

How to Live the Unconquerable Christian Life

By
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Introduction

A deadly war is on. It's as real and brutal as any war. Yet it's largely unseen and, worse, little understood by those supposed to be involved in it with the vilest enemy there is!

The evil kingdom of Satan is at war with the Christian believer; destinies and lives are at stake. But victory is not beyond our reach. The devil is not an invincible enemy. Even though he fights us on different fronts, we are able to defeat him.

The purpose of this booklet is to lay out the strategies and resources revealed in the Word of God by which the Christian warrior may be equipped and armed for victory.

While the victory of the believer is foreordained (1 John 4:4; 2 Cor. 2:14), God never guaranteed that He would crown us with victory even if we refuse to arm ourselves with weapons from His spiritual arsenal. What He has guaranteed us is that the weapons He has given us are invincible, and they are able to pull down satanic strongholds *if we use them* (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

Now is the time, therefore, to stand up to the enemy in the power given to us by God. The Almighty, the Eternal Living God, tells us in Isaiah 52:1: "Awake, awake; put on THY STRENGTH, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city: for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean". In a similar message to Gideon, a self-confessed nonentity (Judges 6:15) God commissioned to free the Israelites from the oppressive rule of the Midianites, He said: "GO IN THIS THY MIGHT, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" (Judges 6:14).

Dear Christian soldier, there's a mighty power in you; don't let it lie idle; operate it for victory over Satan, your chief enemy. It's true that Satan's war against believers is fiercest than ever in these "perilous times" of the end, but the good news is that victory does not belong to the devil; it belongs to the believer who has put on the strength of Christ. This is the believer who is able to say with King David in Psalm 27:1: "The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

This is no time to be the devil's punching bag; it's time to put him to flight! So rise up to the challenge and prevail in the strength of the Almighty. You are more than a conqueror through Christ (Rom. 8:37)! Halleluiah!

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Strengthen Your Position of Authority in Christ

The quest to be strong in the Lord should be of first importance to every believer in this end time. The days are extremely evil, and this is not the time to afford to be weak in your faith. Satanic activity is at its peak "because he knows that he has only a little time left" (Rev. 12:12 GNB).

The Apostle Paul defines for us in simple military terms of his day how to be strong in the Lord in Ephesians 6:10-18. After exhorting the Ephesian Christians to "submit to one another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21-6:9), the Apostle broaches a new topic: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might". Being "strong" in the Lord' (Greek) comes as a crucial final act by which the believer consolidates his exalted position in Christ, the theme of his letter to the Church.

Already, the Church shares in Christ's exalted position of dominance over all the spiritual powers and authorities, including demonic principalities (Eph. 1:20-23; 2:6; cp Col. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:22; Phil. 2:9-11), but now God equips the Church in her ongoing spiritual struggle against the spiritual forces of evil "of the darkness of this age" (Eph. 6:12 *Young's Literal Translation, YLT*; compare Gal 1:4). The resources for victory in the war are, no doubt, included in the heavenly blessings God has blessed the Church with in her union with Christ: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3 ASV).

Elsewhere in his writings, the Apostle describes the weapons God has given to believers in their spiritual warfare as "not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds" (2 Cor. 10:3-4). These are weapons that will never fail you! They are "mighty through God"!

Ephesus, a Stronghold of Satanic Activity

But why the call to take up arms to the Ephesian believers in particular (though some scholars argue that the letter was a circular addressed to a number of churches and not just the church in Ephesus)?

Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus to fortify themselves in Christ, the exalted Lord of all, and in His mighty power fully aware of the spiritual struggle those believers were involved in. They lived in a society steeped in paganism and superstition, the city of the great goddess of Asia Minor, Artemis (Greek) or Diana (Latin), and Paul himself had had a firsthand experience of the struggle in the tail-end of his over two-year missionary stay there (see Acts 19:1, 8-10; 20:31). It was during this time in Ephesus that "God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (vv.11-12).

Paul's demonstration of Christ's mighty power must have caused an instant sensation—so much so that some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists (see Matt. 12:27 and Mark 9:38-40) in the locality were attracted to copy his style of exorcism! Of these, seven sons of a certain Sceva, a chief priest of the Jews in Ephesus, are mentioned as having tried to drive out an evil spirit from a man, saying, "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth". But the evil spirit answered them: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (vv. 13-16).

The result was that, when the residents of the city of Ephesus heard of the astounding incident, "fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified (v 17). Also many of those who were

now believers came, confessing and divulging their [occult] practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily." (vv. 18-20 *ESV*).

The new believers in Ephesus, a cosmopolitan commercial city and capital of the Roman province of Asia (vv. 17, 24-27), witnessed a superior power in Christ and gave everything up! They gave up everything Satanic and ungodly, "openly admitted their involvement with magical spells and told all the details" (v.18 *God's Word; cp Acts 8:9-24*)! Following this, "the Word of God grew mightily and prevailed". Apparently a spiritual battle had ensued, but the Word of God proved mightier and prevailed over all the magical arts, occult books and demons combined! Halleluiah!

Friend, don't ever fear or give in to the devil. Stand firm in the Lord and exercise faith, and you will prevail by the Word of God which is "living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword"!

Having failed spiritually, Paul's spiritual opponents now resorted to physical confrontation. This happened while Paul was contemplating leaving Ephesus for Jerusalem and from there to Rome (vv. 21-22). Hell literally broke loose:

"And the same time there arose no small stir about that way [i.e. the Christian faith].

"For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen;

"Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth.

"Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: "So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth.

"And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.

"And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul's companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre" (vv. 23-29).

Diana of the Ephesians was both a big cult and a big business in a bustling commercial centre! *The People's New Testament* commentary reports: "The temple of Diana at Ephesus was counted one of the wonders of the world. It was at this time (this was the third temple which had been built in succession) of white marble, 425 feet long by 220 wide, with 127 columns, and of surpassing wealth and splendor. It contained an image said to have fallen from heaven (Acts 19:35). It was visited by thousands of pilgrims, and a great industry grew up in making miniature representations of the temple, of wood, gold, or silver. This was the work of Demetrius and his fellow-workers. After paganism fell, much of the material of this temple was transported to Constantinople, and was used in the construction of the church of St. Sophia."

Not surprisingly a hornet's nest was stirred so badly. Paul's companions were dragged into the theatre, which was used not only for amusements but also for public assemblies, for a possible mob trial. The enraged devotees and priests of the "great Diana of the Ephesians" (also v. 34) were only calmed down when the town clerk, an important officer next in rank to the city mayor, said to the riotous crowd: "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is

temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash" (vv.35-36 ESV).

The Apostle Paul and his co-workers took on the powerful cult of Artemis having a regional, if not a worldwide, following with vested commercial interests by the power of God and prevailed. No wonder he prayed that the believers in Ephesus would come to know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own 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 world, but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:15-21).

Be Strengthened in His Power!

Paul's prayer that God give us knowledge and insight into His exceedingly great power towards us is not merely a matter of perceiving or understanding with the senses, but rather having an experiential knowledge of it. The Greek verb "*eido*" (Strong's #1492, 'know') has a wide range of meanings which includes not only "to perceive with the eyes or by any of the senses, i.e. to notice, see or discern" but also "to experience any state or condition, to know how to, to be skilled in" (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

It's this practical use of the Divine power that Paul directs our minds to in chapter six verses 10-18. Because we are engaged in a spiritual warfare with the unseen forces of this dark age, he urges us to be "strengthened" (so the Greek verb "*endunamoō*" [Strong's #1743] means) in the all-powerful exalted Lord seated at the right hand of "the Majesty on high" (Acts 2:36; Heb. 1:3) and "in the power of His might" (v. 10).

The call is a sound advice meant to ensure our resounding victory, considering that "Your strength is small *if* you faint in the day of distress" (Prov. 24:10 *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible LITV*). The Apostle John wrote to the saints of his day: "... I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one" (1 John 2:14b). The youth in Christ overcame Satan, "the wicked one", because they were strong in the Lord and the word of God abided in them. It was not a casual encounter with the Word but a continual relationship in which the Word *continued to be present* and to *remain* in them (as the Greek verb "*meno*" ['abide'] implies). Col. 3:16 tells us, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly".

David, the warrior-king, declared: "Blessed *be* the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, *and* my fingers to fight" (Ps. 144:1). To triumph over the devil and his hordes of wicked spirits, we must not be spiritual weaklings; we must be strengthened in the Lord and in the power of His might. This "power" is the Resurrection Power of Christ earlier mentioned in Eph. 1:19-20. To the true called-out ones of God, the crucified Christ is "the power and wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23-24). His resurrection demonstrates both the immeasurable power of God to bring back from the dead into a state where life reigns forever over death (Rom. 6:9) as well as the operation of a Divine wisdom far beyond the knowledge of the world's rulers (1 Cor. 2:6-8). Although He was manifested in the flesh as a descendant of David, Christ was "declared *to be* the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:3-4). It's in this unequalled power that we are to increase strength.

"Put on the whole Armour of God"

The way to strengthen ourselves “in the Lord and in the power of His might” is not left for us to guess. The Apostle shows us how: “Put on the whole armour of God” (Eph. 6:11). Just as a soldier needs to put on all the components of his armour to be well prepared for battle (see Jer. 46:3-4), so it takes all the commands of God for us to be arrayed in “the whole armour of God”.

In Rom. 13, the “armour of God” is described as the “armour of light” representing a life of sobriety and holiness—in contrast to the “works of darkness” which we must “cast off” as a people who live in the light of day (vv. 12-13). Because this “armour of light” is a metaphor for Christ, the Light of the world (John 8:12), we are then exhorted in verse 14: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (ESV). The word “provision” in both Greek and English thought essentially means ‘prior preparation for’ (as indeed the Greek noun “*pronoia*”, i.e. ‘forethought or provident care or supply’ [Strong’s #4307], conveys).

So we see that to give forethought to the lusts of the flesh and to make provision for them is to forego putting on “the armour of God” which is “the armour of light”, the holy life in Christ. Thankfully, these lusts of the flesh are not hidden or unknown or unknowable to us, they are known, plain and evident, as stated and listed in Gal. 5:19-21:

“Now the works of the flesh are clearly revealed, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lustfulness,
“Idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, fightings, jealousies, angers, rivalries, divisions, heresies,
“Envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revelings, and things like these; of which I tell you before, as I also said before, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (*Modern King James Version MKJV*).

If you identify any of the works or lusts of the flesh in your life, it’s time you repented and gave them up! They are not so obscure as to escape you; if you refuse to repent it’s due to the hardness of your heart.

