

How To Survive A
SATANIC
ATTACK

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Introduction

It's a spiritual battle. That thing you are facing in your life right now, whatever it may be, is first and foremost a spiritual battle.

You might not agree with that. You may be thinking, "It's not a spiritual battle; it's a physical battle. I just got diagnosed with cancer." Or you may be thinking, "It's not a spiritual battle; it's a financial battle. I just lost my job." Or perhaps you are thinking, "It's not a spiritual battle; it's a relationship battle. My husband just informed me that he wants a divorce." Or maybe you are thinking, "It's not a spiritual battle; it's an emotional battle. I'm overwhelmed, afraid, depressed, and unable to relax and enjoy life."

While I certainly understand how you could think like that, I also know that at the heart of whatever you are facing rages an intense spiritual battle. The spiritual battle is the battle below the surface. It's the unseen battle. If you can win the spiritual battle, you will be able to respond properly to the earthly battles you face.

Cancer is a physical problem, but it takes spiritual strength to fight it. It may also require surgery, chemotherapy, and other treatments,

but in order for you to have peace and sanity, you cannot ignore the spiritual aspect of the battle. You have to trust God to see you through.

The loss of a job creates a financial problem, but it takes spiritual strength to deal with that. It may also require that you take a less desirable job in the short term in order to pay the bills and that you cut back on your spending, but you cannot ignore the spiritual aspect of the battle. You have to trust God to see you through.

A broken relationship or the death of a loved one can take the life out of you. It can cause not only heartache, loneliness, feelings of rejection, isolation, and fear, but it can cause physical problems as well. It takes spiritual strength to hold up during an experience like that. It may also require counseling, the encouragement of family and friends, and an extended period of grief and mourning, but you cannot ignore the spiritual aspect of the battle. If you're going to make it, you have to trust God to see you through.

When our hearts are overwhelmed, when our minds are overworked, when our schedules are overcrowded, and when our nerves are overactive, that's clearly an emotional issue.

But it takes spiritual strength to plow through those emotional weeds. It may also require a reprioritizing of what's important, a readjusting of our schedules, and an outlet or two to help us release the stress, but you cannot ignore the spiritual aspect of the battle. In order to be emotionally healthy and whole, we have to trust God to see us through.

That's why I'm saying that whatever you're facing is first and foremost a spiritual battle. At the core of the issue there's a spiritual aspect that you simply cannot ignore. There's a battle for your soul, for your mind, for your influence, for your testimony, and even for your life. God is urging you to trust Him and to fight this battle with courage and faith. Satan, on the other hand, is trying to convince you that God doesn't care about you, that God has abandoned you, or even that God doesn't exist. You have to decide which voice you will listen to.

How Did the Devil Get on the Scene?

Life would be so much better if there were no devil. Wouldn't it be wonderful if there were no sin, no shame, no sickness, no sadness, no sorrow, no pain, and no death? It was the

devil who brought all those things into the world. Life on earth was *literally perfect* until he showed up.

The devil first emerged onto the stage of human history in *Genesis 3*. He took the form of a serpent and enticed Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. When they did, everything changed. Sin entered the Garden of Eden. And with sin came suffering and ultimately death. But where did the devil come from?

Strangely enough, at one time the devil was an angel in heaven. He wasn't the devil then. His name was Lucifer, and he was a high-ranking, beautiful angel. But in the passing of time, Lucifer grew proud. He became envious of God. He wanted to be worshipped. And, as a result, God cast him out of heaven. Lucifer became the devil. And he has an intense hatred for God and for God's people.

When Lucifer was thrown out of heaven, a third of the angels were thrown out with him. These are the fallen angels. They had sided with Lucifer in his revolt against God. We read about all of this in *Isaiah 14*, *Ezekiel 28*, and *Revelation 12*.

The word "*devil*" literally means "*an accuser, a slanderer.*"¹ That's what he does.

After he entices us to sin, he then accuses and condemns us. His more formal name is “*Satan*” (*Revelation 12:9*). That name literally means “*an adversary*.”² That’s who he is. He opposes us. He stands against us. He tries to prevent us from living closely to God and enjoying all the blessings that accompany a healthy spiritual relationship with God.

