Naturally speaking we are either weak or we are strong but to actually say *when I am weak, then I am strong* appears on the surface to be a contradiction. However we know this is not the case. What Paul was actually saying was the very times he felt weak in himself were the very times that he was *strong in the Lord*. He learned that his strength did not come from himself but it came from the Lord. In fact he actually records God speaking the following words to him:

And He (God) said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Corinthians 12:9a

What an incredible revelation. Not only was Paul ***strong in the Lord*** when he was weak, but God's strength was ***perfected*** in his weakness. Because of this revelation Paul is able to boldly declare:

Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Corinthians 12:9b

Putting the whole verse together as well as the following verse we read:

And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

What an incredible statement, ***therefore I take pleasure in infirmities!*** Why could Paul boast in his infirmities, why could he take pleasure in them? We know the answer, it was because he knew that when he was weak he was in fact strong in the Lord.

He knew that God's strength was perfected during his times of weakness. I wonder how often we pray, “ *Please Lord make me strong, I feel so weak please make me strong!*”

This is not a prayer God will answer. God's intention for you and me is not to make us strong but to cause us to know we are weak. It is only when we realise our weakness that we will begin to appreciate His strength. It is during our times of weakness we are motivated to press into the Lord knowing just how much we need Him.

Paul had every justifiable reason for instructing the Ephesians to ***be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might***. He knew from his own experience what it was to be weak in himself and yet at the same time to be strong in the Lord and in His power. Why is it so relevant that Paul explains this prior to providing instruction about the armour? It is because he is making it clear that the effectiveness of the armour has *nothing* to do with our feeling weak or strong but has *everything* to do with being ***strong in the Lord and in the power of His might***.

After realising this wonderful truth that when we are weak we are strong in the Lord, we now turn our attention to another extremely important word Paul uses.....'***stand'***.

Stand

We have now appreciated the battle we are in is not a natural battle but a spiritual battle..... ***for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood!*** Paul however makes it very clear that we are to '***stand***'. In the space of five verses, (if we were to include the word ***withstand***,) he uses the word four times whereby emphasising the importance of it. However, this word is not used in a *passive* sense but an *active* sense. When Paul uses the word ***stand*** it isn't used in the way we would think of a person standing waiting for a friend or waiting at a bus stop. Paul is intending that we are active as we ***stand*** in the battle. We could put it this way, we are '*holding our ground*'.

I'm sure many of us have experienced playing a game with one of our children or grandchildren as we have stood on a particular spot and challenged them to try and push us off that spot. In order for us to hold our ground we quickly discover we need to be very active in maintaining our position as we feel the force of an attempt being made to move us out of position and off the spot. We become very aware that we are actively involved in holding our position exerting energy in the process. This is what Paul means when he says that we are to ***stand***.

It is extremely important that we notice the order of Paul's instructions. He does not say that we are to stand and then to put on the whole armour of God. He tells us that we are to put on the whole armour first and then to stand. We can be sure that when the *evil day* comes if we have not put on the armour first but still attempt to stand, we will not succeed. We will fail every time.

Let's take a moment to review all Paul said towards the end of his letter to the Ephesians regarding being strong, putting on the whole armour, standing and recognising our fight is not against flesh and blood:

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour 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 armour 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—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
Ephesians 6:10-20

When we consider Paul's exhortation to **stand** there is nothing in the above verses to indicate how long we should stand for. At times the battle may be momentary with a fleeting blow from the enemy which we are able to quickly dismiss. At other times it is as if we are engaged in battle for some considerable time requiring us to actively hold our ground. When the battle becomes prolonged with very little let up, it can be exhausting as we seek to maintain our position. At such times it becomes very important that we have the encouragement of other members of the body of Christ standing with us to keep us from becoming disheartened.

Spiritually speaking, what is the ground we **stand** on? There are no doubt several answers to this question, but we can confidently state we are standing on victory ground!

Victory Ground

We stand on 'victory' ground. In other words, as we take our stand it is important to remember that the victory has already been won on our behalf. We may be in a battle but the enemy who comes against us is a defeated enemy and the ground we stand on is the ground of victory! We are not standing with the aim of gaining the victory, we are standing in the knowledge that when Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood the complete victory was won for us.

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.
Colossians 2:13-15

Because Jesus has won the victory, our very position in Christ is a position of victory.

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 15:57

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Romans 8:37

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 2

Corinthians 2:14

As we stand holding our ground it is good to remember that our very position is a position of victory. There may be times when we experience defeat and during such times we can be tempted to become discouraged, but the truth still remains that our position in Christ is a position of victory.

Despite our experience whether it be one of victory or one of defeat, our actual position in Christ does not change! It is a position of victory because we are seated with Christ in heavenly places:

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-7

Our experience may change but our position does not change!

As previously mentioned, it is only after we have put on the armour of God that we are exhorted to ***stand***. There may be several pieces of armour to wear but we are only *fully equipped* for battle when we have put on the ***whole armour of God***.

The Whole Armour

(It is usually accepted that there are six pieces of armour. Prayer is not included as part of the armour as unlike the other pieces, it cannot be 'worn'. Prayer will however be included in this study as there can be no question of its importance with respect to the spiritual battle.)

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

Paul starts the above verse with a very important and relevant word, the word '**therefore**'. Many of us have no doubt heard the well known saying, '*When you see the word 'therefore' you need to know what it is there for!*'

Paul has just revealed that we are in a spiritual battle requiring us to stand firm and to hold our position. By using the word **therefore** at the start of the above verse, he is making it very clear that it is because we are in a battle that it is essential that we take up the armour of God. As mentioned earlier in this study, without realising we are in a battle we will not appreciate the vital importance of taking up the armour.

The second important thing to notice in the above verse is Paul's instructions to ***take up the WHOLE armour of God***. Notice Paul does not leave us with the option of choosing which piece of the armour to put on, but he makes it clear we are to take up the ***whole armour***. In other words we cannot be selective.

“Well I like the idea of using the sword of the Spirit but I don't really understand about the helmet of salvation so I don't think I will bother with that piece.”

