

Christians In Conflict With Evil

[Part 3]

Before we consider other offensive spiritual weapons that are available to us as soldiers of Jesus Christ, I wish to point out one thing about our defensive armour that God has made available.

If we put on all the armour, we are protected from the crown of our head to our feet.

Only one area remains unprotected, our back.

This has a two-fold application to our spiritual life.

1 We can never turn our back on Satan for this would leave us unprotected.

Never can we say, *“I’ve had enough, I can’t stand any more trials, I give up the fight.”*

2 We are dependent on other Christians to protect our back as we should theirs.

The Roman soldiers always fought in close ranks.

Each soldier knew that if he was hard pressed by the enemy, comrades either side of him and behind him were close by to help.

Many scriptures show we should be supportive of one another as Christians.

You cannot live the life of a Christian in isolation.

Galatians 6:1-2 [NIV] *“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.”*

This is how we fulfil Christ’s law of love.

Romans 15:1-3 [NIV] *“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbour for his good, to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.”*

Being supportive of others is following the example of Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:5 [NIV] *“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus,”*

Unity is the end result of showing love for and serving others in our Christian fellowship.

John 15:13 [NIV] *“Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

Jesus Christ gave us the perfect example of this, He always had time for those in need.

We also should be willing to give up our time, and our goods, the end product of time spent earning them.

We cannot defeat Satan and free those he holds captive by ourselves in isolation.

We all need to find our place in the body of Christ on earth, a Bible-centred fellowship of Christians, where as we fight to free those still enslaved by Satan we know we can depend on others for support.

They can trust us to stand by them, and we can have faith in their support.

The real tragedy is that those who should be supporting us, protecting our back are **not** there.

So many nominal Christians are not faithful to us or to God.

Luke 18:8 [NIV] “... *when the Son of Man [Jesus Christ] comes, will He find faith on earth?*”

The Greek word translated “*faith*” is “*pistis*” has little if anything to do with our beliefs or doctrines, it stands for trust and fidelity.

Faith is not what we believe but how we live.

How do we judge the extent of our faith?

Can we be trusted to do what we have promised to do?

All professional soldiers in conflict have to trust, have faith in one another as well as their captain.

If we profess to be Christians, we have to be faithful to our fellow Christians as well as to our Captain, Jesus Christ.

Weapons of attack in our conflict with Satan

Within our list of defensive armour, even our sword is limited to our arm’s length.

2 Corinthians 10:4 [NIV] “*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*”

If we are to demolish Satan’s strongholds within human beings, we are obliged to take the offensive into Satan’s realm.

It is a fact of history and experience that no army ever won a war by staying on the defensive.

As long as Satan keeps the Christian church on the defensive, remaining at home in the barracks, his kingdom will never be overthrown.

Jesus Christ first unveiled His offensive plan for the Christian church the first time the word “*church*” is used in scripture.

Matthew 16:18 [Amplified Bible] “*And I tell you, you are Peter [“petros”, a large piece of rock] and on this rock [“petra” – a huge rock, like Gibraltar] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades [the powers of the infernal region] shall not overpower it, or be strong to its detriment, or hold out against it.*”

“*Gates*” – essential to the power and protection of any city.

“*Hades*” – the root meaning is “*invisible unseen*”, that is the spiritual world in opposition to God.

Neither of these will hold out against the attack of the church.

What is the rock on which the Christian church is built?

Matthew 16:13-17 [NIV] *“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” **Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”** Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for **this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.**”*

The subject being revealed in this passage of scripture is the recognition of who Jesus Christ is.

Peter had this revealed to him by God **not** through any human logic or intellect.

The rock on which the church is built is not Peter but Jesus Christ, and the revelation to all human beings as to who He is, the Son of God and our Saviour.

Ephesians 2:19-22 [NIV] *“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”*

The foundation of the Christian church is the subject being expounded in this passage of scripture.

Prophets – the prophecies relating to the first coming of Jesus Christ and the setting up of the New Covenant church.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 [NIV] *“For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; **for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ.**”*

The spiritual food was manna that came down from heaven each day, except Sabbath.

Jesus was also the rock – “*petra*” in the Old Testament Covenant.

John 6:32-35 [NIV] *“Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. **For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**” “Sir,” they said, “from now on give us this bread.” **Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.**”*

Jesus in the bread [manna] that came down from heaven.

John 6:57-58 [NIV] *“Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so **the one who feeds on me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live for ever.**”*

What happened to Israel in the wilderness was looking forward to the living manna and living rock, Jesus Christ.

Apostles – the faith that Peter and the other apostles had in Jesus Christ, recognising Him as the very Son of God is part of that foundation on which the church is built.

Jesus Christ – the cornerstone that holds it all together.

