

Spiritual Warfare - Putting on God's Armor
Fighting in the Lord's Power with the Lord's Weapons

<i>The greatest single defense in spiritual warfare is a holy life.</i>
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Paul says that we are not to be unaware of Satan's schemes (2 Cor. 2:11). Rather, we are to be strong in the Lord's mighty power and take our stand against Satan's schemes (Eph. 6:10-11). Since our battle is against a *spiritual* enemy, we must learn to fight with *spiritual* weapons (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Paul describes these generally as the "full armor of God" (Eph. 6:10-18).

Note: At our conversion, *positional* victory over evil is secured (Col.2:15; Eph. 2:6) and guaranteed by God (Rom. 8:37-39): the Christian is justified and going to heaven. But *practical, experienced* victory over evil must be appropriated and entered into by the exercise of faith (Eph.6:16).

1. *Belt of truth.* This probably has two meanings:

a) We must anchor our lives in the absolute reliability and potency of Scripture as Word of God (John 8:31-32; 43-45). This is crucial as Jesus calls Satan "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44; cf. Gen.3).

b) We must commit ourselves to live in sincerity and integrity (Psalm 51:6; Eph. 4:15; 25). *Protection from the evil one depends upon my commitment to live in God's truth* (2 Thess. 3:3-4; 1 John 1:3, 6; 5:18).

2. *Breastplate of righteousness.* Again this probably has two meanings:

a) That we would put on the righteousness that is given to us freely in Jesus Christ (Rom.3:22-24). Our relationship with Jesus Christ must be secure. Paul is writing to Christians, i.e. people who had been born again by the Holy Spirit, and therefore, justified by grace through faith (Eph. 1:7, 13-14; 2:8). Some may need to acknowledge their need for salvation for the first time, repent and call upon Jesus for forgiveness (Rom. 10:8-10). Others may need to reaffirm their faith and surrender certain areas of their lives to Christ's Lordship (Rev. 3:20).

Note: Satan is called "the accuser of the brethren" (Rev. 12:10-11; cf. Zechariah 3:1). We are instructed that we "overcome" Satan "by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11). This means that we have a clear testimony that we have been justified by God's grace alone through Jesus death. (see Personal Testimonies of Conversion" at the end).

b) That we would walk in righteousness, i.e. in a way consistent with God's character and command as revealed in Scripture (Eph.4:24; 5:9; Rom. 1:5). This is what John called "walking in the light" (1 John 1:6-7). Essentially this means inviting the Holy Spirit to search us and expose any sin in us, and then confessing this to God and another person if necessary. This is crucial, because repeated unconfessed sin invites spiritual attack.

3. Gospel of Peace. Again this probably has two meanings:

a) Be ready to reconcile strained or broken relationships (Matt.5:23-24; Rom. 12:18; 2 Cor. 2:10-11; Eph. 4:26-27).

b) Be ready to share with the unsaved the good news (gospel) that peace and reconciliation with God are possible through Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:11-21).

4. Shield of faith.

"God Himself is a shield to those who take refuge in Him." (Prov. 30:5). This is an unwavering confidence that God is faithful to back up His promises (Rom.4:20-21). This would also include *faith* in the supremacy and sufficiency of Jesus' name (Mark 11:22- 24; Matt. 18:18-20; Luke 10:17; Php. 2:9-11), *confidence* in the power of his atoning blood (Col. 1:13-20; Rev. 12:11), *courage* to claim and use our authority in resisting evil (Luke 10:17-19), and total *trust* in the present power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38).

5. Helmet of salvation.

The child of God can enjoy absolute certainty that they are forgiven in Christ; there is no condemnation for them and absolutely nothing can separate them from the love of their Heavenly Father (Rom. 8:1, 28-39).

6. Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

This is the offensive weapon of Scripture brought to life through speaking and anointed by the Holy Spirit. This was the primary weapon used by Jesus when tempted by Satan in the wilderness (Matt.4:1-11). A good Scripture to use is 1 John 3:8, *"The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."*

7. Pray in the Spirit.

Another key offensive weapon we have is prayer. Elsewhere, Paul exhorts us to "pray continually" living with a sensitivity to the needs around us (1 Thess. 5:17).

