

or religion says on any and every issue.

One part of our body that is not protected is the back. The Romans did not want their soldiers to turn their backs on the enemy. Neither are we as believers to turn and run from enemy attacks (including everyday difficulties and problems). We are to hold our ground and maintain a fixed position no matter what.

HELMET OF SALVATION

Like the logo on my baseball cap shows I am a Twins fan, the helmet of a Roman soldier bore an insignia showing him to be a soldier in honored service for his country. Our helmet identifies us as being on the side of God in today's warfare. It reminds us what an honor and privilege it is to defend and confirm the truth of God. Our helmet, in addition, protects us in battle by reminding us of our eternal life through salvation. With our eternal future in mind, we can withstand the temporary difficulties and heartaches of this life (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17-18).

SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

The sword is both defensive and offensive; we can strike blows with it. The sword in fact is the only offensive weapon in our armor. Our Lord Jesus, with all the power of the universe available to Him and more, chose to use this weapon and only this when fighting off the devil's temptations (Matt. 4:3-11). Thus we need to have verses of Scripture at the ready to counter attacks from the Devil.

CHINK IN OUR ARMOR

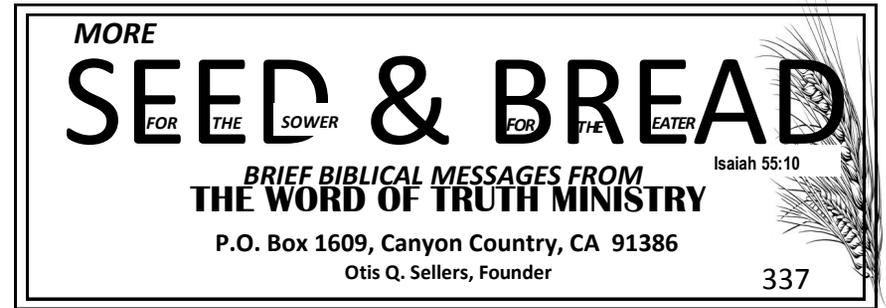
It is a war zone out there. Only God can defeat this world and bring it into subjection to Himself in His kingdom. Until then we must **war a good warfare** (1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:5) by putting on our armor of God. Our **whole** armor of God. Leave out a piece and the enemy will target the unprotected area. Any Minnesotan will vouch how leaving home in winter without gloves or hat or boots puts you at risk for frostbite or worse. In the same way, we the faithful should take care never to leave a chink in our armor of God.

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A CHINK IN OUR ARMOR

By Candy Davis

It is a war zone out there, in case we didn't know. Our Biblical faith, values, and lifestyle all are under attack.

Before striking back we need to understand that the people attacking us are not our true enemies at all. These human foes are nothing but pawns whose thoughts and actions are being manipulated by evil heavenly forces (Ezek. 28; Eph. 6:12). Heading up this hierarchy of wickedness is none other than Satan, **the prince of the power of the air** (Eph. 2:2), **the god of this world** (2 Cor. 4:4). Satan wants nothing less than to supplant the sovereignty and the worship of the Lord God Almighty; he wants to be like the most High, the possessor of heaven and earth (Isa. 14:13-14; Gen. 14:19, 22; 2 Thess. 2:3-4).

Satan's attacks against us do not come willy-nilly. He has a battle plan, a plan that consists of three phases of attack. We had best familiarize ourselves with this evil plan (2 Cor. 2:11).

Phase 1: ATTACK THE MESSAGE

Satan's first line of attack is against the message, the Word of God. The battle cry here is DECEIVE! Deceive the faithful by making us question God's truthfulness. Satan first used this ploy on unsuspecting Eve, convincing her that God was telling her a big fat lie (Gen. 3:1-5). Today we see how the corruption of God's word has picked up steam with false doctrines based on the traditions of men on all sides—denominational doctrines, political correctness, prosperity gospel, new age, humanism, etc. (Mark 7:8; Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:4,8).

Phase 2: ATTACK THE MESSENGER

If Satan fails to corrupt the truth of God in the mind of a believer, he plows ahead with his next phase of attack: Attack the messenger himself, and this includes attacks on his loved ones and material possessions. The battle cry here is INTIMIDATE! Intimidate the believer into abandoning his faith and

godly lifestyle in fear of the consequences wreaked by Satan (Job 1:13-19; Job 2:5-8, 1 Thess. 2:18; 1 Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 12:7; Luke 22:31; Eph. 3:13; 1 Peter 5:8). Not to say we should engage in a witch hunt each time illness or trouble or tragedy strikes (this sin-cursed world and its corrupt inhabitants generate trouble enough); but neither can we dismiss it.