Ephesians 1:17-23 [NIV] *“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called*

*you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And **God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church**, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills everything in every way.”*

Jesus Christ is the head of the church, if you cut off the head then the body dies.

If Jesus Christ is not central to everything that is said or done in the church, it is dead, with no power to resist the evil work of Satan.

Jesus pictures two primary activities for His church in the scriptures we have just studied, building and battling.

These must go together.

There is **no** use trying to battle Satan until we have built the church, that is all the Christians in it need to be mature.

Going back to the analogy of the church being an army of soldiers.

You do **not** send out raw untrained soldiers to fight.

But the picture is **not** of a church on the defensive keeping Satan out, but Satan failing to stop the church from invading his dominion.

We as Christians and a Christian church should not be wondering where Satan will attack next.

It is Satan who should be wondering where the church is going to attack his realm next.

Literally, let us put the fear of God in Satan and his demons.

Colossians 2:15 [NIV] *“And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, **triumphing over them by the cross.**”*

Jesus Christ has already disarmed Satan, he is powerless against our Captain, Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 2:14 [NIV] *“But thanks be to God, **who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ** and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.”*

The triumphant victory of Jesus Christ over Satan.

Matthew 28:18-20 [NIV] *“Then **Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

This is a command to **all** Christians, to administer this authority we have in Jesus Christ, and to demonstrate the victory Christ has already won over Satan.

“Make disciples” – in military terms, we take capture Satan’s conscripted troops and then train them how to fight against Satan who held them captive.

Scripture reveals four main spiritual weapons of attack that we, freed from the captivity of Satan, are to use against Satan and his demons.

The weapon of prayer

Prayer is far more than a weapon we can use against the influence of Satan.

But scripture does give us powerful examples of prayer defeating Satan's attempts to hinder God's purpose for each of us.

Ephesians 6:18 [NIV] *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”*

Paul mentions prayer directly after the six items of defensive armour as he moves us from defence to attack.

An example of the use of prayer as a weapon against Satan.

Acts 12:1-5 [NIV] *“It was about this time that **King Herod** arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He **had James**, the brother of John, **put to death** with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, **he proceeded to seize Peter also**. This happened during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be **guarded by four squads of four soldiers each**. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover. So Peter was kept in prison, but **the church was earnestly praying to God for him.**”*

The church had come under persecution from King Herod.

James had already been murdered by Herod.

Peter was then seized and put in a maximum security jail, physical rescue was impossible.

Acts 12:5, 12 [NIV] *“So **Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.**” ... “When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying.”*

The church was praying for Peter's release.

God answered their prayer by sending an angel to release Peter supernaturally.

But this was **not** the end result of these fervent prayers.

Acts 12:21-23 [NIV] *“On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.” Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, **an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.**”*

Judgement was passed on King Herod the persecutor of the church.

Acts 12:24 [NIV] *“But the word of God continued to increase and spread.”*

God turned Satan's attack on the church into a victory.

Hebrews 1:14 [NIV] *“Are not all **angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation?**”*

Angels are ministering spirits, sent by God for our benefit, but they do **not**, as a rule, come until we pray through Satan's realm to God in the third heaven.

The weapon of praise

Frequently in scripture praise is related to God's supernatural interventions.

Psalms 149:6-9 [NIV] *“May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands, to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all his saints. Praise the LORD.”*

Praise and God's Word linked is a powerful weapon against evil.

The kings and nobles referred to are Satan-influenced rulers who are enslaving the people.

1 Corinthians 6:2-3 [NIV] *“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!”*

This is the time when the saints, that is those who have constantly praised God and know well His Word, the Christian Bible, will judge Satan and his demons.

This is the same time as referred to prophetically in **Psalm 149**, saints using the authority given to us by God.

Revelation 5:9-13 [NIV] *“And they sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.’” Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they sang: ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!’” Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever!’”*

In the context of praise to God is mentioned our part in using the authority given to us by Jesus Christ, to bring judgement to all people.

Praise is a weapon that silences Satan and all his human servants.

The weapon of preaching

Matthew 28:20 [NIV] *“and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

In the context of preparing the world for Christ's Second Coming, we are commanded to preach the Word of God, the Christian Bible.

Isaiah 6:8-10 [NIV] *“Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” He said, “Go and tell this people: ‘Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving.’ Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”*

We are to continue to preach God's Word inspite of the fact that the majority of people will ignore, oppose or criticise us for doing it.

Isaiah 6:11-13 [NIV] *“Then I said, ‘For how long, O Lord?’ And he answered: ‘Until the cities lie ruined and without inhabitant, until the houses are left deserted and the fields ruined and ravaged, until the LORD has sent everyone far away and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be the stump in the land.’”*

This is referring to what will happen at the return of Jesus Christ in His final battle with Satan, and the effect it will have on humanity and the earth’s surface.