He is also called “*a liar*” (*John 8:44*), “*a murderer*” (*John 8:44*), and “*the thief*” (*John 10:10*). Make no mistake about it. The devil is bad news. And he wants to destroy your life. The Bible says, “*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*” (*1 Peter 5:8*). Think about that. The devil wants to literally devour you. How frightening.

We know that the devil is stronger than we are. We know that he has studied human nature for thousands of years. He knows when and how to strike. He knows when we’re vulnerable. He knows when we’re weak and not at our best. He is very effective at making sin seem appealing. He is skilled at instilling doubt, fear, confusion, and guilt into human hearts. It’s enough to make you want to run and hide under the bed.

But when we are under a satanically-inspired attack, we are not supposed to run and hide. Instead, we are commanded to fight. The Bible says, "*Fight the good fight of faith*" (*I Timothy 6:12*).

Certainly we should run away from temptation. The Bible plainly says, "*Flee sexual immorality*" (*I Corinthians 6:18*). But we are not supposed to run away from the devil in fear. The Bible actually instructs us to "*Resist him, steadfast in the faith*" (*I Peter 5:9*). The idea behind the word "*resist*" is "*to withstand*" or "*oppose.*"³ In other words, we, as children of God, are supposed to stand against the devil. But how can we do that? Isn't he stronger than we are?

Yes, he is. But remember, the devil is no match for God. God is infinitely stronger than the devil. God will one day sentence the devil to an eternity in hell (*see Revelation 20:10*). And, even now, the devil can't do anything without first gaining God's permission. Before Satan brought all the problems into Job's life, God had to sign off on it (*see Job 1 and 2*). And God brought much good out of it (*see Job 42*). The same is true in your case. Whatever battle you are facing has been permitted into your life by God. That doesn't mean God *caused* the problem, but He has *allowed* it.

And He never would have allowed it if He didn't intend to use it to your advantage. Your job is to respond appropriately with faith, obedience, and love.

But the point I am making is that since God is stronger than the devil, and since God's Spirit lives in us, we have nothing to fear. The Bible says, "*He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world*" (I John 4:4).

So when we are under a spiritual attack of some kind, we don't run; we don't hide; we don't quit; we don't despair; and we don't give into fear. None of those options is appropriate. Instead, we stand; we fight; we persevere; we endure; we keep on; we trust God; and eventually, by God's grace, we prevail.

The Armor of God

The apostle Paul had learned that the Christian life is no walk in the park. It's a battle. When he came to the end of his life, he wrote, "*I have fought the good fight*" (II Timothy 4:7). Whether we like it or not, the Christian life is a fight. It's a fight with the devil himself. But we don't fight in our own strength. We fight in the strength of the Lord.

In *Ephesians 6*, Paul gave us some very practical, specific instructions about fighting a spiritual battle. He was in such a battle himself when he wrote *Ephesians*. He was in a Roman prison for his bold and courageous witness for Jesus Christ. He was suffering for his obedience to God's calling on his life. But he was not defeated. He was not in despair. There was no panic in Paul's heart. He had learned how to fight a spiritual battle, and he wanted to share the secret with others.

As Paul was in that Roman prison, he was, of course, guarded by Roman guards. In fact, he would have literally been chained to a guard at the time this letter was written. So as Paul was in that dark, damp, musty prison cell looking at that Roman guard, he had a moment of inspiration. The Holy Spirit undoubtedly spoke to Paul's heart as Paul gazed at the Roman soldier's armor. As Paul examined his *belt*, his *breastplate*, his *shoes*, his *shield*, his *helmet*, and his *sword*, he began to associate each of those pieces with something spiritual. Each piece of the Roman soldier's armor began to represent some important aspect of the Christian's response to a satanic attack.⁴ And Paul began to explain, using that imagery, the way to victory.