However, do remember that, whoever indulges in “the works of the flesh” (because he/she had earlier stored them up in their heart, Mark 7:21-23) will be disqualified from the Kingdom of God because, first of all, he neglected to put on “the whole armour of God”. The antidote to fulfilling “the works of the flesh” is to bear “the fruit of the Spirit” which is “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23 *MKJV*).

So then ‘the lusts or works of the flesh’ constitute the armour of Satan as against “the fruit of the Spirit” which defines the essential nature of the armour of God. No individual can wear both, especially since the armour of God is worn so as to be “able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11b). “The wiles of the devil” (from the Greek “*methodeia*” Strong’s #3180) means the ‘cunning arts, deceit, tricks and schemes’ of the devil.

In 2 Cor. 2, the Apostle Paul pleads with the church to restore a brother he had earlier ordered suspended for sleeping with his father’s wife (1 Cor.5:1-5) but who was now repentant, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (v. 11). The point the Apostle makes is that now that church discipline has served its purpose in bringing the brother to penitence, the church would find itself playing into the hands of the devil should they adamantly refuse to accept him back. How? Satan will gladly have the church keep the repentant man out so he will have the chance to destroy his soul, thus outsmarting the church whose mission is to win people into God’s kingdom. As *The People New Testament* commentary aptly observes, “Satan would gladly have

kept the sinful man in the church; since he has repented, Satan would gladly have the church keep him out". The devil you say!

The "devices of the devil", then, are the 'thoughts, intentions, plans and purposes' of the devil. Owing to the subversive activities of the ministers of Satan masquerading as "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15), Paul feared that "as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning" so the "thoughts [of the Corinthian brethren] will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (v.3 *ESV*).

Eve and Adam were corrupted and "led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to God" because they put off the armour of God given to them as a weapon to "stand against" the wiles of the devil. The Greek expression "*pros stenai* [from 'histemi']" ('stand against' Strong's 2476, 4314) does not convey the idea of a one-off resistance but a continuing action, namely "to stand, to make firm, fix, establish, to cause a person or a thing to keep his or its place, to uphold or sustain the authority or force of anything, to stand still, to stand immovable, stand firm, continue safe and sound, stand unharmed, to stand ready or prepared, to be of a steadfast mind; of quality, one who does not hesitate, does not waiver" (*Thayer's*, "*histemi*", "stand").

So then, Eve gave in too easily! Although she successfully countered the devil's opening trick question, "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1-3), she could not resist the devil past this point. She was taken in by the devil's false claim that she would not die by eating of "the tree of good and evil" but that she would be like God, "knowing good and evil" (vv.4-5). Lust then took over, as she "saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise", and she succumbed effortlessly to the devil together with her husband (v. 6; cp 1 Tim. 2:14). But pretty soon, it dawned on them that the devil had lied to them. Instead of becoming like God on their eyes opening, they found out that they had become naked (v.7)!

Adam and Eve put off the armour of God being His commandment (Gen. 2:16-17) given to them to hold out against devil only to discover that they were naked—bare and without covering! It pays to resist the devil by putting on "the whole armour of God" and standing firm against him!

This is the Christ way. During His forty-day dry fasting in the wilderness, He resolutely and consistently resisted the temptations of the devil—three in all and at a most vulnerable moment when He felt the pangs of hunger—until He overcame him. "Then the devil left him. And behold, angels came and ministered to Him" (Matt. 4:1-11 *MKJV*). The devil will flee from you too if you overcome, and grace will drop from heaven!

So, don't ever give up your armour in Christ, not an inch of it! The Supplier of the armour encourages you, "Submit yourselves ... to God [by putting on His armour]. [Then] Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam. 4:7), just as he fled from Christ when He was clothed in His full armour of obedience to the Father (John 8:28-29, 12:50).

Will you now put on "the whole armour of God"? You have no other option unless you wish to be completely disarmed and defeated by the devil with relish, as he has done to the rest of humanity without the armour of God! 1 John 5:19 says, "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (*ESV*). How was He able to do this? He has all unbelievers in His web of 'wiles' who "walk according to the course of this world, according to the power of the prince of the air" and whose bidding they do in fulfilling "the desires of the flesh and of the mind" (Eph. 2:2-3).

“We Wrestle not against Flesh and Blood”

Let’s have no illusion. The fight is not really with fellow human beings; it’s with demonic forces—not just one devil with his “wiles”! In other words, we are fighting Satan and his whole domain of innumerable evil spirits categorized into “principalities, powers, rulers and spiritual forces in the heavenly realm” (Eph. 6:12). Satan is the overlord of this hierarchy of demons. In Matthew 12, the envious Pharisees falsely accused Jesus of casting out demons “by Beelzebub, the prince of devils” (v. 24). “Beelzebub” is another name for Satan.

In ordering his domain of demons or unclean spirits, Satan seems to have closely imitated the hierarchical angelic order in heaven, also classified into “angels, authorities, principalities and powers” (Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 3:22). Although the medieval church taught that there were nine ranks of angels being ‘seraph, cherub, throne, dominion, virtue, power, principality, archangel, and angel’ in that order, scripture does not give us such an elaborate picture of the angelic order in heaven, even though they do clearly have ranks.

The evil being called Satan and his hordes of evil spirits did not originally start off as evil powers. Originally called Lucifer, that is “light bearer” (Isa. 14:12), Satan was once a holy angel of God, one of the “morning stars” and “sons of God” who “sang” and “shouted for joy” at God’s exquisite creation (Job 38:4-7). Said to be in “Eden, the Garden of God” where he wore gems of every kind and was decorated with gold, Satan occupied a high position in the government of God (called “the holy mountain of God”) and was so powerful he could walk up and down the stones of fire burning before the throne of God (Ez. 28:13-14; cp Ex.24:10, 17; Rev. 4:5-6).

Lucifer performed perfectly until “iniquity was found in him” when his heart was lifted up in pride because of his radiant beauty (Ez. 28:15-17), and he said in his heart, “I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation [of angelic beings in heaven], in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High” (Isa. 14:13-14).

The “sides of the north” constitute the locus of God’s throne in the heavenly Mount Zion (Ps. 48:1-2; Heb. 12:22-23). Hence Lucifer deluded himself, “I will be like the most High”.

But is Satan addressed at all? Although in both Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 there appears to be no direct reference to Satan by name and instead the subjects are the King of Babylon and the King of Tyre, the subject matter clearly transcends the two kings. They are no “anointed guardian cherub” (Ez. 28:14) nor had access to the heavenly courts of God. They, however, had one thing in common with the devil—arrogance (Isa. 14:10-11; Ez. 28:2, 5-6). It’s on this basis that they are used as surrogates of Satan to portray the circumstances that led to his fall from holiness and Divine favour—a similar fate they also stood to suffer for their haughtiness!

So Satan’s arrogance has got him thinking about overthrowing the government of God. Soon he got down to work. He won two-thirds of the angels to his side (Rev. 12:4) through his usual sophistry and then with his band of disloyal angels launched a rebellion against God. In the ensuing turmoil, Michael, the chief Archangel (compare Jude 1:9 and Zech. 3; also Dan. 10:13, 12:1), the Angel Jehovah, who became the Christ, fought Lucifer and his rebellious angels and crushed them. Subsequently, Ha’Satan (Hebrew for ‘the Adversary’) was banished from heaven to the earth (Ez. 28:16-17 – ‘cast from the mountain of God to the ground’) “and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:7-9). Following this, an announcement was made in heaven: “Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night” (v. 10).

Just as interesting as the description of Satan in Isaiah and Ezekiel, the episode of the “war in heaven” does not refer to a single event in which Satan suffered defeat at the hands of Christ. It refers to two past defeats, his continuing defeat with the blood of the Lamb (v. 11) and his final future defeat in which he will be “**cast out**” forever!

The devil sustained his first defeat, of course, in the original “war in heaven”. But just before His death, Christ predicted another imminent defeat of Satan by His victory on the cross when He said: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me” (John 12:31-32). This is the victory recorded in Col. 2:15: “And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross” (NIV).

That’s why on resurrecting from the dead He proclaimed triumphantly: “All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18). Apparently, He had trounced Satan and his fallen angels in the spiritual underworld, a section of which (Greek “*Tartarus*”) some of the fallen angels are kept in “everlasting chains of darkness” awaiting the final judgment (Eph 4:9-10; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6). The purpose? To destroy “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15; cp 1 John 3:8).

This utter defeat of Satan is a present spiritual reality in that through the power of Christ the works of the devil are daily destroyed by believers, but it is not definitive. We yet await the ultimate destruction of Satan in which he, described as death, will be destroyed completely—“cast out” forever: “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26; Rev. 20:10, 14; Matt. 25:41). “And death and Hades were **cast** into the lake of fire. This is the second death, *even* the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:14 RV).

In the meantime, Christ has by His direct authority and the victory of His blood given believers *continuing* authority and victory over the devil (Luke 10:18-19; Rev. 12:11). This is seen when we consider that the events of the “war in heaven” are bound up with His struggle with the “great red dragon” right from birth until He is “caught up unto God, and to His throne” at His ascension, leaving His Church (the woman that flees to the wilderness, v. 14) to continue the struggle in His victory (Rev. 12:1-6)! This is where the scene flashes back to the primordial angelic war in heaven to establish the fact that Christ always triumphs over the devil, as evidenced by His past victory over him *as Michael*, His present Calvary victory over him *as the Redeemer* and His final victory over him *as the coming Judge*—all bound together by the common phrase “**cast out**”!

So what happened next after Lucifer and his angels were cast out from heaven? Lucifer and his angels would no longer be described as holy angels but as unclean, evil spirits or demons. Instantly, he fell into infamy as the originator of sin who has been “sinning from the beginning” (ESV) as well as “a murderer from the beginning” and “the father of lies” (1 John 3:8; John 8:44).

Banned from ever staying in heaven (Rev. 12:8), Satan and a number of his demons became wanderers in the earth (Job 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:8; Matt. 12:43); some took up residence in the sky (Isa. 24:21; Eph. 6:12b); some possessed humans (as in the case of Mary Magdalene, Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9), and some dwelt in the sea (Isa. 27:1).

Though primarily confined to the spirit world, their sphere of operations transcends the spirit world. In the days of Noah, some of these evil spirits (referred to by the former glory ‘sons of God’, Job

38:7, 2:1) were said to have manifested in the physical and slept with women who brought forth offspring described as “mighty men of old, men of renown” (Gen. 6:1-4). In the majority of cases, however, the evil spirits possess human beings. While some of these demon-possessed individuals are used by the demons to further their nefarious activities which are “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10), others are actually host-victims afflicted with all kinds of diseases and ailments. In His earthly ministry Christ set many of the latter free by casting out the demons so they could get well. Notable examples include the person out of whom He cast out a dumb spirit and the woman “whom Satan had bound for eighteen years” (Luke 11:14; 13:11-16).