No this is something we must be on our guard of not doing. If we are selective as to which pieces of the armour we wear then we are vulnerable to defeat. The more pieces we leave off the more likely our defeat. Paul does not give us the choice. His instructions are clear, ***take up the whole armour of God***. In the same verse he gives his reason for this instruction, ***that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand***.

At this point it is quite possible we are saying, *“I understand the importance of wearing the armour of God but how do I actually take it up as Paul instructs?”*

Paul's instructions are clear regarding the armour. In verse 13 as we have already seen, he uses the words ***'take up'*** and earlier in verse 11 he uses the words ***'put on'***:

Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:11

The words '***put on***' rather than '***take up***' may provide us with a clearer understanding. The words '***put on***' convey the meaning of something we wear. Just as a soldier prepares for battle by first putting on the right clothes, putting on the correct boots, putting on the protective helmet and so on, in the same way we are to '***put on***' each piece of the armour in readiness for the battle. We could think of it this way:

Imagine it is an extremely cold day. It has been snowing all night, the pavements are slippery and signs of there having been a heavy frost can be seen everywhere. Before going out we think about the most suitable clothing to wear. After deciding, we wrap a long scarf around our neck, find the warmest coat we own and put it on before taking our favourite woolly hat out of the drawer snugly placing it on our head. Finally we push our feet into the well worn wellington boots before going out the door to brave the weather.

In the above example there are two things that take place. Firstly there is *preparation*. Preparation with respect to thinking and deciding which clothing is appropriate to wear.

This in then followed by *action*. Action as we put the individual items on before going out.

We can use these two principles *preparation* and *action* in relation to putting on the armour of God. The preparation relates to reminding ourselves about the armour and the reason for putting it on. Action relates to giving consideration to each piece of armour recalling to mind it's purpose and function. By doing this we become actively involved in '*putting on*' the individual pieces of armour. We could put it this way:

Putting on the armour of God is to be actively involved on a spiritual level in taking each piece and thoughtfully, as well as at times verbally, putting it on. Our thoughts and words being appropriate to the specific piece we are putting on.

In summary of this section, we have seen that it is important that we take the ***whole armour*** of God guarding against being selective with respect to the pieces taken. Also we make sure that we ***put on*** the armour before attempting to stand and not the other way round. Finally, we realise that putting on the armour cannot be achieved by being passive, but involves action on our part.

We have now arrived at being ready to consider each of the six pieces of armour beginning with the belt of truth.

The Belt Of Truth

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth....., Ephesians 6:14a

Although Paul does not mention the word '*belt*', the phrase '*girded your waist*' makes it clear this is what is being described. It's significant that the belt is the first piece of armour that Paul mentions as this would have been the first piece the Roman soldier would have put on. Other pieces of the armour would have been attached to the belt. It is said that when a Roman soldier had the belt tightly wrapped round his waist it demonstrated he was ready for battle and it would only be loosened when he was off duty. For the Christian there is never a time of being '*off duty*' which means the belt continually needs to be firmly fixed in place.

Not only was the belt important for fixing other pieces of the armour to it, but in the olden days men would wear long robes which could easily get in the way of fighting. The belt allowed them to wrap up the long robe so as not to be hindered during the battle.

Paul describes the belt as a belt of truth. In the scriptures Jesus is described as '*truth*' and the word of God is described as '*truth*'.

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:6

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. John 17:17

We also read at the beginning of the book of John the following words:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. John 1:1-2

What is the significance of all this and what is the application with respect to the first piece of armour? To put on the first piece of armour is to know the truth of God's word. By knowing the truth of God's word we know Jesus because Jesus and His word cannot be separated. We could put it this way:

To know Jesus is to know His word, to know His word is to know Jesus.

In other words the more we become immersed in the word of God the more firmly the belt will wrap around our waist making us more ready for battle.

We can consider truth from three perspectives:

- Knowing the truth of who Jesus is.
- Knowing the truth of what Jesus has done for us.
- Knowing the truth of who we are in Him

This is the application of using the *belt of truth*. The more we know who Jesus is, the more we realise what Jesus has done for us and the more we know who we are in Christ the more we will recognise the lies of the enemy and be able to deal with them.

Satan is a liar and there is no truth in him. He brings lies and deceit against the believer and without being girded with the *belt of truth* it will be very difficult to quickly detect his lies or his deceit.

Little wonder that Paul mentions the *belt of truth* first before going on to describe the other pieces.

As we now come to consider the second piece of armour the *breastplate of righteousness*, did you know the bible describes two kinds of righteousness?

Breastplate Of Righteousness

We can now consider the second piece of the armour Paul mentions, the breastplate of righteousness:

.....having put on the breastplate of righteousness. Ephesians 6:14b

If we are to have a clear understanding of the importance of this particular piece it is important to realise that there are two types of righteousness as Paul in the book of Romans describes:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.
Romans 10:1-4

In the above verses we see mentioned two very different types of righteousness. We read that the Israelites were *ignorant of God's righteousness*. As a result of this they sought to establish *their own righteousness*. So we have two kinds of righteousness....*God's righteousness and man's righteousness*.

God's righteousness is perfection in every aspect. It is complete holiness and completely without sin. The standard of God's righteousness is so high it cannot be measured and it is a complete impossibility for man to achieve that standard of righteousness. There was only one man to walk the earth who was one hundred percent righteous and without sin and that was Jesus Christ the Son of God and the Son man. In other words fully God and fully man. If there had ever been any hint of sin in Him, He would have never been able to die in our place as our substitute taking our sin upon Himself and reconciling us back to God by the shedding of His blood.

Let us be completely clear, it is absolutely impossible for us to ever achieve the standard of righteousness God demands or even come anywhere close to it. In the above verses Paul explains that because the Israelites were ignorant of the righteousness of God they attempted to establish their own righteousness by their standard of good conduct and attempt to walk in holiness. Of course we know that this is doomed to fail right from the start because our good works will never satisfy the heart of God. Everyone of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and because of this we need a Saviour.

