

## SPIRITUAL WARFARE 3

Focused Living Ministries

*“Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD...*

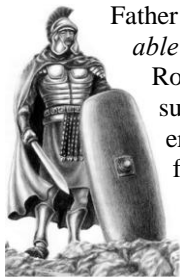
**Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.**

*Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.” II Chron 20:17*



In the early 1800s a father and his son were riding across a prairie out west when a fire broke out. They tried to outrun the wild-fire but it was about to consume them. So the father did the unthinkable. He turned the wagon, charged the fire and found a small smoldering spot that had already been burned. *“Don’t move, son! Stand firm right here!”* The boy started to run as the fire roared close but the father grabbed his hand explaining, *“Stand firm, son! Yes, the fire will come near, but our only hope is to stand where the fire has already burned hot once before!”* The boy was safe because he stayed with his father in a place that the fire could not reach again. As satan attacks you in spiritual warfare, he wants to lure you away from the Cross where the fire of hell has already burned hottest. Jesus has been crucified and ‘burned in hell’ (Rom 1:18; 5:9) for our sin and His resurrection has secured total victory in the Father’s grace. The enemy’s fire cannot touch you when you stay close to Christ at the Cross. There **you must stand firm by putting on the full armor of God!** Why does putting on God’s armor always start at the Cross and keep us at the Cross? Hint: (Col 2:12-15; Heb 2:14-15)

**BELT OF TRUTH** (Eph 6:14) A belt was the first piece of armor put on by a Roman soldier because it secured all the other pieces of the armor and showed that he was ready for action. Jesus taught His men that satan is the *“father of lies”* (John 8:44; Gen 3:1-8) and that is why our



Father God considers lying to be one of the things most *“detestable to Him”* (Ex 20:16; Prov 6:16-17; Eph 4:15, 25; Col 3:9; Rom 1:25; Judges 21:25; Jer 17:9-10). God’s truth should surround His men like a belt and put our faith in the character of His Person, principles and promises and never in the feelings which rule our decaying culture. Knowing, living and teaching His truth with integrity is the best defense to endless lies and deception of the enemy (II Tim 3:16-17; John 4:24; 8:32; Ps 51:6; Deut 6:1-9, 20-21). The real question is, how passionately are you pursuing, owning

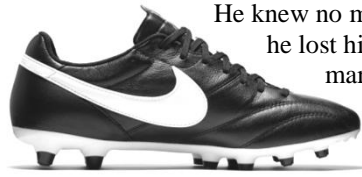
and applying God’s truth to every area of life? Just as we set our watches to the atomic clock true standard time at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, UK, so we must set our hearts according to the standards of God’s truth. *The Bible read for observation and interpretation without application is merely decoration!*” According to Ezra 7:10, what three commitments must you make in order to put on the belt of God’s truth. What practical ways can you keep your belt on and tight?

**BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** (14) A breastplate shielded a warrior’s vital organs from blows that would be fatal. The breastplate especially protects our heart which we are commanded to guard at all costs (Prov 4:23) against the accusations, distractions, deceit and discouragement of satan (Rev 12:9-10). The shield of righteousness is not good works done by men rather, it is the righteousness of Christ freely given to us (imputed) by God and received by faith (Gen 15:6; Rom 1:17; 4:3-5; 5:1; 10:9-10; Gal 3:11; Phil 3:9; 2Cor 5:21) at salvation. When God looks at us He sees Christ in us as our righteousness and is delighted and pleased that we are His sons (Gal 4:3-7; Zeph 3:17; Rom 8:15-17). The enemy cannot take away your salvation but he can ruin your life if you do not protect your heart (Rom 7:15-8:17). There are 2 sides of righteousness: the **being/positional** side (given at the moment of salvation to all who trust in Christ for forgiveness of their sin (Rom 10:9-10) and the **doing/practical** side (doing right things that please God for the right reasons in response to His love/grace. John 14:21; 15:10; Phil 2:12-13; Jam 4:17). To live out a practical righteousness we must first repent (come clean! 1 John 1:9; Rev 2:2-5; 3:19-20) and be forgiven of our sins so that we will be motivated by His grace to do what is right in God’s eyes with the right motivation (Ps 40:8-11). Isaiah 59:2 explains that *“your iniquities have separated you from your God”* and that our righteousness is established by God through Christ alone. Iniquity is the opposite of righteousness, so when we give in to sin without repenting, we are removing our breastplate and leaving ourselves open to more of Satan’s attacks. Psalm 119:172 tells us that God’s commandments are righteousness. It is encouraging to know that according to Isaiah 59:17 God Himself models this principle by wearing His righteousness as a breastplate! Without Christ’s righteousness, we leave our heart open to attack. How well are you protecting your heart with the righteousness of Christ? Are you motivated to obey to earn His love or in response to His grace? Have you put on the breastplate by (1) being rightly related to God in Christ and (2) coming clean in repentance?