Over the rest of unregenerate humanity Satan exercises his vile, corrupting influence as “the prince of the power of the air” who holds them captive to do his will by means of the carnal desires of the mind and flesh (Eph. 2:2-3; 2 Tim 2:26).

Thank God for His spiritual gift of the rebirth! You are not “of the evil one” and therefore no pawn of his evil whims and caprices by which he would have gleefully victimized you, as he has done to the unbelieving world (1 John 5:18-19, 3:12).

Because the whole world lies under the evil control of the devil (1 John 5:19), the real power behind most worldly governments are an unseen cabal of evil spirits operating through human rulers and officials who front for them. One such unseen evil ‘governmental’ power is mentioned in Daniel 10 as “the prince of the kingdom of Persia”. In the words of the angel sent by God to bring a revelation to Daniel on how prophetic world history will unfold “in the days to come” (*ISV*), this powerful spiritual entity resisted him for 21 days until Michael, “first of the chief heads”, (*Young’s Literal Translation*) came to his aid:

“Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God [through fasting and prayer, vv. 2-3], thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

“But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

“Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision *is* for *many* days” (Dan. 10:12-14).

The exact reason for the 21-day struggle with “the prince of the kingdom of Persia” is unclear until we come to verse 20: The time is up for the kingdom of Persia to leave the world political scene through armed struggle, and “lo, the prince of Grecia shall come”. (See Dan. 11:2-4). To put it plainly, the angel bore a prophecy of the overthrow of the Persian Empire to be replaced by that of Greece, and that was what so alarmed the spiritual evil “prince of Persia” to resist the angel so the message would not be brought to Daniel. Knowing full well that “The Almighty LORD doesn't do anything unless he first reveals his secret to his servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7 *God’s Word, GW*), the demonic prince of Persia reckoned that once he succeeded in delaying or even stopping the prophecy-bearing angel from carrying out his assignment, he would possibly frustrate God’s plans to replace the Persian Empire with the Greek Empire.

But once again, Michael, revealed in the Old Testament as Angel-Jehovah (Ex. 23:20-23; Isa. 63:9) and in the New Testament as the Messiah, prevailed over evil!

And He will yet prevail again! Satan, “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4; John 12:31), and his world-ruling demons and their human cohorts (1 Cor. 2:8) will do everything in their power to resist the coming Kingdom of Christ to rule the whole earth, but God laughs it off as “a vain thing” in Psalm 2. Because power belongs to God (Ps. 62:11), Christ will “break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash

them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (v. 9). This happens at the end of the age when, towards the end of their 42-month world rule with their number 666 (Rev. 13:5, 16-18), the world-ruling evil spiritual entities mobilize their supporters to fight the returning Christ by means of a special kind of occult diplomacy rarely acknowledged to be at work:

"And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.

"For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty" (Rev. 16:13-14 *ESV*).

"The great day of God Almighty" is the war of Armageddon (v. 16). The outcome of this FEARSOME LAST WORLD WAR, whose battlefield will stretch from Megiddo in the north of Israel (Rev. 16:16; Zech. 12:11) to Edom in the south (Isa. 34:1-6, 63:1) encircling Jerusalem at the centre (Joel 3:2, 11-12; Zech 14:1-2, 12; Rev. 14:20), is a foregone conclusion: Christ, "the Lamb [,] shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Rev. 17:14; 19:11-21).

The resounding victory Christ (Michael meaning 'Like God') had over the devil in their very first confrontation would not be overturned! Once victorious, always victorious. That is our destiny in Christ too. We always triumph and that as "more than conquerors" through Him (2 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:37).

To this day the fallen angels vividly remember the ordeal they suffered at the hands of Angel-Jehovah Christ in the "war in heaven". That was why during His earthly ministry, the evil spirits immediately recognized Christ and wailed in fear of Him whenever and wherever He encountered them. They recognized Him as Michael, "the Holy [or incorruptible] One of Israel" who once made mincemeat of them in the "war in heaven". On one such occasion in the synagogue in Capernaum, the demon possessing a man cried out: "Let *us* alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God" (Mark 1:23-24; Luke 4:33-34).

While the demons recalled their terrible defeat at the hands of Jesus during that great cosmic war, they also dreaded both what Christ could do to them in the present and at the future judgment. Putting together the accounts of Matthew and Luke about 'the legion of demons' who begged Jesus to send them into a herd of swine, we see the demons express both fears. In Matt. 8:29, "they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?" (See 2 Pet. 2:4). In Luke 8:28, however, the cry is for a reprieve from present torment: "When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, *Thou* Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not".

In His encounters with demons we see Christ exercise absolute power over the demons. He would rebuke them and command them out of their victims with authority (Luke 4:35; Mark 1:25-26). No wonder onlookers "were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power He commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out" (Luke 4:36; Mark 1:27).

Without the power of Christ, the plain truth is that flesh and blood is powerless against the devil and his demons. The good news, however, is that Christ has not deprived His followers of His all-conquering power over demons. You and I have been given authority over the devil because of our union with Christ. In sending His Twelve Apostles to preach the Kingdom of God, the Lord Jesus "gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases" (Luke 9:1-2 *ESV*; Matt. 10:1; Mark 6:7). Later, He sent seventy other disciples of His on a similar mission and apparently gave

them the same “power and authority over all demons” (Luke 10:1). Hence they reported back to Him: “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name” (v. 17). This compares with the experience the Twelve also had in their missionary work: “And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them” (Mark 6:13).

But not only the demons they encountered, but the prince of the demons himself was forced to submit when the disciples mentioned the Name of Jesus. Hence Christ disclosed to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18), even as you confronted the demons in My Name. Following this, He gave believers authority over all the power of the Adversary: “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (v. 19).

That authority “over all the power of the enemy” has only become greater since His great Calvary victory over Satan and his demons (Col. 2:15). Since His resurrection and ascension to the throne of the Father in heaven, Christ has been made the Head of all things including principalities and powers for the benefit of the Church who shares in everything He has (Eph. 1:19-23; Acts 2:36; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; 2 Pet. 1:3; 1John 4:17).

Thus the otherwise redoubtable demonic principalities and powers are a walkover in Christ. You have no reason to fear them as a believer. Just as they recognized and feared Jesus, so they recognize and fear true believers who are spiritually united with Christ (1 Cor. 6:17; Acts 19:15). When we mention the name of the Lord Jesus as Spirit-filled believers, the demons tremble and shake (Jam. 2:19). They can’t stand our spiritual power in Christ. They flee with their tails between their legs when we resist them firmly in the faith with the blood of the Lamb while submitting to God (1 Pet. 5:8-9; Rev. 12:11; Jam. 4:7).

“Evil day” — Satan’s Declaration of All-out War!

As we have seen so far, our spiritual struggle with the devil is not an imaginary cosmic war; it’s a real war situation in which Satan and his demons have specific evil goals to achieve in attacking us. The Apostle has a fitting name for the devil’s campaign of attacks—“the evil day” (Eph. 6:13). The story of Job gives us a sense of what a typical Satan-instigated “evil day” could entail. The devil’s attack on him was a full-scale one, wreaking havoc on his business, his family and his person. So then, “evil day” refers to all kinds of demonic attacks which the powers of darkness can launch against you in their attempts to steal from you, kill and destroy you. They range from assaults on your moral standing to deadly spiritual operations calculated to ruin you once and for all. And it may come any day, without warning. In such times, the LORD is your “stronghold” (Nahum 1:7) and you must quickly run to Him for defence by putting on your whole divine armour (Prov. 18:10).

Arrayed in your full armour, you can now “stand” and square up to the devil (Eph. 6:13b). Yes, with your armour on, you can challenge the whole army of demons to a duel and you will triumph over them! Without your God-given armour on, however, forget all about standing up to the devil. Satan won’t come against you unarmed (see 1 Chron. 21:1). He is a “strong man” with “his armour”. To overcome him, therefore, you must prove “stronger” to disarm him and then “divide his spoils” (i.e. undo his evil works) (Luke 11:21-22).

So it deserves repeating: “take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm” (ESV).

The “done all” refers to all the preparations necessary to the (impending) fight and to becoming a good soldier. Therefore, the message is that having accomplished all things necessary to (winning)

the fight, that is after having put on “the whole armour of God”, “stand your ground” as a battle-ready spiritual warrior in Christ. Position yourself for battle!

Writing at a time he was in prison (Eph. 3:1; 4:1) under Roman military guard (Acts 28:16; cp Phil. 1:13), it is quite possible that the figure of a battle-ready soldier was suggested by the sights the Apostle so often witnessed. In the context of Roman battle imagery, therefore, “stand your ground” carries the idea of resisting and standing firm against the enemy while clothed in full military armour! It’s maintaining your position, and not fleeing or yielding.

The Essential Components of the Whole Armour of God

Now, how do you “stand your ground” (Eph. 6:14a) poised for battle with Satan and his demonic principalities and powers? The call to “put on the whole armour of God” is once again the answer. But then, the Apostle does not give a comprehensive list of Divine instructions or commandments to keep as your “whole armour of God”. Instead, he singles out those instructions most crucial to winning the war with the demons.

In doing this, Paul paints a Roman soldier on the battlefield in his full armour. How did a typical Roman soldier of Paul’s day look like?

“The Roman soldier wore a girdle [or belt], breast-plate, shoes with iron nails, a helmet to protect his head, and carried a great shield on his left arm which was thrown in front of his body. His weapon was the sword. It was with the sword, not the spear as other nations, that the Romans conquered the world. And these represent parts of the Christian’s spiritual armor” (*People’s New Testament* commentary on Eph. 6:14-18).

“The Belt of Truth”

As with the Roman soldier, the first thing to do to “stand your ground” in battle-readiness is to fasten “the belt of truth” around your waist (Eph. 6:14). By “girdle or belt”, the Apostle referred to either the leather apron worn beneath the armour of the Roman soldier or the metal belt protecting his lower abdomen. But in either case, the girdle or belt gave the Roman soldier stability and ease of movement (see Isa. 5:27).

Truth does the same for the believer. It is foremost in the believer’s armour because it gives him a strong unassailable position. Truth is the foundation of all victory.

But as governor Pilate asked the Lord at His trial, “what is truth”? (John 18:38). In context, truth evidently means ‘sincerity’. But “*aletheia*” (Strong’s 225), the Greek word for “truth” used in the text, is an extensive word. Its meanings include factual reality, divine truths or true spiritual teachings, and personal integrity devoid of deceit and falsehood (*Thayer’s*).