I wonder just how many times we fall into the trap of believing we can please God by our good works. It goes something like this. When we feel we have walked pretty much without sin during the day we approach the throne of God with boldness. Yet when we are aware that we have failed the Lord in one way or another we don't have the same confidence or boldness in approaching His throne. This is a clear indication that we are basing our relationship with God on our own level of righteousness and not on God's righteousness which we will shortly discover is an imputed righteousness. It is only when we are clear that there are two types of righteousness that we can begin to understand the significance of the breastplate of righteousness as a piece of the armour. Again the two types of righteousness are:

- Self righteousness based on works.
- God's righteousness which is imputed to us.

Once we become aware of this very important distinction it is far easier to recognise when we are erring towards trying to approach God based on our own righteousness.

Let's take a little more time to look at God's righteousness with respect to our daily walk with Him:

The moment we became born again God's righteousness was imputed to us. It wasn't anything we could ever earn or ever deserve. It was imputed because of the sacrifice of Jesus the Son of God and because He shed His blood for us. Because Jesus died for each one of us, God can justly impute His righteousness to us. Our sin exchanged for His righteousness. What a wonderful divine exchange! My sin exchanged for His righteousness:

For He (God) made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

Jesus the perfect sinless Son of God not only bore our sin on the cross, He actually became sin. Why? So that we could be made ***the righteousness of God in Him***. A divine exchange indeed. Our sin exchanged for His righteousness and we did absolutely nothing to earn or deserve it. It was imputed to us totally based on our faith in Jesus the moment we were born again. We see the very same thing with Abraham:

And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord, and He (the Lord) accounted it to him for righteousness. Genesis 15:6

What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified (declared righteous) by works (self righteousness), he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Romans 4:1-3

We have to agree that our natural thinking struggles intensely to understand how it is that we can be declared righteous when we continue to fail. We look at ourselves and at times can only see our shortfalls, observing one area after another. How is it we can still be declared righteous and yet that is exactly how God's sees us. He sees us righteous in His Son. That does not mean he is not aware of our failings and our sin. Neither does it exempt us from our responsibility to walk with the Lord depending on the Holy Spirit to live a life pleasing to God. But it does mean there is never a time when I cannot approach God's throne with boldness. In my thoughts and in my actions I may fail but we are made up of three parts.

The three parts are body, soul and spirit. Here is the wonderful news! It was not our body that was 'born again' when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither was it our soul that was born again when we believed on Jesus.

The word of God makes it clear; it was our spirit that was born again the moment we became a Christian and it was our spirit that was made righteous. It is because of this that the Holy Spirit was able to join Himself to our spirit:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. 1 Corinthians 6:15-17

And:

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 1 Corinthians 6:19

After appreciating that there are two kinds of righteousness and that God has imputed His righteousness to us we are now able to consider the second piece of armour with much more confidence as to how it is effective in the battle.

The righteousness that Paul is referring to when he speaks of the ***breastplate of righteousness*** is not righteousness based on our good works but it is the righteousness that God has imputed to us.

What a relief being totally confident that when Satan comes with his taunts, his lies and his accusations we can confidently stand firm wearing the breastplate of righteousness declaring,
“I am righteous! I am righteous because God Himself has made me righteous. Yes I have failed, I have fallen short but I am still righteous because God made Jesus to be sin on my behalf that I might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

If we try to stand firm in our own righteousness when the attack of the enemy comes we will fail every time. We will not be able to stand up to his accusations. We will have nothing we can hold up in our defence. But how different it is when we are wearing the ***breastplate of righteousness***. Then and only then are we able to stand firm secure in the knowledge of who we are in Christ.

Whether we believe we are righteous or not will have no bearing on our standing before God. However, being ignorant of how God has made us righteous will certainly have a major impact on our ability to walk in victory. Satan is out to defeat us but let's *'take up'* the ***breastplate of righteousness*** and hold our position firm.

We now come to look at how our feet are to be shod. The correct footwear was very important for the Roman soldier and it is certainly very important for the believer.

Feet Shod

We have now arrived at the third piece of armour Paul instructs the believer to wear. He describes it with the following words:

..... and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
Ephesians 6:15

Since becoming a Christian over fifty years ago, whenever I have heard anything about this piece of armour it has usually been with respect to spreading the gospel of peace to unbelievers. There is no doubt regarding the importance of this. Equally when this verse is compared with the words of Isaiah this would seem to be the correct interpretation:

How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!"
Isaiah 52:7

Paul says a similar thing in the book of Romans:

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace Who bring glad tidings of good things!" *Romans 10:15*

In the light of the above verses it is clear how '***having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace***' could be interpreted to mean spreading the gospel of peace to others. However, I'm sure we have all heard of the importance of reading verses or passages of scripture in their context, especially when it comes to attempting to correctly understand what the bible is saying. Without considering the context we know it can easily lead to error and wrong conclusions being made.

The question we therefore need to ask; what is the context for this particular verse? The answer is clear. It is about the armour of God that a believer wears in order to be able to stand firm in the battle. As soon as we consider the above scripture in its context we realise that it cannot be about spreading the gospel! Why? Because spreading the gospel has nothing to do with the protection of believers in battle. Of course it is right that we share the gospel with others but we must read this verse in it's context. Because of this we have to conclude that Paul is referring to a piece of armour that provides protection.

So far we have considered a belt followed by a breastplate. We now arrive at considering some form of footwear. The words Paul uses ***having shod your feet*** can only refer to something worn on the feet such as shoes, boots or sandals.

Paul was used to seeing the Roman soldier dressed in his armour. There can be little doubt that when Paul is talking about the armour of God he has the Roman soldier in mind and he would have been aware of the type of footwear they used.

We have observed how Paul emphasises the word *stand* when giving instructions regarding the armour of God. The more suitable the footwear the easier it is to stand firm. A mountain climber would never consider wearing trainers, a runner would never consider wearing slippers! Footwear is chosen on the basis of its suitability for the task in hand.

For the Roman soldier it was extremely important that they were able to maintain a good grip when engaged in battle both for standing as well as for moving forward quickly. For this reason the sandal of the Roman soldier was mainly a sole with straps that went up around his ankles and calf holding the sandal tight to his foot. The sandals also had spikes on the bottom much like a golf shoe in order to provide maximum grip.