The Purpose of the Armor

The purpose of putting on *the armor of God* is so that we will be able to stand. In *Ephesians 6:10-18*, Paul talked about standing several times. As you read through this passage, notice his emphasis on standing:

*“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able **to stand** against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able **to withstand** in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand**. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints”* (*Ephesians 6:10-18, emphasis mine*).

What is the significance of standing? Well, the significance is this: *The devil wants to make you fall.* He wants to knock your legs out from under you. That's the reason for the satanic attack you are experiencing. But God is saying to you that you don't have to fall; you can stand; you can make it; you can endure; you can win. But you have to be dressed for the battle.

The remainder of this booklet will be devoted to the six pieces of *the armor of God.* We will learn, by studying these pieces, how we can stand when the devil tries to knock us down. And if we have fallen already in some area, we will learn how to stand again.

The Belt of Truth

It's interesting to me that the first piece of the armor Paul mentioned is *the belt of truth.* A Roman soldier's belt is what kept everything together. It's also what held his sword. The belt is what gave the soldier "freedom of movement"⁵ Without it, he would be encumbered by his own loose-fitting clothing.

Similarly, it is "truth" that holds us together spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. Remember, the devil is a liar. He bombards our

minds with one lie after another. If we are going to survive his assaults, we must refute his lies with truth.

As I think about some of the lies the devil has used on me through the years, and on many others with whom I have talked, I think of statements like these:

Lie #1 → God's promises don't apply to you.

Lie #2 → God's grace doesn't cover that sin.

Lie #3 → You can't handle this situation.

Lie #4 → You're all alone in the world.

Satan may use different words, but those are some of his most frequently used lies. That's why so many people are living with hopelessness, guilt, fear, loneliness, and depression. They've been lied to by the enemy and instead of responding to the lie with truth, they have believed the lie. And now, they are falling apart. They don't have their belt on, and everything is coming loose. Let's think about those four lies the devil often uses:

Lie #1 → God's promises don't apply to you.

If Satan can get you to believe that God's promises don't apply to you then you're in serious trouble. If you don't believe that God's promises apply to you then you won't even know that you're saved. You will question and doubt your salvation endlessly. If you don't believe that God's promises apply to you then you won't have the assurance that your needs will be met. You will worry about everything.

But if you will respond to his lie with the truth that God's promises do indeed apply to you then you will be peaceful and confident. You will know that you are saved because God has promised to save everyone who trusts in Jesus (*see Acts 16:31*). You will know that God will meet your every need because He has promised to do so (*see Philipians 4:19*).

Someone took a year and a half counting all the promises of God in the Bible and came up with 7,487 promises.⁶ Friend, if you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, they *all* apply to you. Believe them. Stand on them. Personalize them. And when Satan lies to you, quote one of those promises to him. The Bible says that "*all the promises of God in Him are Yes*" (*II Corinthians 1:20*). Build your life on the promises of God.

Lie #2 → God's grace doesn't cover that sin.

This is a big lie. And many people fall for it. Maybe you have convinced yourself that you've done something so bad that God just can't forgive it. That's a lie. That's from the liar himself. But that lie can easily be eradicated by any number of Bible promises. Take this one for example: *"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7)*. Let me ask you a question: *How is your sin not included under the category of "all sin?" What part of "all" is unclear?* Confront Satan's lie with truth. Your sin is forgivable.

Someone will always bring up the unpardonable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit. We read about it in *Matthew 12:31-32*. You may fear that you have committed that sin. The fact that you are reading this booklet means you probably haven't. The sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit means that a person has rejected the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The person has refused to let the Holy Spirit lead him to Jesus for forgiveness and salvation. The person has hardened his heart and refused to come to Christ. So obviously that is an unforgivable sin. You can't be forgiven apart from Christ. But as long as your heart is tender, as long as you trust in Jesus, you haven't committed that sin. Don't let the

devil tell you that you have. Again, the fact that you are reading this booklet tells me that your heart isn't completely hardened.

Lie #3 → You can't handle this situation.

Sometimes we get into a situation and we feel like we just can't handle it. The death of a loved one, relocating to a new city, bankruptcy, or a serious illness are some of the things people think they just can't handle. And, as the devil whispers in your ear that you can't handle it, you become even more convinced that you can't. But that's a lie. Here's a promise for you to claim: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13). With Jesus in your life, you can handle any and every situation. The phrase *"all things"* literally covers it all.