Truth is a core attribute of God. Ps. 33:4 says, “The word of the LORD *is* right; and all His works *are done* in truth [i.e. faithfulness]”. In Deut. 32:4, Moses similarly says of the LORD: “He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He” (cp Ps. 111:7; Dan. 4:37; Rev. 15:3). This element of God’s character the Psalmist celebrates as lasting forever, as do all His other attributes: “the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; and His

truth endureth to all generations” (Ps. 100:5; cp Ps 146:6). He is not only abundant in truth (Ex. 34:6) but He is “the God of truth” (Isa. 65:16).

What is true of God is equally true of His Son Jesus, who is “the exact imprint [likeness]” of the Father’s nature (Heb. 1:3 *ESV*). Truth is His essence. He declared in John 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life”.

Sadly, fallen mankind does not have truth as one of its strong points (see Ps. 58:3; Isa. 59:14-15; Rom. 3:13). So, how has God made available to us His essential characteristic of truth?

Truth has come to us in the form of God’s law (Ps. 119:142), as an element of Christ’s grace (John 1:14, 17) and in His teachings (Eph. 4:20-21; 3 John 1:4). But above all, Christ the Truth has been formed in us through spiritual rebirth into His Divine Nature (Gal. 4:19; 1 John 3:9).

Now, in fighting the devil we are to appropriate this heavenly gift and make it part of our own essential nature as a counter to falsehood which is intrinsic to Satan. The Lord Jesus said of Satan: “Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and standeth not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father thereof” (John 8:44 *ASV*).

The *ASV* translation is much closer to the original Greek, “he does not stand in the truth” (in the sense of maintaining, upholding, or accepting the validity of it). That is to say, since the beginning when Satan of his own accord abdicated to uphold the truth, he has not stopped being against the truth; he has been doing so to date. This is because “there is no truth in him”; instead the speaking of lies comes naturally to him.

In contrast to this essential characteristic of Satan, we are exhorted in Proverbs chapter 3: “Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man” (vv.3-4).

The clause “Let not truth forsake you” does not suggest the idea of truth abandoning you by itself and you stopping it from doing so. The Hebrew word “*azab*” (Strong’s 5800), translated “forsake”, implies ‘relinquish or permit’ and thus puts the onus on you not to give up truth, which will mean to ‘set it loose, set free or let go’ (*Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Definitions, BDB*).

So, make sure you don’t relinquish truth in your fight with the demonic forces of darkness. Make sure you are on the side of truth and the truth is on your side. Don’t entertain a scintilla of falsehood or you will play into the hands of the devil. You cannot beat him at his own game! Worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24; Ps 145:18), not in dishonesty and deceit (2 Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:15). Serve and walk before God in truth (Jos. 24:14 & 1 Sam. 12:24; 1 Kings 2:4 & 2 Kings 20:3; 3 John 1:4). Deal truthfully with your neighbour (Zech. 8:16; Eph. 4:25). Love truth and rejoice in it (Zech. 8:19; 1 Cor. 13:6). Obey the truth (Rom. 2:8). Commend yourself by the truth (2 Cor. 6:7-8, 7:14). Meditate on the truth (Phil. 4:8). God Himself, your ultimate Defender, defends you with His truth: “His truth shall be thy shield and buckler” (Ps. 91:4). His Church is “the ground and pillar of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). He sanctifies and purifies us with His truth (John 17:17, 19; 1 Pet. 1:22).

Truth is depicted as a belt buckled around the waist to communicate the idea that we are to consider ourselves ready to take on the devil only when we have truth. Christ tells us in Luke 12:35: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning”. As the *NET* Bible explains in its footnote, the expression “Let your loins be girded,” was “an idiom referring to the practice of tucking the ends of the long cloak (outer garment) into the belt to shorten it in preparation for activities like running,

etc". In relation to truth, then, you aren't ready to stand your ground against the devil unless you have fastened on (the belt of) truth, the first piece of the armour of God.

Without truth, we can't fight the devil from a position of strength. What we will have left is falsehood which he will happily use against us. That's why Jesus rejoiced just before His death on the cross: "the prince of this world cometh: and he hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). Christ had neither the lies of Satan nor any of his evil inventions and so defeated him soundly by His death on the cross. With truth, victory is already won. 2 Cor. 13:8 says, "We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth" (2 Cor. 13:8). In other words, truth is incontrovertible, and one fights it only to lose the battle. Time will vindicate truth: "The lip of truth shall be established for ever: but a lying tongue is but for a moment" (Prov. 12:19). This was what played out in Moses' confrontation with the sorcerers of Pharaoh led by Jannes and Jambres: "Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men corrupted in mind and disqualified regarding the faith. But they will not get very far, for their folly will be plain to all, as was that of those two men" (2 Tim. 3:8-9 *ESV*).

So, it's really foolish to operate on the basis of falsehood and think that you will be successful in the long run. As in Paul's example in Ephesus, he was operating on the truth that he was the servant of the true living God versus the falsehood of his opponents that Artemis was a "great" goddess worthy of veneration. In the end, Paul won out because the truth was on his side.

Truth always prevails. The Lord Jesus prevailed with truth in the "war in heaven"; He prevailed with truth on the cross of Calvary; He will prevail with truth at His Second Coming (Rev. 19:11-16).

So, love and practice truth, and you will ever be victorious. 'Know it', familiarize yourself with it and you will be free forever (John 8:32). The aged Apostle John rejoiced over his flock: "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4, also v. 3). With truth on your side, you have nothing to fear, but every reason to rejoice. Always abide in the truth, and it will be with you forever for one victory after another (2 John 1:2).

"The Breastplate of Righteousness"

You are still positioned for battle. The "belt of truth" has been buckled around your waist, but you are not finished yet. You need to put on "the breastplate of righteousness" (Eph. 6:14b).

In the Roman armour, "the breastplate" consisted of two parts, called 'wings'. "One covered the whole region of the thorax or breast [i.e. chest or lungs], in which the principal viscera of life are contained; and the other covered the back, as far down as the front part extended". The breastplate was made of hard leather, bronze, or iron, including the corresponding plate covering the back. The two parts were "connected by leathern straps or metal bands passing over the shoulders and fastened in front, and by hinges on the right side". (*Vincent Word Studies; Clarke's Commentary*).

When placed on its lower edge, the breastplate stood upright, and its two parts could clearly be seen. That is why the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 6:7 describes "the breastplate of righteousness" as "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left". Here, righteousness is depicted as a weapon with which God's ministers both attack (right hand) and defend themselves (left hand).

This makes righteousness, to some extent, the only weapon we could classify alongside "the sword of the Spirit" (the Word of God) as an offensive weapon. Even so, it's mostly to be viewed (as in Ephesians 6) as a defensive weapon against "the wiles" of Satan.

Isaiah 54:14 says: "In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee". Going by its stated role here, righteousness, like truth, should be seen as giving us additional stability without which one cannot stand firmly on the ground.

But righteousness is a complex, expansive word ranging from right acts of God and man to justification to divine vindication. But the sense in which Paul uses it is that of moral uprightness or rectitude. Again, Jesus is our model (Heb. 1:9) as is God Himself. The image of "the breastplate of righteousness" is borrowed from Isaiah 59 where God puts it on to uphold and defend righteousness Himself in the face of widespread lawlessness in the land with no advocate of justice in sight. From systematic injustice in the courts to godless acts of cruelty and wickedness, God saw that truth was lacking, "and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey [a victim]. "The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then His own arm brought Him salvation, and His righteousness upheld Him. He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on His head; He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak. According to their deeds, so will He repay, wrath to His adversaries, repayment to His enemies; to the coastlands He will render repayment. So they shall fear the name of the LORD from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; for He will come like a rushing stream, which the wind of the LORD drives" (Isa. 59:15-19 *ESV*).

In the aftermath, righteousness triumphs and takes root: "And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression," declares the LORD" (v. 20).

God places so great a value on the practice of righteousness by His people that in *verse 21* He binds Himself with a covenant to put His Spirit on His people and His words in their mouths so that they will always be empowered to keep His righteousness found in His words: "And as for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit that is upon you, and My words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children's offspring," says the LORD, "from this time forth and forevermore" (v. 21).

Christ, who is pictured as girt with righteousness in Isa. 11:5, is totally responsible for our righteousness. Hence God has made Him to be "unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Indeed, as 2 Cor. 5:21 says, God "made Him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him".

The simple message is that Christ, by offering Himself as a sin-offering, cleansed us from all sin and put us right with God. But He requires the obedience of all those who come to Him (Heb. 5:8-9) lest they fall back into sin, forfeiting their right standing with God and any more divine pardon: "if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. 10:26-27).

But the problem is that *the doing of righteousness* does not come naturally to man who is ordinarily inclined to unrighteousness and takes delight in it. The solution lies in spiritual regeneration. We must be born again by God into His essential nature of righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:22-24). Because the resultant new birth captures the very character of God who is Spirit and it takes the action of His Spirit to be begotten, the born-again believer is described by the Lord Jesus as if he were wholly composed of spirit: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).

Obviously, it's the new way of life that is spiritual, but because the way a man lives is what defines him or *what he is*, it's not far-fetched to say that such a person is "spirit"! The righteous life is plainly spiritual as stated in Rom. 8:10: "If Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life [or alive *NASU*] because of righteousness" (ESV).

Thus the spiritual 'life' of righteousness is only 'alive'—active, working—when people are empowered to live it by Christ through His Spirit. This way, the hold of the flesh preventing people from obeying God's spiritual law (Rom. 7:14, 8:7), wherein is righteousness (Rom. 7:12; Ps 119:172), is broken. The result is that whereas carnal men find it impossible to keep it (Jer. 13:23; Matt. 7:16-18), those who have been spiritually reborn and therefore "walk after the Spirit" obey or fulfill to the max (Grk '*pleroo*') "the righteous requirement of the law" (Rom. 8:2-4 *ESV*). In fact, it comes naturally to them as a manifestation of their own essential nature acquired from God: "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29; cp 3:7, 9-10).

In effect, they become "slaves of righteousness" (Rom. 6:16-18). They do the bidding of righteousness which is all about the keeping of God's commandments. Luke says of the parents of John the Baptist: "And they were both righteous before God [unlike the Pharisees who appeared righteous *before men*, Matt. 23:5, 28], walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6; cp vv. 74-75). The Psalmist says in Psalm 1: "Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in His law doth he meditate day and night" (vv. 1-2). In Isa. 51:7, God describes those who know righteousness as a people who have His law in their heart: "Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart *is* My law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings".