Most likely, Paul is speaking of a prayer life that is developed with a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. The more closely we walk with Jesus, the more sensitive we will be to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to pray “in his name.” Additionally, Paul is probably exhorting those with a prayer language (tongue) to pray that way as well.

Note: Satan will seek to hinder your personal communion with the Lord in every way imaginable, because he knows that our intimate knowledge of God and His ways as well as our personal, spiritual power comes from our union with Jesus Christ (John 15; 17).

Perhaps the greatest way to acknowledge that Christ is our source of strength and security is in prayer. Ask in prayer for God's wisdom (James 1:5-6) and a sharpening of your discernment (1 John 2:20,27). Ask Jesus how he wants you to pray in this particular situation. Invite the Holy Spirit to fill you and take control of your circumstance. Growing in prayer is vital to growing as a Christian and would include our personal prayer and devotion as well as praying with and for other Christians.

Note: The Lord is committed to teaching us how to pray. As George MacDonald says – *“What father is not pleased with the first tottering attempt of his little one to walk. But what father would be satisfied with anything but the manly step of the full grown son or daughter.”*

Note: God has ordained prayer as a primary means by which His Kingdom is brought to earth. Augustine offered the following statement – *“Without God we cannot, but apart from us God will not.”*

Conclusion:

It is important to note that there is no “armor” for the back. We cannot fight if we are running away in fear. We must stand firm in the Lord’s power with the Lord’s weapons and resist the attack (James 4:7).

Other important weapons in our arsenal include worship (Hebrews 10:24-25; 12:28), developing mutually accountable relationships with other Christians (Hebrews 3:12-13; Gal. 6:2; Eccl. 4:9-12) and growing in the fruit and gifts of the Spirit. All of these add to the fact that *the single greatest defense in spiritual warfare is holy living*. Holiness removes the enemy's handles from our lives. Ground given must be reclaimed through confession and repentance.

Personal Testimonies of Conversion

*“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony.”
Revelation 12:11a*

A word about our “conversion” experiences may be helpful. Wisdom and the Bible teach us that there are different ways we may come to true faith. Many people can point to a specific and even dramatic moment and experience when they trusted Christ and decided to follow him. Their experience is like Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) or like the man, whose sight was *immediately* healed by Jesus (Luke 18:35-43).

Others do not find it so easy to point to any one single moment or experience when they trusted Jesus Christ. Their experience feels less dramatic and more like a process by which they came to see Jesus more clearly and trusted him with their salvation. Their experience seems more like the man whose sight was healed in a *process* by Jesus (Mark 8:22-26). While they cannot pinpoint a single moment, they are able to say *today* that Jesus Christ is their Savior and Lord.

Still others can never remember a time in their life when they did not believe and love Jesus Christ. Like Timothy their faith was nurtured in a believing family from their earliest memory (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Some refer to these conversions as “nurtured conversions.”

In order to help you consider this question honestly, you should ask yourself three key questions:

1. Who do I believe Jesus of Nazareth to be? This is the question Jesus asked his disciples (Matthew 16:13-30). A necessary part of our profession of faith is that we believe that “Jesus is Lord” (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3; Php. 2:11).
2. What is the personal relevance of Jesus’ death on the cross for me? Again, a necessary part of our profession of faith is that Jesus is our personal Savior. We can honestly say that Jesus died for our sins (1 Cor. 15:3-5; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 1 Peter 2:24).
3. Have I set my heart to be Jesus disciple: to learn from Jesus how to live this new life in God’s Kingdom? Do I have a sincere desire to obey Jesus however I might personally struggle to do so? (Titus 2: 11-14; 1 John 1:5-7; 2:3-6).

Regardless of your ability to pinpoint an exact date, the real question is whether you are a disciple of Jesus Christ today. Have you been spiritually regenerated according to Jesus (John 3:3-8; Titus 3:4-7)? The person who has lost their birth certificate does not need it to know they are alive. Just the same, you do not need to know the exact moment you were spiritually reborn in order to know whether you are alive spiritually. The real questions are: Have you entrusted yourself to Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins

and eternal life with God? Have you sincerely turned away from a self-oriented life to a Jesus-oriented life? Do you really desire to obey him as your Lord and Savior?