When the Roman soldier went to battle he needed to have confidence that the footwear would give him secure footing on the battle field.

When Paul uses the words, *and having shod your feet with the preparation (or readiness) of the gospel of peace*; he is explaining that if we are to stand firm against the principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness we need to be totally secure in the truth of the *gospel of peace*. If we are not secure in the truth of the gospel of peace we will not have a firm footing in the battle. In other words, this piece of armour enables us to hold our ground and to stand firm. How are we able to do that? By being secure in the knowledge of the *gospel of peace*.

So what is the *gospel of peace*? We know the word *gospel* means *good news*. So the *gospel of peace* is the good news of knowing whereas once we were enemies of God, because of the blood Jesus shed on the cross, we now have peace with God. We are no longer enemies. Our peace with God is not based on anything we can do but is based on the finished work of Jesus. How wonderful, once enemies but now we have peace with God. Good news indeed!:

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. Colossians 1:19-20

Therefore, having been justified (in right-standing) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 5:1

When the enemy comes against us tempting us to believe the lie that God has turned away from us, or because of our failings and sin we can no longer have fellowship with Him, we need to quickly use this piece of armour which reminds us that we are at peace with God. What is the gospel? It is *Good News!* It is the good news that once we were enemies but now we have peace with God. Just like the spikes in the Romans sandals, it is this knowledge that enables us to stand firm against the attacks of the enemy.

We have considered the footwear and we have considered the gospel of peace, but what about the word '*preparation*'. Let's look at the verse again:

..... and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
Ephesians 6:15

We know how important preparation is. Without first taking time to prepare the likelihood of being successful is lessened. Before going on a long journey we first make preparation for it. Before teaching a class of pupils preparation first takes place.

Before tiling a bathroom preparation first takes place in order to make sure the tiles are positioned correctly. Preparation is very important and is certainly a biblical principle.

Reading the word *preparation* in context I believe we can consider two meanings for it:

Firstly to be prepared for the battle itself. Before Paul provides instruction about the individual pieces of armour, he firsts makes clear that we are in a spiritual battle. If we are to experience victory being prepared for the battle is essential. No army would ever consider going to war without having made adequate preparation. And yet how often do we find ourselves engaged in a spiritual battle only to realise we are not prepared?

Secondly I believe the meaning of the word *preparation* related to this particular piece of armour, has to do with making sure we are secure in the truth that we are now at peace with God. We are no longer enemies but God Himself is on our side. By being secure in the truth of the gospel of peace our faith is anchored to solid ground. Just as the spikes in the Romans sandals provided anchorage to the ground they were standing on, so does the knowledge of the gospel of peace provide anchorage when the enemy comes against us. Preparation therefore involves being secure in the knowledge of the *gospel of peace*.

We have just considered our 'footwear' as part of the armour of God enabling us to stand firm in the battle, but what about the times when arrows bursting with flames come flying at us? God has provided a piece of armour for that as well!

Shield Of Faith

As we now turn our attention to the fourth piece of armour, Paul not only tells us what it is, but in the same verse he explains its purpose:

.... above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Ephesians 6:16

The fourth piece of armour is *the shield of faith* and its purpose is to *quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one*. Immediately before mentioning the shield of faith, Paul uses the words '*above all*'. By referring to the Greek words for '*above all*' we find these two words could also be translated '*while always*'. In using the words '*above all*' especially when we consider that they could be translated '*while always*', I do not believe that Paul is indicating that this particular piece of armour is more important than the other pieces. It is clear that every piece of the armour is important if we are to be able to stand victorious against the enemy. However, I do believe Paul is wanting to draw our attention to the relevance of this piece for the purpose of quenching or extinguishing *all the fiery darts of the wicked one*.

The Roman soldier knew that going to battle without the shield left him exposed and extremely vulnerable. The enemy would often shoot fire burning arrows.

These arrows would have their tips wrapped in fabric soaked in flammable fluids. When lit they would burn with red hot flames. The sight of a barrage of arrows flying through the air at great speed, all of which having their tips alight throwing out flames of fire, must have been a very frightening sight! An unlit arrow had the potential to cause great harm to the Roman soldier, but when it was on fire the potential harm was greatly multiplied.

Paul is purposely using the words *fiery darts of the wicked one* to convey their threat to the believer. He is illustrating that the darts Satan shoots at us not only have the potential to penetrate but can also continue '*burning*' inside us once they have penetrated causing ongoing harm.

So what is our protection against these *fiery darts*?
It is *the shield of faith*.

We find in the book of Hebrews a clear definition of what faith is:

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Biblical faith provides substance. It gives evidence to the things which cannot be seen. This word 'evidence' is very important.

When a crime is committed one of the first priorities of the police officers investigating the crime is to look for evidence. Without any evidence they have no case which will stand up in court. However, on the contrary, to have evidence provides the opportunity for a conviction.

No evidence – no conviction. Evidence – justice can be achieved.

We can see from the above example that true biblical faith is not something superficial and simply a word we glibly use as part of our Christian vocabulary. On the contrary it is the very thing that provides ***substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.***

(More detailed consideration will be given to biblical 'hope' when we come to consider the helmet of salvation).

Now that we have appreciated the definition of 'faith' it is worth spending a few minutes to consider how faith comes about and how it operates. To discover this we need to turn to the book of Romans:

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17

In the above verse we find that faith comes into being by ***hearing by the word of God.*** This of course is the rhema word. *(More consideration will be given to the meaning of the rhema word shortly).*

When God speaks His 'now' word (rhema word) into our hearts we find that faith suddenly becomes alive within us. The very thing we were struggling to believe suddenly has the evidence of faith which has happened because we heard the rhema word of God. Fear has gone. Doubts have gone. Anxiety has gone. Why? Because we heard the rhema word of God which caused faith to explode providing the evidence we needed for the things we hoped for and for the things which are not seen.

We see from the above that faith cannot be separated from the living word of God. That is why we need the logos. Knowing the logos, the written word of God, provides the opportunity for God to speak into our hearts the rhema word which the Holy Spirit quickens to us causing faith to arise. We could put it this way:

To have true biblical faith is to know the word of God.