As an essential weapon with which we attack and defend ourselves in our spiritual warfare with the devil, righteousness is not something to toy with. In our confrontation with Satan and other 'workers of iniquity', it gives us unparalleled boldness (Prov. 28:1) and footing (stability) in God. He never forsakes the righteous (Ps. 37:25, 112:6) nor allows them to be shaken (Ps. 55:22; Prov. 12:3, 10:30; Ps. 15:1-5).

Like truth, righteousness is unconquerable, and we go into battle armed with "the breastplate of righteousness" to win:

"In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee.

"Behold, they shall surely gather together, *but* not by Me: whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake.

"Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy.

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue *that* shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This *is* the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness *is* of Me, saith the LORD" (Isa. 54:14-17).

So continue to do righteousness by means of Divine grace. Just as the ancient breastplate was vital to the life of the warring Roman soldier, being a protection for such principal organs of life as the heart, so righteousness is vital to your spiritual life in Christ. Without it, you are dead (Rom. 8:6-7; 1Tim. 5:6; Rev. 3:1). But as a child of Light, righteousness is a must, being the fruit of the Spirit or Light (Eph. 5:8-9).

So ‘pursue’ it (1 Tim. 6:11) even if you are hated for it, and you will triumph in the end (2 Pet. 3:14-16). God will never take His eyes off you as long as you follow righteousness (Ps. 34:15). In addition, He will exalt you and establish you forever (Job 36:7). Righteousness will surely reward you (Prov. 11:18; Isa. 3:10) with long life (Prov. 3:1-2), prosperity (Ps. 1:1-3; Prov. 11:28) and life everlasting (Prov. 12:28, 11:19). No matter how hard the demons fight you as a righteous person in Christ, they can’t wish away the victory righteousness is divinely destined to bring you: “And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust [or assurance or security] forever” (Isa. 32:17 *ESV*). Amen!

Military Boots for the Preaching of the Gospel

However essential truth and righteousness are in our spiritual warfare, we remain largely battle-ready and on the defensive when we do not push at the enemy, even though we have our belt and breastplate on! All that changes, however, the moment we put on our military boots. We ready ourselves to launch an assault on the kingdom of Satan, as we now set out to share with others the truth and righteousness we have in Christ.

The Apostle Paul equates the preaching of “the Gospel of peace” with the sandals or boots worn by the Roman soldiers of his day: “having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15 *RV*). Known as “the *caligae* or *sandals*”, these military shoes were “bound by thongs over the instep and round the ankle, and having the soles thickly studded with nails. ‘Preparation’ (Grk ἑτοιμασία, *‘hetoimasia’*) means *readiness*; but in Hellenistic Greek it was sometimes used in the sense of *establishment* or *firm foundation*, which would suit this passage: *firm-footing*” (*Vincent’s Word Studies*).

So then, the Roman soldiers “needed to wear sandals or boots so they could advance toward the enemy undistracted about what they might step on; this gear was essential to their ‘preparation’ for battle. Paul takes the image especially from the herald of Isaiah 52:7 who announces good news: sharing the message of Christ advances God’s army against the enemy position” (Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament*, p. 554).

Thus with the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ in obedience to the Great Commission (Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19), we march to the battlefield to engage the devil in the war for souls. Through the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom in power (1 Thess. 1:5), we advance its goals of “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 14:17). Because these goals are bound up with the preaching of the Gospel, Christ gave the Twelve “authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction” (Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1) and instructed them as He sent them on an evangelistic mission to the people of Israel: “as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely ye received, freely give” (Matt. 10:7-8).

In the context as used by Christ, the term “Kingdom of heaven” does not mean the visible rule of the Kingdom of God over all the earth as will be witnessed at the end of this “present evil age” but the present reign of God in the lives of people (Luke 17:20-21). This present reign of God is **evidenced** by His power to directly improve the present circumstances of people in the form of healing them, raising the dead and setting the spiritually oppressed free. The Lord establishes such a clear connection in Matt. 12:28: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you”.

It's for this same reason that He also told the seventy disciples He similarly sent on an evangelistic tour of Israel: "Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'" (Luke 10:9). The report of the seventy disciples proved that the Kingdom of God really *drew near* the people with Divine power: "And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the demons are subject to us through Your name. And He said to them, I saw Satan fall from Heaven like lightning. Behold, I give to you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the authority of the enemy. And nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:17-19).

The disciples so shook the kingdom of darkness as they preached the gospel of the Kingdom of God and cast out demons as proof that the overlord of that kingdom, Satan, suffered a terrible fall in the spirit, akin to his fall from heaven when Michael defeated him! The Lord Jesus, the Master of the triumphant disciples, observed him "fall like lightning from heaven"! He then gave them, and all subsequent disciples who would likewise represent the Kingdom of God, "authority over all the power of the enemy. And nothing shall by any means hurt you".

Beloved, if only you will put on your spiritual military boots and head for battle with "the Gospel of peace", be assured that the Master has given you authority over all the power of the enemy. With your boots on, you need not worry where you step with the Gospel of Christ or which enemy you encounter. It's victory all the way. At the mention of Jesus' Name, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord (Phil. 2:10-11).

Such was the experience of Evangelist Philip (Acts 21:8) when he preached the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in Samaria. Evil spirits were cast out, the sick were healed, and a popular local sorcerer bowed to the invincible power of Christ! (Acts 8:5-13). The result is that "there was great joy in the city" (v. 8; cp Mark 7:37). Won't you like to affect lives this way?

God pleads with you, "how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14b). No pairs of feet are more beautiful in the eyes of God than the feet of those who proclaim the good news of His Kingdom: "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (v. 15). In the original text in Isaiah 52:7, the present reign of God is not simply implied but beautifully articulated: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!".

The preaching of the Gospel is a veritable weapon we wield in our spiritual warfare with Satan. To neglect it is to throw away an important component of the spiritual armour given you by God—a weapon that so terrifies Satan that he falls down with lightning speed!

So by all means put on your spiritual military boots. Share the Gospel of the Kingdom with family, friends and coworkers while demonstrating the present reign of God in their lives. Act with faith that Jesus will make good His word to be with you to show His power of salvation as you preach Him. Therefore, pray for those who are sick, listen to those who have worries and pray for them. With the Master by your side in the spirit, no power will be able to withstand you; on the contrary, every contrary power will bow to the Name of the Lord Jesus whose servant you are.

If you are not gifted in the area of one-on-one evangelism or even evangelism in general, you could still put on your boots! You may use whatever relevant resources you have to support those specially gifted by God to preach. Knowing that it was not their place to teach (1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:34-37), the women disciples of Christ, for example, supported His evangelistic activities out of their own means (Luke 8:1-3). Do the same, and you will turn the kingdom of Satan upside down!

This is the reason for “the gift of helps” in the church (1 Cor. 12:28). So what support can you offer? Money to support missionaries on the field? Distribute tracts? Pay for the costs of printing Gospel literature or radio evangelism? Emulate the fine Christian saints at Philippi who supported Paul’s missionary efforts, and God will “supply all your needs according to His riches in glory through Jesus Christ” (Phil. 4:15-19). Meanwhile, you will have sent Satan and his demons scurrying for cover!

“The Shield of Faith”

So far so good. The kingdom of Satan has been shaken to the core with the proclamation of the Gospel of peace. But will the devil take it lying down?

Sure, the devil won’t. He’s defeated but wrath—a standard reaction of his ever since his first defeat in heaven to date (Rev. 12:9-12, 13-17)! So he resorts to throwing “fiery darts” at us, the victorious warriors in Christ! The weapon we need to counter him is “the shield of faith”: “Above all, take the shield of faith, with which you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph. 6:16 *MKJV*).

What are “fiery darts”? And of what use was “the shield” in ancient warfare?

Vincent Word Studies has this to say:

“Shield, is from *θυρα* door, because shaped like a door. Homer [an ancient Greek poet/historian] uses the word for *that which is placed in front of the doorway*. Thus of the stone placed by Polyphemus in front of his cave (“*Odyssey*”, ix., 240). The shield here described is that of the heavy infantry; a large, oblong shield, four by two and a half feet, and sometimes curved on the inner side. ... It was made of wood or of wicker-work, and held on the left arm by means of a handle. Xenophon describes troops, supposed to be Egyptians, with wooden shields reaching to their feet (“*Anabasis*,” i., 8, 9). *Saving* faith is meant.

“Fiery darts”, literally, *the darts, those which have been set on fire*. Herodotus [another Greek historian] says that the Persians attacked the citadel of Athens “with arrows whereto pieces of lighted tow were attached, which they shot at the barricade” (viii., 52). Thucydides: “the Plataeans constructed a wooden frame, which they set up on the top of their own wall opposite the mound.... They also hung curtains of skins and hides in front: these were designed to protect the woodwork and the workers, and shield them against blazing arrows” (ii. 75). Livy tells of a huge dart used at the siege of Saguntum, which was impelled by twisted ropes. “There was used by the Saguntines a missile weapon called *falarica*, with the shaft of fir, and round in other parts, except toward the point, whence the iron projected. This part, which was square, they bound around with tow and besmeared with pitch. It had an iron head three feet in length, so that it could pierce through the body with the armor. But what caused the greatest fear was that this weapon, even though it stuck in the shield and did not penetrate into the body, when it was discharged with the middle part on fire, and bore along a much greater flame produced by the mere motion, obliged [i.e. forced] the armor to be thrown down, and exposed the soldier to succeeding blows” (xxi. 8)”.

Like all other warriors of the time, “Roman soldiers were equipped with large rectangular wooden shields, four feet high, the fronts of which were made of leather. Before battles in which flaming arrows might be fired, the leather would be wetted to quench any fiery darts launched against them.

After Roman legionaries closed ranks, the front row holding shields forward and those behind them holding shields above them, they were virtually invulnerable to any attack from flaming arrows" (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament*, p. 554).

In the heat of war on the battlefield, the shield wetted to extinguish flaming missiles and projectiles like arrows was extremely important. Four feet high, the shield covered virtually every part of the body and could be turned in every direction to ward off blazing missiles in flight. Little wonder the Apostle urged: "In all circumstances", that is, at every stage in the war, at all times, "take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one" (*ESV*).

And the recommended shield is able to do the job. The Apostle takes pains to remind us: "with the shield of faith you shall be ABLE to quench **all** the fiery darts of the wicked one". So then, faith is the means by which we seek and find defence in God against the attacks of Satan. Paul does not use 'faith' here in the sense of faith for conversion which is rudimentary to the Christian experience (Heb. 6:1; Mark 16:16). He uses it in the sense of faith as a weapon of defence against the temptations, troubles and trials ferociously hurled at us by Satan! To counter his attacks, we must resist him with steadfast faith, knowing full well his agenda of harassment against fellow believers elsewhere in the world (1 Pet. 5:8-9; cp Col. 2:5; Acts 14:22).