## **FEET SHOD WITH SHOES** \_\_\_\_\_ **GOSPEL OF PEACE**

(15) A centurion's battle shoes were studded with nails/spikes (cleats) to help him stay balanced, stand firm his ground and move quickly in combat.



He knew no matter how big, bad or powerful he was, if he lost his footing or was not able to make long marches with good speed over rough terrain, he was going down in de feet (sorry!) to the enemy. So every Roman soldier had to be "ready" for whatever the

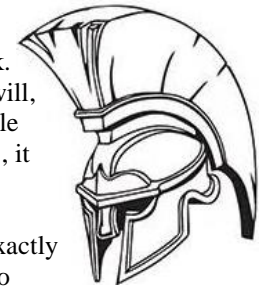
enemy had in store as well as all types of terrain, obstacles, conditions and scenarios. But what does the "gospel of peace" have to do with cleats? Every soldier has a mission. The mission Jesus has assigned to us as His men is to live and lip the awesome good news of peace with God for the forgiveness of our sin and the promise of eternity with Him for all who will believe/receive Him as the Christ (Matt 28:16-20; Rom 10:9-17; John 1:12; 14:27; Acts 20:24; II Tim 2:3-4). This message is so prized and the mission so vital that God says, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger (soldier) who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns" (Rom 10:15; Isaiah 52:7)! Jesus is saying to His men, "I've given you a strategic mission, a clear message and specific marching orders. Now motivated by My love (II Cor 5:14) I command you to advance forward into enemy territory where you live, work and play to boldly live out and proclaim this message with everyone I put around you. Now make sure to wear your cleats because the terrain is often slippery, rocky, steep, treacherous and uneven with many obstacles and I don't want you to slip or go down. I want you to be able to move quickly, stay balanced and stand firm during battle" (II Tim 4:2; I Col 4:2-6). Remember, since satan can't stop the message, he will do anything to trip you up as the messenger (2 Thess 2:15; 2 Tim 1:12)! Sometimes the wise thing is to flee from temptation before you can advance as fleeing is not retreating (1 Cor 10:14; 1 Tim 6:11; 2 Tim 2:22). Is the mission, message and marching orders of your life clear (1 Cor 15:1-6) and are you faithfully carrying them out? Where are you slipping, sliding, stumbling, falling or tripping in any area of life? How can you regain your footing?

**SHIELD OF FAITH** \_\_\_\_\_ (16) God teaches us through Paul that the "days are evil" (Eph 6:13; II Tim 3:1-8; Rom 1:18-32), that we are to expect flaming "arrows of the evil one" (Eph 6:16) and that our daily battles were going to be costly (I Tim 2:12; II Tim 1:8; 2:3-4). Jesus Himself even promised that the world would hate them (John 15:18-27)

even as we love, serve and share the Gospel with them. The only shield we will have to defend us from arrows of doubt, despair, deception, disappointments, discouragement and temptation is faith (pistos= convinced to the point of action by living like God is telling you the truth). It is not the **amount** of our faith that will shield us, but the **object** of our faith Who is God Himself who will protect you (I John 4:4; 5:4; Heb 11:1-2, 6; 12:2; John 14:1; Gal 2:20; II Tim 1:12; Rom 4:18-21; Dan 3, 6). Remember, all faith is built on facts. Faith is also like a muscle - Use it or lose it. To grow your faith muscle you must exercise it by hourly trusting the facts, truths, principles and promises of God's character. The shield of faith is not just for personal protection. The Roman soldiers had a strategy of joining their shields together. If we join *our* shields—that is, strengthen each other with our faith, building up and serving as we are able—we will be able to take on any challenge. With what 3 words would you use to accurately describe your present faith in God? What flaming arrows do you see coming at you? Are you focused on the flames or on the Father's character? With whom do you need to hook your shield for greater protection and mutual encouragement? Give an example of your faith protecting you during warfare. How practically can you grow your faith stronger?