To not know the word of God is to not have true biblical faith.

I mentioned hearing the rhema word results in faith rising within us, causing fear to be gone, doubts to be gone and anxiety to be gone. If I simply change the word 'gone' for the word 'extinguish' or 'quench' our thoughts are quickly taken back to Paul's explanation of the purpose of the shield of faith.

We can suddenly appreciate the application of this piece of armour. For example, whilst experiencing a spiritual battle with Satan firing his fiery darts at us, we receive a rhema word from God, faith immediately explodes within us resulting in the fiery darts being extinguished (quenched).

Notice Paul's wording, ***quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one***. The shield of faith does not simply extinguish *some* of the enemies fiery darts, but is extinguishes *ALL* of them. What a wonderful piece of armour knowing that all the enemy may 'shoot' at us can be dealt with using the shield of faith.

We now need to consider another important word that Paul uses, the word '**quench**':

... above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to QUENCH all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Ephesians 6:16 (Word in capitals for emphasis).

When we think of the word 'quench' we often think of it in relation to quenching our thirst. When we are thirsty we will often have a drink of water so that our thirst can be quenched. Equally we can think of it in terms of a fire being quenched and therefore being put out. In both instances we associate water with quenching our thirst and extinguishing a fire.

At this point we may well ask,
“*What has water got to do with the shield of faith?*”

To answer that question we need to turn to the previous chapter in the book of Ephesians, chapter five.

Paul is giving instructions to husbands to love their wives. In doing so He is using the comparison of Christ loving His Bride the church. These are the words he uses:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

Ephesians 5:25-27

Notice in the above scriptures Jesus sanctifies and cleansing His body the Bride with ***the washing of water by the word***. The word of God has a '***washing***' effect in cleansing and sanctifying us.

Before the Roman soldier went on the battle field he would soak his shield until it was water saturated. He knew that if his shield was dry and a fiery arrow struck, it would probably immediately burst into flames. By using a shield which was water saturated it would literally *quench* or *extinguish* the flames.

It now becomes clear why Paul uses the word **quench** when speaking about the shield of faith. We have already realised that faith cannot be separated from the word of God. We have just seen that the word sanctifies and cleanses with **the washing of water by the word**. When we put all of this together we begin to understand how the shield of faith provides protection against the enemy.

As we take in the word of God and submit ourselves to it, it is as if we are spiritually soaking our **shield of faith** in water. In other words, our shield of faith is at the ready for the time when the enemy will shoot his fiery arrows at us. Because our shield is heavily inundated with the water of God's word, when the fiery darts come they are instantly quenched or extinguished immediately robbing them of any potential damage.

In his book '*Our Riches In Christ*' Ray C Stedman provides a very helpful description of Satan's fiery darts:

'The devils fiery arrows can be recognised by two characteristics.

The flaming arrows of Satan seem to arise out of our own thoughts. They seem to come from within us. We think, "What a shocking thought! How could such a thing even cross my mind?.....In our ignorance we blame ourselves for a horrible thought that really has its source in the deceiver.

The arrows of the devil take their toll on us in the form of mental anguish, emotional strain, confusion and tension. It's important that we recognise the lies of the devil for what they are. We are not the source of such thoughts. Satan is. The flaming arrows of Satan always seem to attack our position in Christ. They always insinuate doubt about the reality of our relationship with God.'

The fiery darts may appear in many different forms, but Paul tells us that the shield of faith is capable of quenching *ALL* the fiery darts the enemy shoots at us. Let's conclude this chapter by reminding ourselves of Paul's words describing the shield of faith and alerting our attention to its importance with his opening words in this verse:

.... above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. Ephesians 6:16

For the Roman soldier his shield was an essential piece of armour, but he would not have been fully protected without his helmet. As we are about to discover, the same is true for every believer and of course.....God has provided a suitable piece of armour for us to wear!

Helmet Of Salvation

In Part One we noted that one of Satan's favourite areas of attack is the mind. God has provided a piece of armour just for this area of attack and it is the *helmet of salvation*.

And take the helmet of salvation.....Ephesians 6:17a

The Greek word for '*salvation*' in the above verse is *sótér*. According to Strong's Concordance the definition of this word is '*a saviour*' or '*deliverer*'. In other words, in considering the *helmet of salvation* we could describe it in the following way:

The helmet of salvation is the helmet of deliverance from Satan's many and varied attacks against the believers mind.

In order to appreciate this piece of armour more fully we need to turn to Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians in which he provides more information about the helmet:

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 1Thessalonians 5:8

In the book of Ephesians Paul describes this particular piece of armour as ***the helmet of salvation***. In his first letter to the Thessalonians he describes it as ***a helmet the HOPE of salvation***. (*Capitals used for emphasis*).

We often hear the subjects of '*faith*' and '*love*' taught in the church today, but it is probably fair to say we hear less taught on the subject of '*hope*'. And yet in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul places hope alongside faith and love.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:13

It is unfortunate that due to our usage of the word '*hope*' in our everyday language, it has become greatly weakened with respect to its true biblical meaning. Because of this, when we read the word of God, it doesn't impact us in the way it should. We often say things like:

“ I hope it doesn't rain on Friday when we go to the beach.”

“ I do hope you have a lovely birthday.”

“ I really hope the bill for the car repairs is not too expensive.”

In all of the above examples, the word '*hope*' is more like a wishful way of thinking and speaking.

It has no solid foundation. In other words, it might rain on Friday and it might not. It is possible that your birthday does not turn out to be a lovely day and of the course, the bill for the car repairs could well turn out to be expensive!

We see in the above that the word '*hope*' is weak. And yet the biblical meaning of the word '*hope*' is strong and solid. It is totally rooted to the word of God. In the same way we saw how faith cannot be separated from God's word, likewise hope cannot be separated from His word. It is because of this that when we use the word '*hope*' in a biblical way, it can fill our hearts with assurance that the very thing we are hoping for is truly anchored to the word of God. Hope could be described as '*the certainty of future blessing*'.