But what is faith, and how might we utilize it as a defensive weapon?

Hebrews 11 defines it for us: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (v. 1). In more understandable, simpler language, the *Good News Bible* states: "To have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see".

It seems almost unreal to the human mind, but faith is that which holds the key to the mystery of creation. Faith was the basic mechanism employed by God in creating the world of out of nothing (Rom. 4:17): "Through faith we understand that the worlds [*Grk 'aion'*, universe] were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear [i.e. visible]" (Heb. 11:3). Hence "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" by His Word and breath/Spirit (Ps. 33:6, 9; 2 Cor. 4:6).

The Word of creation is the Word that "became flesh" in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose glory we saw as the glory of "the only begotten Son" of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1-4, 14). Remarkably, the process by which the Word brought the cosmos into being was faith, making faith highly significant in the divine scheme of things. Not surprisingly, it's impossible to please God without faith: "But without faith *it is* impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is [though unseen], and *that* He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11:6).

Just as faith was instrumental in His creation of all things, both the visible and the invisible, out of nothing (Latin *Creatio ex nihilo*) (Col. 1:16), so God expects us His children to have suchlike faith in everything we do, particularly in our spiritual life.

In Mark 11 where Jesus cursed a fig tree to dry up on finding no fruit on it, He said in response to Peter's amazement at the effect of His words barely 24 hours after He had uttered them: "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:12-14, 19-22). This is how the KJV and several other Bible versions translate Mark 11:22, but accurately translated from the Greek source text as the *Young's Literal Translation* (YLT), the *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* (LITV) and the *Douay-Rheims Bible* (DRB) do, the scripture actually says, "Have the faith of God".

Thus the call is to emulate the very faith God exercised in commanding creation out of nothing! Hence Christ continued: “For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive *them*, and ye shall have *them*” (vv.23-24).

The reality obvious to the eye is that of a mountain standing secure in the ground, unmoved; but the eye of faith sees a mountain removed and thrown into the sea! If you continue to believe that this is indeed the case and shall not doubt in your heart, it will happen accordingly. Since faith is conviction and certainty about things not yet seen, when we pray we must believe that we have received those things about which we have prayed, and we “shall have them”. The key is that we ‘must not doubt’, as that will amount to “little faith” incapable of producing results.

In Matthew 14 we read of an incident in which Peter used the faith of Jesus to walk on the sea for a while—as Jesus was doing—only to give way to “little faith” as soon as doubts entered:

“And straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

“And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone.

“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.

“And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.

“But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.

“And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water.

“And He said, ‘Come’. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.

“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.

“And immediately Jesus stretched forth *His* hand, and caught him, and said unto him, **‘O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?’**” (Matt. 14:22-31; cp 17:14-21 and Mark 9:17-27).

Disciple Peter failed to sustain the faith of Jesus he had appropriated; the raging wind struck at his confidence in Christ resulting in fear and doubt! Consequently, he began to sink.

You can’t be buoyed up on a windswept sea by “little faith”; you can only walk steadily on it by utilizing the impregnable faith of God!

So, what threatens you as a believer? What makes you afraid? Your answer is the iron faith of God, or you will sink under the menacing threat! King David declared: “When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?” (Ps. 56:3-4 *ESV*).

Here, David should ordinarily fear, but he refuses to fear because of his trust in God: “what can man do to me?” (v. 11). Do the same. Refuse to fear when you should ordinarily fear, because of the trust you have put in God. What can man or devil do to you? Doesn’t all power belong to God Almighty? (Ps. 62:11).

The same King David says in Ps. 27:1: “The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” As the preceding verses show, David has every cause to fear humanly speaking, but he refuses to fear—though attacked by his enemies in an attempt to ‘eat him up’, though enemy troops surround him with all manner of vicious weapons (vv. 2-3). The comforting truth is that the LORD as his “light and salvation” stands as an unassailable reality, incapable of being disproved or countered; the devil is only running around in circles! Yes, he will attack, but he won’t succeed in torpedoing the fact that the LORD is David’s “salvation” and therefore can’t be destroyed.

In the context of our study, then, faith is the weapon we use to parry away satanic troubles and trials that are, in human terms, a patent reality but which we refuse to accept as real in place of God’s promise. In such situations, we see and feel Satan’s “fiery darts” thrown at us and may even suffer from them, but it’s what Satan claims to have done versus God’s Word that all is well with us, that we are “more than a conquerors” through them all (Rom. 8:35-37)!

In 2 Cor. 4, the Apostle Paul juxtaposes “the fiery darts” of Satan with the victories of faith won by the believer in Christ:

“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair;
“Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;
“Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.
“For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (vv. 8-11).

The verb tense in the original Greek is present continuous, “in every way we are being troubled”, indicating a continuous barrage of troubles but each of which fails to have the intended effect. So while Satan throws the ‘fiery dart’ of persecution at us, our ‘shield of faith’ in Christ neutralizes it. So we are not forsaken. When he strikes us down, our ‘shield of faith’ repels his salvos, and we are not destroyed. The secret is the undying life of Christ—the Life that went through the jaws of death and yet lives forever (Rev. 1:18)!

The believer who wields “the shield of faith” in the God of Israel is beyond destruction (Mal. 3:6). Job, at the peak of his severe trial, uttered in faith: “I know *that* my Redeemer liveth, and *that* He shall stand at the latter *day* upon the earth: And *though* after my skin *worms* destroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God” (Job 19:25-26).

Although hope in a future ‘redemption of his body’ (Rom. 8:23) is strongly implied, hope for present salvation cannot be discounted either. Amid his travails, his Redeemer lives, and He lives for all time to bring him both present relief and lasting relief at the resurrection.

“My Redeemer lives!” That’s the ‘stubborn’ reply of faith to direct at the troubles Satan instigates against us. As in the case of Job, God will prove Himself that He’s the Redeemer.

The use of ‘shield’ as a metaphor for spiritual protection has been in use since Old Testament times. David says of God in Ps. 5:12: “For You; O LORD, will bless the righteous; with favor You will surround him as *with* a shield” (NKJV).

In Gen. 15, God Himself said to Abraham after his phenomenal victory over the combined armies of four neighbouring kings: “After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I *am* thy shield, *and* thy exceeding great reward” (v. 1).

“Fear not”, the LORD said to Abraham, because in all likelihood Abram feared reprisal attacks from the four powerful kings he had soundly defeated with his ragtag army of some 300 to recover Lot and other prisoners of war and their belongings from their captivity (Gen. 14).

Do you feel that the enemy is plotting against you? Make the LORD your shield, and you have nothing to fear (see Ps. 84:11). He is a trustworthy refuge (2 Thess. 3:3) because it’s against His nature to lie or disappoint people. This was why after His solemn promise to Abraham to bless and multiply him, He backed it up with an oath—to serve as an enduring testimony to His faithfulness: “So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of His purpose, He guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things [promise + oath], in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:17-18 *ESV*).

Satan who shoots “the fiery darts” is described as “the wicked one” (1 John 3:12) because wickedness is His essence, and he does not relent in evil since he started sinning from the beginning (1 John 3:8). You cannot afford to throw down your shield of faith! He fires “fiery darts” all the time. His flaming missiles come flying at us all the time and so we must always be armed with faith, fending them off whatever shape or form they take and from whatever direction. His typical “fiery darts” include temptations (Luke 22:31-32), trials (Jam. 1:2), and hindrances (1 Thess. 2:18; 1 Cor. 16:9). But let your heart be firm each time he shoots his flaming darts at you; trust in the LORD, which is to say, ‘put your shield of faith into action’ (Ps. 112:7). The faithful God will not abandon you nor allow you to be tried beyond what you can endure; He will provide a way of escape for you (1 Cor. 10:13).

Faith is certainly a formidable shield against the flaming arrows of Satan. But how do we develop the God-like iron faith that accepts no impossibility (Matt. 19:26; Luke 1:37)? Remember, this faith is the opposite of “little faith” ‘diluted’ with fear and doubts.

The apostles of Christ, knowing that they fell short of the standard of faith required of them, implored their Master: “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). It’s pertinent to seek the same help from our Lord.

He boosts our faith by His Word: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). If not, how else will you resist satanic attacks? What words and assurances of God will you rely on when the wicked one strikes, considering that the Master Himself prevailed by the Word when He was tempted by the devil during His forty-day fast?

God told Joshua shortly after he succeeded Moses as Israel’s leader: “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Josh. 1:8; cp Ex. 13:9). The Hebrew word for “meditate” ‘*hagah*’ (Strong’s #1897) means “to read it in undertones” or “recite it quietly”; that is, ‘mutter’, ‘muse’, utter’.

Similarly, Paul instructed Timothy: “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim 4:13). The force of the Greek expression ‘*prosecho*’ “give attendance” (Strong’s #4337) is ‘keep putting thy mind on, apply one’s self to, attach one’s self to, hold or cleave to a person or a thing, devote thought and effort to’ (*Robertson’s Word Pictures, Thayer’s and Strong’s Greek Dictionaries*).

It's not a casual once-a-week peck at the Word but a continual ingestion of it in a purposeful devotion to reading it, hearing it, meditating on it and studying it. That's how to build potent faith! The Word is the foundation of faith: "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, 'I believed, and so I spoke [Ps. 116:10],' we also believe, and so we also speak" (2 Cor. 4:13 *ESV*).

FAITH-SPEAK is the appropriate *faith response* to the "fiery darts" of the devil whatever they may be. Therefore, constantly feed on the word; let it not depart from your thoughts or lips, and you shall build up strong faith in God to withstand any satanic attack. In addition, build a strong network of a people of faith by encouraging the weak in faith in order to create the right conditions for God to act mightily on our behalf:

"Say to them *that are* of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come *with* vengeance, *even* God *with* a recompence; he will come and save you.

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

"Then shall the lame *man* leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.

"And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, *shall be* grass with reeds and rushes" (Isa. 35:4-7).

Once you develop God-like faith, you have nixed defeat at the hands of Satan and his demons! The power of faith is unassailable: "Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abides forever" (Ps. 125:1). What is more, you have forever put shame behind you: "the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in Him will not be put to shame" (Rom. 10:11; 9:33). God who rewards living faith will give you victory after victory over every flaming missile of the devil as He accomplished in the lives of the ancient saints of faith:

"And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and *of* Barak, and *of* Samson, and *of* Jephthae; *of* David also, and Samuel, and *of* the prophets:

"Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

"Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens" (Heb. 11:32-34).