Lie #4 → You're all alone in the world.

What causes us to believe this lie is that sometimes we feel alone. If we live alone, we are especially vulnerable to this lie. But one of the best things about being a Christian is this: *We are never alone.* God has promised to be with us always, in all places, and at all times (see Deuteronomy 31:6).

So stand on the promise of His presence whether you “feel it” or not. If you’re truly saved, not only is God *with* you, but He’s also *in* you in the Person of the Holy Spirit (*see Colossians 1:27*).

When the devil puts a lie of any kind in your mind, don’t argue with him. Don’t reason with him. Don’t even get into a conversation with him. Just quote a Bible promise to him and move on. And when he comes back, just quote it again. The devil has to know that the only thing he gets from you is a Bible promise. Remember, we don’t believe lies. We don’t let lies control us. We respond to lies with truth. Truth trumps lies every time. That’s why Jesus said, “*And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (*John 8:32*). Put your belt on, and you’ll keep yourself together!

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The second piece of the armor that Paul mentioned is *the breastplate of righteousness*. Roman soldiers wore this part of the armor to protect their chest cavity and vital organs contained therein. As New Testament scholar Warren Wiersbe noted, the breastplate “was made of metal plates or chains” and it thoroughly “covered the body from the neck to

the waist.”⁷ When the arrows of the enemy hit the breastplate, they bounced off the protective piece and harmlessly fell to the ground. The soldier under attack was safe and sound. The breastplate had saved his life.

Christians are constantly under spiritual attack by Satan. He is called in Scripture “*the accuser of our brethren*” (*Revelation 12:10*). He condemns us for all the things we have ever done wrong. He torments us by reminding us of sins we have long since repented of. He paralyzes us with guilt and shame. Satan knows that if he can cause you to live in regret over the past that you won’t be peaceful, joyful, and productive in the present. So he harasses the child of God over sins that have already been forgiven.

Paul knew this experience well. In his past, he had persecuted Christians. He had ridiculed the name of Christ. He had tried to destroy the infant church. Paul felt so badly about those sins that he even referred to himself as the chief sinner (*see I Timothy 1:15*).

But Paul had also learned about the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. He had come to understand that when God looked at his life that He no longer saw his sins and imperfections. Instead, God saw him

covered in the very righteousness, the perfection, of Jesus Christ. This is why he could write these words: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). Paul knew that Jesus had removed those old sins, that He had washed them away with His blood. And he knew that Jesus had clothed him with His own perfect righteousness.

That’s what salvation is. It is the removal of our sins and the receiving of Christ’s righteousness. It is described by the Old Testament prophet Isaiah like this: *“He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness”* (Isaiah 61:10). Think about that. If you are a believer, you have been clothed and covered with heavenly garments. Your sins are gone. You are clean in God’s eyes.

In the New Testament, Paul said that he wanted to be *“found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”* (Philippians 3:9). This is the truth the devil doesn’t want you to understand: *God doesn’t see you as a guilty sinner. He sees you as a forgiven, clean saint who is covered in the breastplate of Christ’s righteousness.*

So the question is this: *Which garments are you wearing?* Are you clothed in your own goodness, your own good works, your own righteousness? Or are you clothed in the righteousness of Christ? The Bible says that *“all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags”* (Isaiah 64:6). Even our best efforts fall short of perfection. So often our good deeds are mixed with impure and selfish motives. As a result, if we are depending on our own righteousness to make us acceptable to God, we are, in essence, clothed in dirty, filthy rags.

But, if we will come to Christ and ask Him to forgive us, He will not only remove our sins, but He will also clothe us in His own perfect righteousness. He will give us new clothes to wear. And God will see us in a whole new light.

If you would like to receive the forgiveness of your sins and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, pray this prayer now:

“Dear Jesus,

I have sinned. And I have tried to cover those sins with my own good deeds. But it hasn't worked. I need to be forgiven. I need to be clothed in

the protective breastplate of Your righteousness.