The writer of the book of Hebrews describes it in the following way:

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.
Hebrews 6:19-20

Biblical hope provides an anchor, ***an anchor of the soul***. Consider for a moment the image of a large boat nearing it's docking place in the harbour.

Suddenly and unexpectedly a storm breaks out causing the waves to become raging and dangerous throwing the boat from one side to the other. The captain orders the anchor to be dropped. Although the storm has not ceased, the boat is provided with a stability that it didn't have prior to dropping it's anchor.

Biblical hope is like dropping the anchor into the word of God when the storm of Satan's attack comes against the believers mind. The battle may be raging but because of hope we are anchored to the word of God and become immovable.

Because Satan is completely aware of the importance of hope in a Christians life, his strategy of attack will often be with the aim of bringing the believer to a position of complete hopelessness. In other words to a position of feeling all hope is gone. Without any sense of hope the Christian becomes completely discouraged, weak and completely incapacitated spiritually. It is truly a very dark place. It is true to say that most Christians never come to a place where a sense of *all* hope is gone. Rather as a result of Satan's attacks, it is more an awareness that hope has become weakened.

The story of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem in the book of Nehemiah provides a wonderful illustration of how Nehemiah's enemies attempted to bring about a sense of hopelessness within the heart of the Jews.

The aim of the attack was for the sole purpose of causing the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem to cease. Had the Jews during that time come to a place of hopelessness the work would have indeed ceased.

This is exactly the purpose behind Satan's attacks. He knows if he can cause hope to weaken, or better still, to be lost for a season altogether, then he has achieved in bringing the Christian to a place of ineffectiveness. The greater the loss of hope, the greater the level of ineffectiveness.

By way of personal testimony I have been a Christian for over fifty years. During this time I have only once experienced loosing all sense of hope. Although the length of time being in that position was short, it is something I would never want to experience again. It truly was a very dark place but it taught me a vitally important lesson which I could never have appreciated in the same way had I not had that experience. The lesson I learned was the importance of hope! Since having that experience I am much more alert to when hope within me is under attack. During such times I now appreciate in a way that was not possible before the importance of putting on *the helmet of salvation*. The helmet which provides *the hope of salvation*. Or to put it another way, the helmet which provides the hope and complete assurance of God's deliverance.

How wonderful to know that God has provided a specific piece of armour which protects the mind. In our daily walk with the Lord let us be increasingly aware of the level of hope within us, and when we find it is weakening as a result of the attack coming against us, let's remember the helmet God has provided and be quick to put it on.

Until now the pieces of armour we have considered have been for defensive purposes. We now come to a piece which can effectively be used both defensively and offensively.

Sword Of The Spirit

We now come to the sixth and final piece of armour:

.....and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; Ephesians 6:17b

The Roman soldier's sword was relatively short, probably between 25 – 27 inches long. For this reason it would no doubt have been used more to defend rather than attack.

In the above verse, Paul makes it clear what the ***sword of the Spirit*** actually is, namely ***the word of God***. It important to note that the word ***Spirit*** is written with a capital 'S' making it clear that this is a weapon that the Holy Spirit uses. We are involved in the process by verbally speaking the word of God out and as we do so the Holy Spirit takes the words spoken using them against the enemy.

Accepting that when Paul described the sword of the Spirit it was probably more in relation to it being used defensively rather than offensively. However, we know that a sword can be used for both purposes. So it is with the sword of the Spirit. It can be used *defensively* in warding off the enemies attacks whether they come in the form of temptations, lies, deceit or accusations.

But also the sword can also be used *offensively* in taking new ground. For instance, we considered earlier in this study how Satan seeks to build strongholds in our mind, the spoken rhema word of God becomes the sword of the Spirit in tearing down the strongholds thereby enabling new ground to be taken.

When we think of the sword of the Spirit we are reminded of well known words in the book of Hebrews:

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. Hebrews 4:12

What an amazing description of the word of God. It is ***living and powerful***. In other words when it takes root in our hearts it produces fruit unto God. It constantly changes us from the inside out. The word of God inside our hearts is something which is '*alive*' within us. Not only is the word of God described in this way but we also read of it being ***sharper than any two-edged sword***.

When we bring to mind any sharp two edged sword that a soldier may use on the battle field, no matter how sharp it may be, it will never compare with the sharpness of the word of God.

It is so sharp *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.* This truly is a wonderful piece of armour.

Not only do we read in the book of Hebrews just how powerful the word of God is but in the book of Isaiah we discover something else about it:

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 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. Isaiah 55:10-11

Because the word of God is both alive and it is powerful is able to accomplish whatever God wills. There is surely no better example of this than in the new testament. A centurion comes to Jesus and informs Him that his servant is paralysed and dreadfully tormented. Jesus offers to go with the centurion to heal the man. Because of the position of authority that the centurion held, he knew he would only have to '*speak a word*' to one his soldiers under his command and because of the position and authority the centurion held, they would obey.

The centurion recognised the position Jesus held. Not only as the Son of Man but also the Son of God, Fully human and fully divine. He also recognised the authority that Jesus had. Because of this he realised that it was not necessary for Jesus to actually go with him in order for his servant to be healed:

The centurion answered and said, “Lord I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”
Matthew 8:8-9

What incredible faith. The centurion was willing to simply hear Jesus *speak* the word and he knew that would be sufficient for his servant to be healed:

Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.”
And his servant was healed that same hour.
Matthew 8:13

Notice Jesus *spoke the word only* and the servant was healed. In other words as we read in Isaiah, the word accomplished what it was sent to do. I believe it is important to recognise that if Jesus had not *spoken* the word then the servant would not have received his healing.

It was important that Jesus actually spoke the word, the living and powerful word, for the healing to take place.

This is exactly the very same principle with the sword of the Spirit. It is first recognising the power and effectiveness of the word of God. Next, in order for the word of God to become '*the sword of the Spirit*' it has to be *spoken* out. If it isn't spoken out it will not become a sword in the Spirit's 'hands'. This is so important because it shows our responsibility to speak out the word of God. We are active in the use of this piece of armour. It may well be described as the *sword of the Spirit* but we have our part to play.

