

# Christians In Conflict With Evil

## [Part 2]

Any soldier in an army needs three things for success in conflict.

1) Good morale; 2) A sound defence; 3) Effective offensive weapons.

God has provided all three of the above for us as His soldiers in the spiritual conflict against evil in which we are all involved.

### 1 Good morale

**Colossians 2:13-15** [NIV] *“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”*

**Jesus Christ our Commander-in-Chief has already assured victory over the enemy, Satan, we do not have to fear defeat in this conflict.**

**Our job as soldiers of Jesus Christ is to share in that victory by releasing all the people who were made captive by Satan.**

**We are to comfort and feed these freed humans and give them the message of reconciliation to their Creator God.**

**Revelation 20:1-3** [NIV] *“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.”*

Satan and his influence have **not** yet been neutralised, **this is something that will happen at Christ’s Second Coming.**

So we still need a good defence and offensive weapons to counter his attack on all human beings, including ourselves.

### 2 A sound defence

**Ephesians 6:10-17** [NIV] *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

The “day of evil” is **not** an option but a certainty, Paul was constantly facing days of evil in his life.

Here is listed our defensive armour for use against any attack Satan and his demons may launch against us.

We need this armour if we are to “*stand firm*” and to “*take our stand against the devil’s schemes.*”

**Matthew 7:24-27** [NIV] “*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*”

Jesus gives a similar warning.

Let us now examine the six parts of the defensive armour so that we can be sure we are wearing them constantly.

The armour is based on that of a Roman soldier so that people in Paul’s day could easily relate to each part.

### **The belt of truth.**

The basic foundational garment of a Roman legionary was a loose fitting tunic.

When active use of weapons was called for this loose tunic could be a hinderance unless firmly in place.

This was accomplished by a strong wide leather belt.

In other scriptures we are told to “*gird up our loins*”, this is the same analogy.

I believe what is mentioned here is **not** theological truth, but truth in our daily living, honesty, sincerity, openness and frankness.

**All too often religious people are encumbered with religious sounding words that are so much sham and hypocrisy.**

**Many things we say but do not really mean them, but say them because they sound good.**

**There are many religious people who are full of religious clichés and insincerities.**

These are like a loose hanging tunic that will hinder a Christian from being an effective soldier for Christ.

We must **not** hide behind a religious front.

**We must, with the Holy Spirit and God’s Word, see the real motives behind what we say and do.**

### **Breastplate of righteousness.**

The breastplate of a Roman legionary protected one vital organ of the human body, the heart.

**Proverbs 4:23** [NIV] “*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.*”

All things that are in life come from the heart.

The Hebrew word translated “*heart*” is “*leb*”, referring to feelings, will and intellect, which are central to all life.

**1 Thessalonians 5:8** [NIV] *“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”*

**Paul calls faith and love our breastplate.**

The breastplate is the righteousness that comes from faith in what Jesus Christ has done for us, and love, one of the “fruits” of the Holy Spirit.

**Philippians 3:9** [NIV] *“and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, **the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.**”*

**This faith in what Jesus Christ has done for us, brings to us Christ’s righteousness, not our own.**

**Luke 22:31-32** [NIV] *“Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But **I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail.** And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.”*

Notice Jesus’ prayer for Peter.

Jesus did **not** pray that Peter would **not** deny Him, for He knew the weakness of Peter’s human frame.

Jesus prayed that Peter’s faith would **not** fail.

**Mistakes made through human weakness can be rectified, as long as our faith in what God has done through Jesus Christ never fades.**

**Galatians 5:6** [NIV] *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.**”*

No outward ritual or ceremony is sufficient in itself.

**Only one thing is essential for success in a Christian life.**

**Faith that expresses itself through love for God and for all other human beings.**

**1 John 3:10-11, 14-15** [NIV] *“This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: **Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.** This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.” ... “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.”*

The Greek word translated “love” in this passage of scripture is “*agapé*”, meaning a love that is spontaneous, irrespective of the rights or the response of the person receiving this love. It is a sacrificial love where the selfish personal desires are sacrificed in order to show this love to others.

**This is a love that only comes from God as one of the “fruits” of the indwelling Holy Spirit.**

**Song of Songs 8:6-7** [NIV] *“Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; **for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned.**”*

“*Love is as strong as death*” – death is the one irresistible thing we all must face.

Agapé love is just as irresistible.

Agapé love always conquers, there is **no** way it can be defeated.

**1 John 4:16** [NIV] *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. **God is love.** Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.”*

God is love.

**Love protects us from all negative forces such as resentment, unforgiveness, bitterness, discouragement and despair, all of which can corrupt our heart and spoil our lives.**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8** [NIV] *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. **Love never fails.** But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”*

**Love always protects us from Satan’s attack of negative thoughts.**

Always wear the breastplate of God’s righteousness that works by love, it will always protect us.

**“Feet fitted with readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”**

A Roman legionary wore strong heavy sandals, with strong thongs to keep them in place, laced up to the calf.

Such footwear enabled the soldier to travel long distances at speed.

When on active duty they were always kept on the feet, the key was instant availability and mobility.