I believe You died on the cross to pay for my sins and that You rose again conquering death and the grave. I ask You now to come into my heart. Forgive my sins. Make me a Christian. Clothe me in Your righteousness. And, as I pray for salvation, I receive it by faith. Thank You for saving me. I trust You with all of my heart.

*In Your Name I Pray,
Amen.”*

Friend, if you prayed that prayer, God heard it, and He answered it. You are now forgiven. And you are protected from Satan’s attacks because you are covered by Christ’s righteousness. From now on, when the devil accuses you of a sin, just remind him that your sin is under the blood of Jesus. You can simply say this to the enemy: *“I’m trusting the blood of Jesus. I’m clothed in His righteousness, not my own righteousness.”*

Going forward, you have a new motivation to live a pure, clean life filled with goodness and kindness towards others. You no longer do those things *in order* to be acceptable to God;

you do them because you *already are* acceptable to God. Your motivation for living right and obeying God is now one of gratitude to God for all He has done for you. You are no longer trying to *earn* God's acceptance; you are simply trying to *thank Him* for forgiving you and for covering you with the breastplate of Christ's righteousness. *The pressure to perform is off.* When satanic attacks of guilt bombard your heart, hide behind the breastplate. You are protected there. You are safe in Jesus. He is now your righteousness.

The Shoes of Peace

Once we are held together by truth and covered in Christ's righteousness, we are ready to put on *the shoes of peace*. When you put your shoes on, you're ready to go!

A Roman soldier "wore sandals with hobnails in the soles to give him better footing for the battle."⁸ Without good shoes, a soldier would slip and fall. In a similar way, we, as Christians, need dependable shoes if we are going to be able to stand for the duration of the battle. Paul actually said that our shoes are "*the preparation of the gospel of peace*" (*Ephesians 6:15*). But what does that mean?

Well, first of all, it means that we must be at peace with ourselves. We need a peaceful, undistracted mind and heart. This begins, of course, by being at peace with God through our faith in Jesus Christ. But it also means that we must be at peace with the circumstances of our lives. We have to accept life as it is and make the most of the situations we encounter. We do this by recognizing that God is absolutely in control of every aspect of our lives and that He would never allow anything to happen to us that could not ultimately be used for our good and for His glory.

If we're going to walk in *the shoes of peace*, it also means that we must seek to be at peace with others. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*" (Matthew 5:9).

I have often been encouraged by something Paul said in Romans. He wrote, "*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men*" (Romans 12:18). Notice that we are to do everything within our power to be at peace with others. But Paul qualified that commandment twice by saying, "*If it is possible, as much as depends on you.*" Sometimes it's not possible. Sometimes it doesn't just depend on you. In order for there to be peace, all parties must want peace.

The point Paul was making is this: *In relationships with others, God holds you responsible for what you can control.* Many times, perhaps most of the time, we can actually “make peace.” But at other times, we can’t “make peace” because someone else doesn’t “want peace.” In those instances, we have to make sure that we have done all we know to do to bring about peace, and even if we have failed, we have to make sure that we are at peace with others even if they are not at peace with us. You can’t make another person love you, but that doesn’t mean that you have to stop loving them. You can be at peace with them (in your heart) even if they are not at peace with you.

While it is imperative that we be at peace with God, at peace with ourselves, and at peace with others, I think Paul had something else in mind when he talked about *the shoes of peace*. I think Paul was thinking primarily about sharing the gospel with others. After all, he referred to “*the gospel of peace*.” The word “*gospel*” means “*good news*.” As Christians, we have “*good news*” to share with others. We can share with them what God has done for us. And we can lead them to receive Christ as their Savior.

The reason I began this section by talking about being at peace with ourselves and seeking to be a peacemaker with others is because if we lack those qualities then we won't ever be very effective soul-winners. In order to lead others to Christ, they have to want what we have. When an unsaved person sees love, joy, and peace in a believer's life, he naturally wants those qualities in his own life. But if those attributes are lacking in us then we don't have much credibility.