Why should we continue to preach when we see little or no response to our preaching?

Isaiah 55:11 [NIV] *“so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”*

This is an essential promise for every preacher to claim.

The effect may **not** be obvious to us but assures us that the use of this weapon of preaching will accomplish all that God intends it to accomplish.

Jeremiah 23:29 [NIV] *“Is not my word like fire,” declares the LORD, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?”*

Likened to fire and a hammer crushing rocks, the stubborn resistance to God’s Word, prompted by Satan and his demons, will in the end give way to the hammer blows God’s Word delivers.

Hebrews 4:12-13 [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. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.”*

God’s Word penetrates our thoughts and attitudes.

This is where the battle is raging against Satan’s strongholds of prejudice and preconceptions in the minds of human beings.

Acts 19:8-10 [NIV] *“Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way. So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”*

Here we have an example of Paul’s persistent preaching in Ephesus.

Note the results of this preaching.

Acts 19:11-12 [NIV] *“God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.”*

Supernatural attestation to Paul’s message by miracles.

Acts 19:13-16 [NIV] *“Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, ‘In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.’ Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. [One day] the evil spirit answered them, ‘Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?’ Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.”*

Evil spirits being driven out into the open, and even admitting in a back-handed way, that Paul was achieving something by his preaching.

Acts 19:17-19 [NIV] *“When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour. **Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practised sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.**”*

The domination of the occult over the entire city was broken.

Today even many professing Christians still dabble in the occult, **not** aware of the danger they are exposing themselves to.

It was only when the power of Paul’s preaching exposed the reality of Satan’s powerful hold over them that the people turned from the occult and Satan, committing themselves completely to God.

Acts 19:20 [NIV] *“In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.”*

Again God’s Word being preached was a powerful influence in the minds and hearts of the people who heard it.

We need such powerful forthright “no holds barred” preaching today in our fight to release people from Satan’s power.

The weapon of testimony

Preaching is presenting truth directly from God’s Word, the Christian Bible.

Testimony is speaking from personal experience about incidents in our life that relate to Word of God and confirm the truth of God’s Word.

Testimony is basic to Jesus’ strategy of reaching the whole world with the gospel message of reconciliation.

Acts 1:8 [NIV] *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and **you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**”*

Remember that to be an effective witness for Jesus Christ we need the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit working in us and through us out to others who do not yet know God.

Jesus restrained the disciples from witnessing until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost.

Jesus envisaged an ever-extending circle of testimony until it reached every part of the earth.

Revelation 12:7-11 [NIV] *“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. **The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. **They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.**”***

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, and our testimony will ultimately overcome Satan's influence.

The testimony is of those who are totally dedicated to God and His way of life, depicted by love.

“Witness” or “testimony” is translated from the Greek word “*marturia*” from the root word “*martus*” which refers to one who gives up his life for a cause, a martyr.

Romans 14:8 [NIV] *“If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.”*

This is the attitude of mind that every Christian should have.

Acts 22:20 [NIV] *“And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.”*

Stephen died as a result of his personal testimony [Greek word “*marturia*”].

John 15:12-13 [NIV] *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.”*

To give our lives [time] in love to others fulfils the same principle.

Testimony centres on two things:

- 1 The blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.
- 2 Our witnessing to the power of the Word of God, the Christian Bible.

We overcome Satan's influence when we testify personally exactly what these two things have done for us.

Satan has **no** answer to this testimony.

1 Corinthians 11:26 [NIV] *“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you **proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**”*

Accepting the bread and wine in the communion service is just the starting point for a Christian, we are then to proclaim exactly what Christ's death and resurrection has done for us personally and can do for every human being.

In order to testify effectively to what the Word of God, the Christian Bible, states about the blood of Jesus Christ, we need to know by heart what it does say.

Ephesians 1:7 [NIV] *“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace”*

Redemption and forgiveness of sins.

1 John 1:7 [NIV] *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”*

Purifies us from all sin continually.

Romans 5:9 [NIV] *“Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!”*

Justifies us, makes us just-as-if we had never sinned.

Hebrews 13:12 [NIV] *“And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate **to** [sanctify RSV translation] **make the people holy through his own blood.**”*

Sanctified [to make people holy] also means set apart by God for a special task.

To be effective in our appointed task as soldiers of Jesus Christ we have to ensure we have on all of God’s armour at all times.

Also daily using the offensive weapons that God has provided us to free those held captive by Satan in blindness and ignorance as to the reason God has given us as human beings physical life and the opportunity to receive eternal life.