With faith you will please God, and He will release His grace and power into your life to make the impossible possible for you (Mark 9:23). In the process, Satan, the dreaded foe, will be a pushover in Jesus' Name! Amen!

"The Helmet of Salvation"

The battle gets intense, and Satan fires a flurry of "fiery darts" at us, but his attacks are warded off with "the shield of faith" in Christ. We are unharmed because we are protected right up to the head.

The next piece of armour the Apostle mentions as vital to emerging victorious in our ongoing spiritual warfare with Satan is “the helmet of salvation”: “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17).

For the Roman soldier, his helmet was a metallic cap worn to protect the head from injury. Originally made of skin, it was “strengthened with bronze or other metal, and surmounted with a figure adorned with a horsehair crest”. It had a visor (which could be pulled down) to protect the face and the eyes. It also had components to protect the cheek (*Vincent Word Studies*). No Roman soldier would go into battle without his helmet on.

If so, why must the Christian soldier? But first the call to “take the helmet of salvation” has a mistranslation with respect to the word “take”. Unlike the “take” in verse 13 (*‘analambano’* Strong’s 353), the “take” in verse 17 (*‘dechomai’* Strong’s 1209) should correctly be rendered “accept” or “receive” or “take up”. The point is that Salvation is of God and of His Christ alone (Psa.3:8, 37:39; Jer. 3:23; Isa. 45:22; Acts 4:12) and that it’s from Him that the Christian soldier receives his “helmet of salvation”.

Again, like “the breastplate of righteousness”, the image of a righteous warrior going into battle wearing his “helmet of salvation” is from God Himself: “And He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore **His arm brought salvation unto Him**; and His righteousness, it sustained Him. For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke” (Isa. 59:16-17).

Salvation is in Him, springs from Him and flows out of Him. Although we are engaged in a deadly spiritual conflict, God crowns us with salvation. The “helmet of salvation” is an indication that He has already saved us, and nothing will ever reverse that, even though all the demons of hell attack us a million times! Thus properly defined, “the helmet of salvation” is “the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8). It’s waging a spiritual war in which we are certain of victory and certain of salvation because He has already crowned us with such outcome!

Notice what the LORD tells us in Isaiah 43:

“But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called *thee* by thy name; Thou *art* mine.

“When thou passest through the waters, I *will be* with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (vv. 1-2).

This is salvation that suffers no reversal; that encounters every obstacle but proves itself to be invincible! The key thought is, “I have redeemed thee”. Because of this, “When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you; your troubles will not overwhelm you. When you pass through fire, you will not be burned; the hard trials that come will not hurt you. For I am the LORD your God, the holy God of Israel, who saves you. I will give up Egypt to set you free; I will give up Ethiopia and Seba” (vv.2-3 *GNB*).

We need not “fear” whatever troubles and trials come our way. He will give up Egypt for the sake of our salvation (“ransom” KJV), if need be. Rather than seeing us perish, Yahweh will choose to have the enemy, though mightier than us, destroyed so our salvation will be secure. Prov. 11:8 says: “The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead” (also 21:18; cp 11:4, 6; Isa.

43:4). The simple reason is that the portion of the righteous is salvation guaranteed to him by God, and it's irreversible.

This is the believer's "helmet of salvation". He fights with the firm hope that victory/salvation is assured; that Christ, the Captain of his salvation (Heb. 2:10), will not disappoint or abandon him to his fate. It's the consciousness that the ever living Christ is "able to save" him "to the uttermost" ("the very end" *YLT*) no matter how tough the battle gets! (Heb. 7:25). This "hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

God loves us so much to disappoint us; His great love for us which beats in our hearts by means of His indwelling Spirit will not allow us to suffer defeat or disappointment. So why fear, why quiver? Fight on under the victory banner of the Lord Jesus Christ, dear Christian soldier (2 Tim. 2:3). Be fired with zeal to press on in the struggle. You are not headed for defeat; victory is firmly fixed before you.

As the hope of winning a prize motivates a runner to keep running until the finishing line (1 Cor. 9:24-27), so let the hope of salvation encourage your heart. You have no reason to be discouraged; your victory is a foregone conclusion—already uttered by Christ on the cross: "It is finished" (John 19:30)!

This is a victory Christ is prepared to defend at all costs and so will shield you from all the blows of the enemy with His "helmet of salvation". But it's a salvation that's also ahead of us, although it's already accomplished. That's why it's hoped-for, to wit, "the hope of salvation". Hence patience is a necessity when this accomplished, assured salvation *appears* not to be in sight: "we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8:24-25).

King David wrote:

"I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

"He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

"And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD" (Ps. 40:1-3).

Salvation was *foreordained* for the king (Ps. 27:1), and he 'merely' had to wait for its manifestation. On its 'arrival', the pit could not keep him, nor the miry clay; the God of His salvation brought him out and feet set his feet on a rock. Salvation asserted itself.

But more than that, salvation must be held on to. Christ, the Source of our salvation, warns us: "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11). The "crown" is clearly the crown of salvation or "righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:8) or "life" (Jam. 1:12) to be given to us at the return of Christ, but we hold it NOW by the truth we practice and because of its irreversible certainty in the Lord! Christ in us is surely "the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). Now, how do we guard against losing the crown of salvation?

While Christ is able to and indeed "keeps us from falling [away]" (Jude 1:24; John 10:28-29), we must not of our own accord shrink back to destructive ways: "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any [righteous] man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:38-39).

For the righteous man already crowned with salvation (a natural outcome of righteousness, Prov. 12:28; Acts 10:35), he lives his righteous life by **constant trust in God**, not by relying on his own strength. Otherwise, he is sure to fail and “draw back” incurring God’s displeasure with the consequence of losing salvation: “When I say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his righteousness, and commit iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in his iniquity that he hath committed, therein shall he die” (Ez. 33:13 *RV*).

Thus the righteous preserves his crown of salvation as long as he trusts in God to keep him righteous. Gal. 5:5 says, “We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith”. So continue to trust in God, the Giver of your “Helmet of salvation” through the power (ability, strength, etc) of the Holy Spirit, and be forever assured of irreversible victory and salvation in your ongoing war with Satan and his demons. The “helmet of salvation” you have received from Christ is the reason why “the fiery darts” of Satan fail in the first place—of course while you continue to exercise faith in Him.

With it, we the spiritual soldiers of Christ are unbowed; God is the lifter of our heads: “But you, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head” (Ps. 3:3 *ESV*). The *Good News Bible (GNB)* is more to the point: “But you, O LORD, are always my shield from danger; you give me victory and restore my courage”. Halleluiah!

“The Sword of the Spirit”

Assured of victory by “the helmet of salvation”, do we now relax and sit back, after all we are already saved?

That will be a naïve assessment of the spiritual conflict we have with the devil. Although we have been saved by Christ (Col. 1:12-14), our salvation is under constant attack from Satan. The Apostle Peter exhorts us: “Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Pet. 5:8-9 *ESV*).

The people the devil seeks to “devour” are not unbelievers already under his thumb (2 Cor. 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Rev. 12:9) but true believers. He seeks to devour you and me who are soldiers of Christ, purified by the blood and obedience to the Word (Heb. 13:12; John 15:3; 1 Pet. 1:22), devoted to undoing his evil works, and headed for the Kingdom as kings and priests of God. The weapon to use to fight the temptations of Satan is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God” (Eph. 6:17). Curiously, the temptations of Satan also mostly consist in words (of deception).

Like the use of the sword by the Roman soldier of old, the “sword of the Spirit” is mainly used as an offensive weapon against Satan. And it prevails, just as the sword did for Rome which, history testifies, conquered the world with the sword. In Paul’s spiritual struggle with the occultists and Satanists of Ephesus, we recall that “the Word of God grew mightily and prevailed” despite all the dark magical arts and powers employed against him (Acts 19:20 *MKJV*).

However, the classic example of how the Word prevails over Satan is Jesus’ victory over the temptations of Satan during His 40-day fast in the wilderness. To each temptation of Satan, Jesus was ready with His drawn sword, countering and overcoming each with a quotation from the Word—“it is written”! To the temptation to turn stones into bread, He counter-replied: “**It is written**, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”, quoting Deut. 8:3 (Matt. 4:4). To the temptation to throw Himself down the pinnacle of the

temple because “it’s written”, saith the devil, ‘God will command His angels to bear thee in their hands lest thou hit thy foot against a stone’, Jesus stoutly countered: “**It is written again**, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”, quoting Deut. 6:16 (Matt. 4:5-7). To the devil’s last temptation that He worship him in exchange for “all the kingdoms of the world”, Christ once again struck him with “the sword of the Spirit”: “Get thee hence, Satan: for **it is written**, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”, quoting Deut. 6:13 (Matt. 4:8-10).

Unable to withstand the piercing strokes of “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”, the devil left the Lord, “and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him” (v. 11). The Word prevailed!

But note that Jesus didn’t read from scripture in the heat of His encounter with the devil. He spoke the Word from memory, literally drawing out “the sword of the Spirit” from His mouth as pictured in Isa. 49:2 and Rev. 19:15. This underlines, once more, the importance of meditating on the Word and committing it to memory in readiness for combat. Thus it’s the Word in its *spoken character* that is used to fight the devil on the spiritual battlefield. Greek, the original language of the New Testament, has a distinct name for it—“*rhema*” (Strong’s #4487).

According to *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, “*rhema* denotes ‘that which is spoken, what is uttered in speech or writing’” (p. 683). Expanding on this, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* defines “*rhema*” as (1) “that which is or has been uttered by the living voice, thing spoken, word: any sound produced by the voice and having definite meaning, speech, discourse, what one has said; (2) a series of words joined together into a sentence (a declaration of one’s mind made in words): an utterance, a saying of any sort as a message, a narrative concerning some occurrence; (3) subject matter of speech: thing spoken of, so far forth as it is a matter of narration, so far as it is a matter of command, a matter of dispute, case at law” (4:69, 505).

No wonder, “The significance of *rhema* (as distinct from *logos* [‘the expression of thought’ or idea; reasoning, John 1:1-3]) is exemplified in the injunction to take ‘the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God’ (Eph. 6:17); here the reference is not to the whole Bible as such, but to the individual scripture which the Spirit brings to our remembrance for use in time of need, a prerequisite being the regular storing of the mind with Scripture” (*Vine’s*, “WORD”, p. 683).