The fact that Paul talked about *the shoes of the gospel of peace* says to us that we have to go where unbelievers are. We have to move in their direction. Our church recently took on the project of attempting to go to every home within a five-mile radius of our church's location to deliver packets of information about our church and also about how to be saved. We went to over 47,000 houses in what we called *The Jerusalem Project*. As those visits were made, people were saved. Lives were changed.

Back in the 1970s, our church did a similar thing. Our church family delivered Bibles to thousands of homes in Pasadena. As was true of our more recent *Jerusalem Project*, people were saved. Lives were changed.

One of those lives was a man named Jim Wright. He and his wife, Nancy, were home one evening when their doorbell rang. Two ladies from our church introduced themselves and told them they were there to give them a Bible. Jim and Nancy invited them in, and the ladies shared Christ with them. Nancy had been saved years earlier, but Jim never had. About two weeks later, one of Jim and Nancy's sons, Linc, walked into the kitchen and saw his father pouring bottle after bottle of alcohol down the drain. Linc said, "Dad, what are you doing?" To which Jim replied, "Jesus has changed my life. I don't want this stuff anymore." Jim had battled the problem of alcohol for years, but when he received Christ, his desire for alcohol went away.

Jim died recently, and at his funeral, Linc told that story. He concluded his eulogy by telling the congregation that his father had been saved for over forty years and that he had been sober all of that time.

Now think about what happened. Those two ladies from our church had put on *the shoes of the gospel of peace* and shared Christ with an alcoholic. As they did, the Holy Spirit convicted Jim, Jesus saved him, and He made Jim Wright one of the finest Christian men I have ever known. He became one of the most

respected men in our church. His life had been so radically changed by God that I had actually forgotten he had been an alcoholic until his family reminded me of his story. Jim was a role-model for me and an example of Christian love, grace, compassion, and zeal.

But it all started when those two ladies went to the Wright's home and shared Christ. Maybe there's a home you need to go to. Maybe there's a person you need to share Christ with. If the Lord has placed someone on your heart, put on your *shoes of peace* and go!

You may be wondering how sharing Christ with someone helps you survive a satanic attack. Well, when you share Christ you are doing the thing the devil *doesn't* want you to do. So you are resisting him. You are obeying God. And, as a result, you are on your way to victory. Every time you look at your shoes in a given day, let them be a reminder to you of your responsibility to share Christ with others.

The Shield of Faith

We come now to an extremely important part of the believer's armor, *the shield of faith*. Notice the emphasis Paul placed on the Christian's shield. He said, "***Above all, taking***

the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one” (Ephesians 6:16, emphasis mine). What a vivid description of how the enemy attacks us. He shoots fiery darts at the people of God.

In Bible times, those “darts” were “arrows dipped in some inflammable substance and ignited.”⁹ They were then “shot at the enemy.”¹⁰ The protective shield was made of wood that had been covered with leather. The shield protected the soldier from the fiery arrows.

Warren Wiersbe provided an additional insight when he wrote, “The edges of these shields were so constructed that an entire line of soldiers could interlock shields and march into the enemy like a solid wall.”¹¹ In other words, the oblong shields were most effective when they were hooked together with other shields. Soldiers were safer together than they would have been by themselves. The same is true for Christians. We need each other in the battles of life. We’re better when we’re together. That’s the beauty of the church.

Paul’s imagery could not be clearer. We are in a spiritual battle in which flammable, deadly arrows are being shot at us. They come in many shapes and sizes, but perhaps Satan’s

most effective arrow is *the arrow of fear*. That's why Paul called the shield "*the shield of faith*." Fear and faith are polar opposites. One can't operate where the other is present.

Fear is a terrible thing. It can be strong and debilitating. Some people are so controlled by fear that they don't do anything. They don't fly. They don't drive. They don't even leave their house. For others, fear isn't necessarily debilitating, but it is nonetheless a real problem. It causes them to question every decision, worry about what might happen in the future, and live their lives under a cloud of heaviness. Either way, fear is not from God. The Bible says, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*" (II Timothy 1:7). Notice that God didn't give us a spirit of fear. He has given us power, love, and a sound mind. Those things are the opposites of fear. So when we are afraid, instead of power, we have weakness. Instead of love, we have suspicion, anger, and even hatred. And instead of a sound mind, we have cluttered, confused, undisciplined, panicky thoughts. Fear causes all of that.