Before leaving this piece of the armour we need understand a little about the difference between the *logos* word and the *rhema* word. Without a clear understanding of the difference between the two the effectiveness of this weapon will be greatly weakened.

There are two different Greek words in the scriptures, *logos* and *rhema*. Both of these two words are translated 'word' the bible but they have different meanings.

We can think of *logos* as the written word of God. When we hold the bible in our hands we are holding the *logos*, the written word of God, in our hands.

Logos enables us to learn about God and to learn about His ways. We understand the gospel message because of logos. Logos is the Greek word for the written word of God.

The Greek word rhema is also translated 'word' in our bibles but has a different meaning to logos. Rhema is when the Holy Spirit takes the written word (logos) and quickens it to us bringing it alive inside of us. We may be going about our daily tasks when suddenly a scripture comes to mind and it feels alive and powerful. It is exactly what we are needing to hear at that particular time. This is rhema. It is God using His logos to speak directly to us. We could call it a '*now*' word. It is God speaking His word to us at a particular time for a specific reason and there is something about it where we just know in our spirit that God Himself is speaking to us.

Another example would be spending time reading the bible. One day we may reading the bible and it could well be a passage we are very familiar with as we have read it lots of times. Suddenly as we read it's as if a scripture literally jumps off the page and into our hearts! It is exactly what we were needing to hear from God at that particular time. It feels powerful, the word feels alive within us.

We may have been going through a difficult time and suddenly as we are reading the written word of God (logos) the Holy Spirit quickens a scripture to us and we experience peace in place of the anxiety. This is rhema. It is God speaking speaking His 'now' word to us. It is God using His logos to speak His rhema to us.

It is important to realise that rhema will always be in agreement with logos. God will never speak a word to us that is not in complete agreement with His word. If what we hear does not line up with the written word of God then God has not spoken it to us.

At this point we are probably saying,
“I want to receive the rhema word of God.”

Of course this is an extremely healthy desire and it is vitally important that we do experience receiving the rhema word of God. However, it is important to realise that without knowing the written word of God, the logos, we are unlikely to receive a rhema word from God.

To receive a rhema word from God we need to know the logos word of God.

There are many examples in the bible where our translation uses 'word' but in reality the Greek word may have been logos or it may have been rhema. The following are a few examples of this:

In the beginning was the Word...., John 1:1a
'Word' is logos

The sower sows the word. Mark 4:14
'word' is logos

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Timothy 2:15
'word' is logos

... that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.
Ephesians 5:26
'word' is rhema

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Romans 10:17
'word' is rhema

... while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. Luke 3:2
'word' is rhema

Now that we have realised the difference between logos and rhema we can return our attention to the sixth piece of armour the *sword of the Spirit*:

.... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; Ephesians 6:17b

Here we find '**word**' is rhema not logos. If we are going to appreciate the effectiveness of this piece of armour it is extremely important that we appreciate '**word of God**' in Ephesians chapter six verse 17 is speaking about the rhema word of God. The word becomes the *sword of the Spirit* when it is the rhema word of God.

To help us understand this more fully let's consider the following example:

We are going through a particularly difficult time. We feel weak and vulnerable. It feels as though there is a battle raging in our mind. Satan's taunts and lies following one after another:

*“You're no good!” - “God will never use you.” -
“You will never be free from this problem!” - “Why
don't you just give up?” - “You're just a failure!”*

Fear and anxiety fills our heart. Discouragement is pulling us down and we wonder how much longer we can cope.

Suddenly in the midst of all this God speaks a word to us. It's a rhema word. We speak it out and immediately it becomes *the sword of the Spirit* cutting right through the lies and the taunts. Suddenly our heart is filled with peace. Something has changed inside us and the raging battle in our mind has ceased. How did it happen? By receiving a rhema word and allowing the Holy Spirit to use it by us speaking it out.

So what should we do using the above example when we don't have a rhema word. At such times we need to find the most appropriate logos word for our situation, meditate on it and regularly speak it out. Whilst doing this be asking the Lord to give us a rhema word remembering that it is the rhema word that becomes *the sword of the Spirit*.

What a truly wonderful piece of armour. A piece which can be used both defensively and offensively. Satan cannot stand the word of God. As we have seen, he came against it in the Garden of Eden when he deceived Eve and he sought to come against it when he tempted Jesus three times in the wilderness. How amazing that God has given to us His logos word and because of this we can experience the rhema word becoming *the sword of the Spirit*.

Although we have come to the end of Paul's list of the six pieces of armour, it would be wrong to finish this study without considering the importance of prayer. Paul speaks about it straight after speaking about the *sword of the Spirit*. In the next chapter we consider it's importance appreciating how it complements every piece of the armour of God.

Prayer And Supplication

Having looked at the six pieces of armour God has provided we now give consideration to prayer. Although Paul's instructions about prayer follow immediately after the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, I believe it would be wrong to think of prayer as a piece of armour. All of the six pieces of armour Paul describes represented pieces of armour the Roman soldier would wear and because of this it would surely be wrong to label prayer as piece of armour. However, with Paul placing prayer immediately after listing the six pieces of armour there can be no question at all of Paul highlighting its importance and relevance with respect to the spiritual battle all believers experience:

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—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. Ephesians 6:17-20

In the above verses we notice four key words and an important phrase:

- *prayer*
- *supplication*
- *in the Spirit*
- *watchful*
- *perseverance*

(We will spend a short time on each of the above).

Prayer and Supplication

The fact that Paul mentions ***supplication*** as well as ***prayer*** indicate that supplication is a particular *type* of prayer. Paul uses the same words in his letter to the Philippians demonstrating that supplication is a particular type of prayer.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

Philippians 4:6

Prayer itself can cover a whole range of different ways of communication with our Father. It can include praise, thankfulness, confession, requests and intercession to name just a few different categories.

The word ***supplication*** carries with it a sense of reverence and devotion. From the Greek it can also be described as '*speaking out loud*', '*expressing what we need*' and an invitation to '*speak up boldly*' with respect to the things we need.