**1 Peter 3:15** [NIV] *“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** But do this with gentleness and respect,”*

**As Christians we are obligated to have an intelligent understanding of the gospel message, and be able to communicate this message to others.**

**John 14:27** [NIV] *“**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.** I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

This message of peace and reconciliation is something that can **only** be transmitted to another person by someone who **is** reconciled to God and **is** then experiencing His peace in their lives.

**“Shield of faith”**

The Greek word translated “shield” is “*thurēōs*” literally meaning a door, that protects when closed.

The Roman shield was shaped to cover all of the torso.

**Our faith needs to be large enough to cover and protect us from any attack Satan may launch upon us.**

Our shield of faith should be ready for use with the shields of faith that other Christians have.

Any platoon of Roman soldiers being attacked would use their shields to form a covered box so that everyone in the platoon would have total cover from any projectile, no matter what direction it was coming from.

**“Helmet of salvation”**

As the breastplate protects our heart [our emotions], the helmet protects our mind.

**Because the mind is the battlefield, we need to be very careful what we allow to enter our minds.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:8** [NIV] *“But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the **hope of salvation as a helmet.**”*

The hope of salvation is what will protect our mind from Satan’s attack of doubt, discouragement and deception, the three deadly “D’s”.

There is a vital connection between hope and faith.

**Hebrews 11:1** [NIV] *“Now **faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.**”*

Faith is the foundation on which we build hope.

**Faith is for today, hope is the assurity of the future.**

Where does this foundational faith come from?

**Romans 10:17** [NIV] *“Consequently, **faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.**”*

The Greek word that is translated “*hearing*” is “*akōē*” which is more than just hearing the word.

**It means to understand the message or teaching, with the intent of acting on it.**

When scripture tells us that God hears our prayers, it signifies that He will answer our prayers.

Faith is based on an understanding of God’s Word in particular the promises that God makes in His Word, the Christian Bible.

Such hope is an optimistic attitude that always chooses to see the best in others or in situations, so will not give way to depression, doubt or self-pity.

**Romans 8:28** [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*

When we have faith in this promise and live each day as if we believe it, then our minds are protected from Satan’s major weapons of doubt, discouragement and self-pity.

**Romans 8:22-25** [NIV] *“We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we **wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.**”*

Our adoption as sons of God is the end result of our being “*born again*” children of God who have matured to become adult sons.

**The vast majority of people in this world are without any lasting hope in the future.**

**What is our secret of lasting hope?**

**Ephesians 2:12-13** [NIV] *“remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, **without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.**”*

**Our hope is based on what Jesus Christ has done for us and His promise to be in us, to live an earthly life again in and through us.**

**Hebrews 4:14-16** [NIV] *“Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.** Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

We can have this great hope because of our access to the very throne of the Creator God via our High Priest Jesus Christ.

### **“The sword of the Spirit”**

This is the first item of our armour that is **not** purely defensive.

But without this sword we have **no** way of driving off Satan.

**Hebrews 4:12** [NIV] *“For the word of God is living and active. **Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.**”*

**We are to use God’s Word as Jesus Christ did to “cut Satan down to size.”**

**Matthew 4:1-11** [NIV] *“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” **Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’**” Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. **For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’**” **Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’**” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” **Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’**” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.”*

**God’s Word was the only weapon that Jesus Christ used against Satan.**

Note four things about this passage of scripture:-

- 1 Neither Jesus nor Satan questioned the authority of scripture.
- 2 The basis of every temptation Satan used against Jesus Christ was doubt.
- 3 Jesus Christ did **not** vary His method of dealing with Satan’s attack. Jesus countered this doubt with “*it is written.*”
- 4 Satan also quoted scripture but misapplied it.

**We need to know scripture so well, including the context of each statement, that we can recognise when it is being misapplied and counter it at once, in our mind, where the battle against Satan is taking place.**

**Ephesians 6:17** [NIV] *“Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*

The Greek word translated “word” of God is “*rhema*” which is primarily used for the spoken word.

**The Bible needs to be in our mind not in the bookcase.**

Only then can the Holy Spirit come to our rescue when we are attacked.

**John 14:26** [NIV] *“But the Counsellor, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**”*

**The Holy Spirit cannot remind us of what we have not read and meditated on.**

**Luke 12:11-12** [NIV] *“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, **for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.**”*

This will **only** happen when we have allowed the Holy Spirit to give us understanding of scripture.

**John 16:13** [NIV] *“But when **he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.**”*

By leading us into all truth the Holy Spirit will give us understanding of all truth.

**What is truth?**

**John 14:6** [NIV] *“**Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through me.**”*

Jesus Christ is the personification of all truth.

**John 17:17** [NIV] *“Sanctify them by the truth; **your word is truth.**”*

All of God’s Word, the Christian Bible, is true.

**This combination of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and a believer will defeat Satan.**

**But we have to take the sword and use it, the Holy Spirit will not do this for us.**

**Revelation 12:11** [NIV] *“They [Christians] **overcame him [Satan – see v9] by the blood of the Lamb [Jesus Christ’s sacrifice] and by the word of their testimony, they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.**”*