Once this is done, in a way in which truth is studied and understood, we will have texts of scripture at our fingertips to meet every temptation of Satan as our Master did. This way, we will not rely on our own reason or wisdom—which is powerless against Satan (Luke 22:31 and 1 Chron. 21).

Taking the “sword of the Spirit” then is the effective use of the Word both to engage the devil on the spiritual battlefield of evangelism (as Paul did in Ephesus) and as a combat-ready weapon that constantly engages his temptations and overcomes them each time. This Word, this “sword of the Spirit”, is described in Hebrews 4:12 as “living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword”. It is a highly effective weapon in the hands of Christ’s army on earth (Ps. 149:6). But it’s effective only as far as those who wield it are spiritual and are in living communion with the Spirit. That’s why the Word is not just ‘the sword’ but “the sword of the Spirit”; that is, the sword *associated with* the Spirit. The “sensual”, devoid of the Spirit (Jude 1:19), cannot use it. Our Lord, who soundly overcame the devil with His spoken Word in the wilderness, was “full of the Holy Ghost” (Luke 4:1) during the period, and subsequently “returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee” (Luke 4:14), having fasted for forty days and forty nights. Spiritual development in the power of God through *fasting and prayer* (see Acts 1:13-14, 13:1-3) is, therefore, of crucial importance to the effective use of “the sword of the Spirit”.

In its role as a potent weapon against satanic temptations, King David says of God's word: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Ps 119:11). In verse 133 He says: "Order my steps in Thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me".

So how sufficiently have you armed yourself with "the sword of the Spirit", the Word, as a Christian warrior? Do you read and study it regularly? Do you pay attention to the preaching of it [*rhema*] (1 Pet. 1:25)? Do memorize it? Can you reproduce it from memory? If the answer is 'no' to any of the above, then, you are yet to take up "the sword of the Spirit"!

All the pieces of "the whole armour of God" starting with "the girdle of truth" are preparatory to your use of "the sword of the Spirit"; they are meant to position you for a real one-on-one combat with the devil. While without them you have no ground to stand on to confront the devil in the first place, without the use of the "Sword of the Spirit" also, all the preparation will have definitely been in vain.

So, fight you must fight with "the sword of the Spirit" against Satan's daily incessant attacks. It's worth every sacrifice.

Prayer—"the Sword of the Spirit" in close Combat with the Devil!

In so far as "the sword of the Spirit" goes into action when it's *spoken* (*rhema*), prayer is its natural ally. Hence the Apostle continues: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints" (Eph. 6:18).

But how is prayer used as a weapon—"the sword of the Spirit"—against Satan?

Prayer is used as a weapon against the devil when we pray *reproducing God's Word*, repeating His thoughts and truths, which Satan can't controvert. Thus the only effective prayer against the devil is the prayer whose words are derived from the living and powerful Word of God shaper than any two-edged sword, not "meaningless words" (*GNB*) or "vain repetitions" which Christ forbids us from using (Matt. 6:7)! The Word of God prayed repeatedly in prayer is not "vain" (i.e. 'empty or futile') (Isa. 55:10-11; Jam. 4:5). Therefore, by "vain repetitions", Christ did not mean we should avoid *much praying or praying in the same (divine) words* (both of which He did, Luke 6:12; Matt. 26:39, 42, 44; cp Heb. 5:7); He meant we should not "be babbling vain words" (*LITV*) like the Gentiles do in a clear reference to the chants (mantra) uttered by heathens in their prayer and meditations. (See 1 Cor. 14:15).

Meanwhile, we are to "pray always [1Thess. 5:17] with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit". That is, we are to pray *all kinds of prayer*: private prayer by ourselves alone (Matt. 6:6; Matt. 14:23; Dan. 6:10; Gen.24:63), corporate prayer with brethren of like precious faith in the Assembly (Acts 1:13-14, 2:42, 4:23-31, 12:5, 13:1-3), prayer with fasting because the situation demands so (Ps 69:10-15; Neh. 1:4; Dan. 9:3; Matt. 17:21; Acts 13:2-3); silent prayer where our hearts speak to God (Ps. 5:1; 1 Sam. 1:9-17), audible prayer accompanied by spiritual songs (Acts 16:25), night and day prayers with or without fasting (Luke 2:36-37; 1 Thess. 3:10; 1 Tim. 5:5; Ps 55:17; Dan. 6:10), 'morning devotion' (Ps 5:3, 88:13, 130:6, 119:147), and prayer with earnest crying to God (Ps. 34:6; 40:1; Jer. 31:9; Hos. 12:4).

"Praying with all prayer" could also include the different prayer postures God's people typically pray in: knees bowed in prayer (2 Chron. 6:13; Ps 95:6; Acts 20:36; Eph. 3:14; Luke 22:41), praying standing up (1 Kings 8:22; Mark 11:25), praying prostrate (face down) before God (Num. 16:22;

Josh. 5:14; 1 Chron. 21:16; Matt. 26:39), praying with uplifted hands (Ex. 17:11-12; Ps 28:2, 141:2; Lam. 2:19; 1 Tim. 2:8), and praying with outstretched hands (2 Chron. 6:13).

In effect, “praying with all prayer” means we may pray any kind of Biblical prayer as long as it’s devoid of hypocrisy or intended to portray us as sanctimonious before people (Matt. 6:5), we pray with all our heart (Jer. 29:12-13) without harbouring sins in our heart (Job 11:13; Ps 66:18; Prov. 28:9; 15:8, 29), we pray “in truth” (Ps. 145:18) and with faith (Jam. 1:5-7; Mark 11:24), while keeping His commandments (1 John 3:22).

But above all, we must “pray in the Spirit” (also Jude 1:20). That is to say, we must pray not in our own strength but pray energized and aided by the indwelling Holy Spirit. Otherwise, “the spirit [or mind] is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). One other way in which the Spirit helps us to pray is to act as our *perfect spokesman* before God, making impeccable representations to God on our behalf in a way we could never do on our own. We read in Romans 8:26-27: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what *is* the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*”.

The truth of the matter is that despite our best efforts, we don’t know how to pray satisfactorily to God. This is the weakness the Spirit overcomes for us as we pray in the Holy Spirit. Whereas we do not know, the Spirit knows how to intercede for us according to the will of God, who already knows our deepest feelings. And He does it with “groans that words cannot express” (*GNB*). In the end, satisfactory prayer is offered to God “according to His will”, and we are confident that He has heard us (1 John 5:14).

So, pray always (Luke 18:1), wherever you find yourself (1 Tim. 2:8; Acts 16:23-25), and in whatever Biblical prayer mode. Never sheathe “the sword of the Spirit” you wield. Brandish it at all times and fight the devil with it. God will bless your efforts. Prayer is a mighty weapon consistently used by God’s saints to ‘avenge the enemy’—by Moses at the Red Sea, by King Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:1-6, 15-22), by King Asa (2 Chron. 14:9-12), and by King Hezekiah (Isa. 36 & 37).

You won’t be the exception. If you pray day and night with faith, God will speedily give you justice (avenge your enemy) and give you victory (Luke 18:1-8). But it’s best to pray together with other fellow warriors (Christian brethren), for example, at a prayer meeting. That fits in more with the war imagery of Ephesians 6. It’s probable that the primary prayer form Apostle Paul had in mind was the corporate prayer of the saints. His exhortation to “pray always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” does vividly bring to mind columns of sword-brandishing Christian soldiers, whether physically gathered together at one place or united in spirit, marching forward into battle against an army of demons:

“If prayer for one another (v. 18) continues the figurative image of warfare in the preceding context, it might relate to how the soldiers had to stand together in their battle formation, covering one another by moving as a solid unit. A Roman soldier by himself was vulnerable, but as a unified army a Roman legion was virtually invincible” (*The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament*, p. 554).

When believers are united in intense fervent prayers, the power of God is stirred in a mighty way and great things happen (Joel 2:15-28; Jam. 5:16-18; Matt. 18:19-20; Acts 4:24, 31; 12:1-17). The army of believers moves in greater force against the devil! So don’t overlook the power in the corporate prayer of the saints; don’t try to be a lone ranger on the vast, dangerous spiritual

battlefield. Let the prayers of the brethren cover you, and do cover other brethren as you pray along with them.

And “watch unto prayer”. This ‘watching’ has two sides to it: it’s to keep awake or vigil (Prov. 6:4-5; Matt. 26:38, 41; Eph. 5:14), and it’s to watch or guard against everything that will hinder prayer (1 Pet. 4:7).

“Perseverance” in prayer is to continue praying without becoming discouraged or disheartened. In Luke 18:1 Jesus told His disciples “a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart” (ESV). Another parable where the Lord also teaches perseverance in prayer is ‘the Parable of the Friend at Midnight’ (Luke 11:5-13). In this parable, the point or moral is not that God is a reluctant prayer hearer (cp Ps 65:2) but that persistent prayer pays off!

Ya’acov (James), the Lord’s brother and leader of the Jerusalem Church, emphasizes the same point in James 5:17-18 in relation to the “fervent prayer” of Elijah, the prophet: “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit”.

In other words, Elijah was human like us and therefore prone to all the factors (doubts, wanderings of the mind, tiredness, etc) that tend to discourage people in prayer, but he prayed “earnestly”, i.e. *determinedly*, on both occasions, and there was a mighty move of God. In fact, in the latter prayer for rain to break the three-and-half-year drought so as to fulfill God’s promise to send rain (1 Kings 18:1), he *prayed seven times determinedly*, “And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he [Elijah’s servant] said, Behold, there ariseth a cloud out of the sea, as small as a man’s hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Make ready *thy chariot*, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in a little while, that the heaven grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel” (1 Kings 18:41-45 RV; cp 17:1).

Now, what hinders your prayer life, which is holding back your “great rain” of blessing promised you by God? Is it too much TV watching? It’s pure laziness? Be mindful of the Divine warning in Amos 6:

"Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria, the notable men of the first of the nations, to whom the house of Israel comes!

"Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall,

"Who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music,

"Who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!" (vv. 1, 4-6 *ESV*; cp 2 Tim. 2:4-5).

So, overcome all the hindrances to your prayer life now and wield your “sword of the Spirit”. It’s a most important weapon.

This, together with all the other pieces of “the whole armour of God”, is what Christ, our Captain of Salvation, has given you for victory in Him. Put them on—all of them, and you shall be victorious indeed. Practice Truth, keep righteousness, get involved in the preaching of “the Gospel of peace”, maintain faith, keep salvation hope alive, and fight with “sword of the Spirit”—the “living and powerful Word of God sharper than any two-edged sword”! Victory is sure, for “the battle is the LORD’S” (Rom. 8:37; 2 Chron. 20:15). Halleluiah! Amen!

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