**HELMET OF SALVATION** \_\_\_\_\_ (17) The main purpose of a helmet in battle, sports or work is to protect the brain with which we think. The mind is the control center for our actions, will, attitude and emotions. Because the greatest battle raging today is for our mind (world view./truth), it is no surprise that satan's primary strategy is to attack the mind so that as soldiers we no longer think according to God's truth. In fact, that is exactly what he did to Adam and Eve by getting them to think wrongly about the character of God as if He were somehow withholding something from them in the garden. They started to think wrongly that God's purpose for commanding them not to eat the fruit was going to enslave them instead of free them (Gen 3:1-10). And you know how their wrong thinking turned out for us all! That is why our Father challenges His men, "Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and



*pleasing and perfect*" (Rom 12:2 TLB). Why? Because *"as a man thinks within himself, so he is"* (Prov 23:7) and *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace"* (Rom 8:5-9).

Remember, this is the helmet of 'salvation'. To put on this helmet is to bring you back to the Cross, square one, so that you can start thinking about everything through the filter of God's grace, forgiveness and mercy that you might experience His resurrection power every day. You never move away from thinking about the Cross. For *salvation* (spiritual birth), *sanctification* (growth), *justification* (position before God) and *glorification* (future hope with God in heaven) all start at the foot of the Cross. Here are a couple of things you can do to keep your helmet on!

- **Wake up!** Do not be ignorant of satan's schemes to capture your mind (II Cor 2:11; 4:4)
- **Man up!** Decide hourly who/what is going capture your mind determining how you think. (II Cor 10:3-5; Rom 6:16-18)
- **Throw up!** Vomit all lies, false doctrine and spiritual deception so that you can have the mind of Christ. (Col 2:8-12; I Cor 2:12-16)
- **Sign up!** Commit now to taking your pursuit of God's truth to the next level. (Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:1-9, 17-18)
- **Store up!** Hide God's truth in your heart so that it is immediately accessible whenever satan smacks you up side the head with a lie. (Ps 1:2; 119:9-11)

**SWORD OF SPIRIT** (17) While all the other pieces of armor are defensive, the sword of the Spirit is your only offensive weapon. It speaks of the holiness and power of the Word of God. This includes God's written Word (Bible), God's incarnate Word (Jesus/ Logos), and God's spoken Word (Holy Spirit). A greater spiritual weapon is



not conceivable *"for the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart"* (Heb 4:12). This weapon will take a life time to master and use in spiritual warfare. Remember how Jesus used the Word of God to defeat satan's temptations (Matt 4:1-10; Luke 4:1-13)? Notice that it is not our sword but that of the Spirit. He will keep it sharp and available to us in all situations to cut into and destroy the enemy's lies. The Scriptures are *"God-breathed"* (II Tim 3:16) so that there is awesome power in His Word. This is why it is our best and only offensive weapon. As you look at a

quick sword training scene from *The Mask of Zoro* how can you identify? What do can you practically do to learn how to use the Sword that the Spirit has given to you in Jeremiah 23:28-29. **Grain** (nurture, grow). **Fire** (purify clean). **Hammer** (pound truth into hard hearts).

**PRAY IN THE SPIRIT** (18-20) Prayer is an often forgotten part of the armor of God and is the way we draw strength from God and rely on Him. In essence, it is what "activates" the armor giving us the ability to use it as desired and designed by God Himself. For apart from the Father, and reliance on Him through prayer, our efforts in spiritual battle are futile as we have no strength in ourselves. It is no wonder that we are commanded to *"pray without ceasing"* (I Thess 5:17). In verse 18, we are told to pray in the Spirit (with the mind, heart, priorities of Christ). We cannot neglect prayer, as it is the means by which we draw spiritual strength from God. And note that Paul did not ask for release from prison, or comfort or even cable TV. He asked specifically for things which will give him success in battle! He understood that prayer is not prep for the battle. Prayer was the battle! God's men advance forward in victory on our knees as we battle disappointment, discouragement, doubt or division (Dan 9:3; 10:1-2; 1 Peter 4:7).

**ASSIGNMENT** Out of bed slip to knees to get ready for today's battle and by faith through prayer put on each piece of God's armor

**TAG TEAM DISCUSSION** What truth was most convicting? Why? How practically will you apply the armor in your life this week?



**"What did I tell you, Boris. These new uniforms are a crock!"**

Gary Larson 1983