When Paul uses the words ***praying always with all prayer and supplication*** he is informing us that as well as using a wide range of prayer it is important to humbly and reverently speak out loudly with boldness our requests before God. Requests not only for ourselves but for others as well:

In the Spirit

Paul not only tells us to pray with ***all prayer and supplication***, but he also tells us how to do it.....***in the Spirit***.

These are three very important words. We may well ask what it means to pray ***in the Spirit***. There is no doubt a whole study could be given over to answering the question, however let's consider one or two aspects of what it means to pray in the Spirit.

We can be confident that when we pray ***in the Spirit*** we are praying in accordance with the will of God. The Holy Spirit Himself communes with our spirit making known to us the will of God.

As we begin to pray according to the revealed will of God, which will always line up with His word, then we are praying *in the Spirit*. Our prayers change from simply being words we speak to being powerful petitions brought before God according to his will.

In his letter to the Romans Paul makes it clear we do not always know what we should pray for. However, he goes on to explain there is a place of knowing the Holy Spirit praying through us. This is a powerful place of prayer:

Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Romans 8:26-27

Praying in the Spirit also includes using the 'heavenly language' which God has made available for every believer. The bible calls it '*speaking in tongues*'. It is a language we have never learned, a language which without any interpretation we do not understand. But it is a language given to us by the Holy Spirit.

This is a perfect way of praying according to the will of God. Because it is a language given to us by the Holy Spirit, when we use it we can be confident we are praying according to God's will.

For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. 1 Corinthians 14:2

For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding. 1 Corinthians 14:14-15

I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all 1 Corinthians 14:18

We appreciate from the above scriptures Paul not only spoke in tongues, but he makes it clear that it is a heavenly language which bypasses our understanding. A language given to us by the Holy Spirit.

How wonderful to know that the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to know *what* we should pray for in line with the will of the Father. Not only does He show us what we should pray for but He also shows us *how* we should pray which as we have just seen is.....***in the Spirit.***

Watchful

Having looked at Paul's instructions to pray prayers and supplications in the Spirit, it is important that we now consider his use of the word '**watchful**' in the context of prayer.

In the same sentence Paul mentions prayer and supplication, he also uses the word '**watchful**'. Jesus also spoke about being watchful in the context of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane:

Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, “Sit here while I go and pray over there.” And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and WATCH with Me.” Matthew 26:36-38 (Word in capitals for emphasis).

After He returns from praying and finds His disciples sleeping, He says to Peter:

Then He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter “What! Could you not WATCH with Me one hour? WATCH and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Matthew 26:40-41 (Words in capitals for emphasis).

In the above scriptures Jesus shows the importance of being watchful when praying. His instructions to Peter are '*watch and pray*' followed by giving the reason for His instruction, '*lest you enter into temptation.*' In other words Jesus is saying it isn't sufficient to just pray, but there also needs to be the action of being *watchful*.

Being spiritually *watchful* will not only result in us being on guard, but it will enable us to be spiritually aware of what is taking place. This is particularly powerful when being watchful is combined with the word of God. For example; knowing bible prophecy regarding the end times combined with being watchful allows us to see what is taking place with spiritual eyes through the lens of God's word. We are not just looking at things from a natural perspective.

In other words, using the above example, it is important not only to know the word of God but to combine that knowledge with being *watchful*. So we could consider the word '*watch*' or '*watchful*' as meaning being on our guard, being aware of what is taking place or being alert.

We are in a spiritual battle and we never know when Satan is going to launch his attack against us. For this very reason it is important that we are not only lifting our prayers and supplications to God but that we are watchful. Being watchful is part of an effective prayer life.

With respect to being **watchful** Paul encourages us in the above verses to be keeping watch for one another. As we do so we will appreciate when things are particularly hard for a brother or sister. In realising this we can lift our prayers and petitions to the Father more effectively on their behalf.

*In closing this section I believe it is relevant to emphasise the importance of being watchful. The year is 2020 and I am writing this study at a time when things happening in the world are changing at a rapid pace. The world is not the same place it was less than twelve months ago. If there was ever a time when we need to be spiritually watchful, to be on our guard and to be alert it is certainly now! When we think of prayer let's also remind ourselves of the need to be **watchful**.*

Perseverance

As we draw towards the end of this study, we now come to the final key word Paul uses in the above verses the word **perseverance**.

We could think of '**perseverance**' as keeping going when things get tough. When the going is smooth and all appears well we do not need to persevere. It is only when hard times hit and there seems to be no let up that the requirement to persevere comes into play. When things are so difficult that we want to give up, the only answer is to persevere.

There are times in our walk with the Lord when the battle seems relentless. Day after day, one thing after another. It could be the battle is taking place in our mind and it is relentless, or it could be that nothing seems to be going right and circumstances seem to be constantly against us. We are being worn down, feeling weak and everything within us is shouting,
“*Give up!*”

It's in such times as these that *perseverance* is so important.

Paul was a man who knew what it was to go through unimaginable hardships which he describes in detail in 2 Corinthians chapter eleven. Not only did he experience frequent hardships but he also had a '*messenger of Satan*' relentlessly buffeting him:

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.
2 Corinthians 12:7-9

Despite all of this, Paul was able to proclaim the following words in his second letter to Timothy:

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7

Paul certainly knew what it was to persevere. And so it is in his letter to the Ephesians he encourages the believers not only to bring their prayers and supplications in the Spirit, not only to be watchful for one another but to do all of these things with ***perseverance***:

..... 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 6:18

Prayer may not be a piece of armour as such, but when it includes supplications in the Spirit and being watchful with all perseverance it becomes a powerful 'weapon' enabling us to stand firm in the midst of the battle.

Conclusion

We have been on quite a long journey and have covered a lot of ground. Along the way we have realised that we are in a battle. It is not a battle of our choosing but a spiritual battle as a result of having an enemy Satan. An enemy who is defeated but has not given up the fight.

To be unaware of the spiritual battle will result in us not appreciating the importance of putting on the armour of God. All six pieces providing complete protection enabling us to stand firm in victory. Without it we are not only vulnerable but will experience defeat every time!

As we go on with the Lord seeking to walk more closely with Him and to be increasingly used by Him, let's encourage one another to wear the armour realising that God has truly made..... '*Provision For The Battle*'.

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