Phase 3: DISCREDIT THE MESSENGER

If Satan fails to shut down the believer using personal attacks, he moves to squelch us by deploying his third line of attack: Discredit the messenger in the eyes of others. The battle cry now is DISGRACE! Disgrace and discredit the believer so no one will take his testimony seriously. Tempting a believer to commit sin (1 John 2:16, Gen. 3:6) is one way to accomplish this. Who hasn't heard of a religious leader losing his ministry for succumbing to an adulterous affair or committing embezzlement? Another means of discrediting the faithful is to launch a smear campaign against us. Here the Devil lives up to his name: slanderer, false accuser. The Devil stirs up his human soldiers to do the work of defaming us. We are ridiculed, slandered and reviled (Rom 3:8; 1 Cor. 4:11-14) by the world, by the media, and by those who have given up on Biblical morality. Once our credibility is shot, we can profess our faith all the livelong day but no one will take serious notice.

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

Before we wind up as casualties of war, we can take heart, because God has a battle cry of his own. **STAND! Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand** (Eph. 6:11, 13). Never does the Lord, when we are under attack, command us to Charge! What He wants us to do is **STAND** (*Gk.-histēmi*). Stand our ground. Hold our position of faith in the midst of every false doctrine, every temptation, every trouble.

How do we stand? By putting on the whole armor of God, which is His provision of protection for us from the assaults against our faith, against our person, and against our reputation.

BELT OF TRUTH

In the 1970s we would wrap rubber bands around the flare of our bell bottoms so they would not get stuck in the chains of our bikes, causing us to take a header onto the pavement. The Roman soldier did something similar. He would gather up his flowing garment and tuck it into his belt (girdle) so he would not trip and fall in battle. Things haven't changed much. In our present battle against evil we are told to have our **loins** (core muscles between our hips and lower ribs) **girt about with truth** (Eph 6:14). This speaks indirectly of the loins of our mind (1 Peter 1:13). We are instructed to wrap around our minds the very truth of God, which is the Lord Jesus and His Word (John 15:6;

John 17:17). We are to read, study, and meditate on the Word of God; let it dwell in us richly (2 Tim. 2:15; Col. 3:16; Psa. 119:15-16). We can liken our belt to the detection of counterfeit bills by the Secret Service. These agents work to become so familiar with the genuine article that they can recognize fake currency in an instant. Likewise for us, we must be so familiar with Scripture that when winds of false doctrine come blowing our way (Eph. 4:14), we can spot corruption in a snap. The same goes for identifying those slick individuals who dispense phony doctrine. Don't waste your time being on guard for preachers wearing red long johns and toting pitchforks. Satan is beguiling (just ask Eve) and so are his cohorts— cunning, crafty, lying in wait to deceive the unsuspecting (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Col. 2:4, 18; Eph. 4:14).

BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The breastplate covers the middle part of the soldier's body, where his vital organ the heart is located. Damage here most often proves fatal. The heart of the believer indicates our inner person, our new identity in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17, 21) based on His imputed righteousness. Our awareness of this righteousness helps protect and fortify us during enemy attacks of condemnation and fear (Rom. 8:1, 35-39). It also reminds us of the importance of our daily walk (Eph. 4-6; Titus 2:12). Nothing gives the Devil more ammo to discredit us than our ungodly conduct (Eph. 4:27). How we live matters. Our daily walk must reflect our new identity in Christ.

SANDALS OF THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Sandals worn by Roman soldiers were made of stiff leather with iron spikes in the soles for a stable foundation, making the soldier able to withstand the vicious blows of an opponent. Evangelism is what many equate with this piece of our armor, yet the point is not the gospel but the preparation of it. My home is built with a basement, a firm foundation. The firm foundation of the gospel of peace—its preparation—is found in the record of the Old Testament and the four Gospels. It is from this record of Old Testament truths and persons that we build and strengthen our foundation of faith. The Lord did not just pull the gospel out of the blue and stick it in a tract. He began to lay its foundation from the very start of His Word (Gen. 3:21) and continued as His record unfolded. The more familiar we are with the Old Testament, the stronger our faith in the gospel.

SHIELD OF FAITH

Darts, set on fire and launched, were the artillery of Biblical times. As protection, soldiers held giant shields of leather soaked in water. Our armor includes a shield as well, with which we are able to **quench all the fiery darts of the wicked** (Eph. 6:16). Faith is taking God at His Word; it is believing what God has said. So far, with our belt of truth and sandals of preparation, we have deep knowledge of God's Word. Now we must add belief in this Word, strong enough so that we stand behind God's truth regardless what the world