I encourage you not to give into fear. Whatever the devil tells you to do, do the opposite. Whatever he tells you that you can't do, do that thing.

Some time back, my brother, Joel, shared with me that he has always had a fear of heights. I never knew this. He described how tall buildings and even flying in an airplane sometimes made him anxious. So instead of giving into those fears, he started facing them head on. He started climbing mountains just to conquer this fear. He was liberated from his fear of heights, and he wanted his children to be free of any and all fear, too.

So recently, Joel and his wife, Jodi, along with my niece, Charli Jo, and my nephew, Joel, Jr., flew to Africa and climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro. It's over 19,000 feet high. It's the highest free-standing mountain in the world. To the best of our knowledge, my niece, at eight years of age, became the second youngest girl to climb that mountain. My nephew, at six years of age, actually became the youngest person to ever climb it. They were all a little nervous about going. But they had trained. They had prepared. They had planned. They went up to the top of that mountain with a guide and a medical team. And, by the grace of God, they came down the mountain just fine. They faced their fears with faith in God. And faith won out. And they made some beautiful, life-long family memories.

Someone has said that fear is **False Evidence Appearing Real**. I think that's so true. Sometimes a situation seems impossible. We feel like we just can't do it. But faith speaks up and says, "Yes, you can. You can do all things through Christ."

Fear got the best of me one day in an MRI tube. I was having a routine follow-up scan from a surgery to remove a cancerous tumor from my left kidney. Thankfully the surgery had been successful, but follow-up scans are just part of the protocol.

The technician helped position me on my back on the table and then tied my arms down. He then covered my upper body with some kind of large piece of heavy plastic. I had a thought race through my mind, "I can't do this. I feel trapped. I want out." So I asked him to remove the plastic shield and untie me which he graciously did. I sat there on the side of the table for a moment then I told him I wanted to try again so he hooked me up once more. The same thing happened. I couldn't do it. I asked to be unharnessed and untied again. By this time, I was embarrassed, but I was also disappointed with myself. I felt like a hypocrite. I spend my life telling others to trust God and here I was having a meltdown in the MRI room. The technician said, "Why don't

you reschedule for another day? We can put you to sleep and do the scan that way.” I replied, “Can you give me just a minute?” I prayed and asked God to help me. *Philippians 4:13* came to mind. It says, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” I began to calm down. I began to feel peaceful. I actually began to feel sleepy. I told the technician I would like to try one more time, and I told him that if I had any more trouble that I would go home and come back another day. He hooked me up for the third time, and this time I was as relaxed as I could be. The test went fine. I had no problem. It was a peaceful experience. And, thankfully, a few days later, the results came back clear.

I experienced something that day I had never experienced before. I had known God as my Savior, my Lord, my Friend, my Provider, my Helper, and my Defender. But I had never known God as my Sedative. He calmed me down. He did what a sedative would have done with none of the side effects. He gave me peace when I claimed *Philippians 4:13*.

Friend, I don't know what your fear is, but I encourage you not to give into it. If you're scared of heights, climb a mountain! If you have claustrophobia, get an MRI! But whatever you do, don't let *the arrow of fear*

defeat you. Take up that *shield of faith*. It will quench those fiery darts of the enemy every single time.

The Helmet of Salvation

No football player would go into a game without first putting his helmet on. No Roman soldier would go into a battle without first putting his helmet on. And no Christian should go into the battle of a new day without first putting his or her helmet on. Our helmet is called *the helmet of salvation*. And it protects our thinking.

The spiritual battle in which every Christian is involved takes place primarily in the mind. If Satan can *dictate* your thoughts, he can *dominate* your life. Simply put, the battle is *for* your mind, and it takes place *in* your mind.

Your “thought life” is extremely important. The Bible says that as a person “*thinks in his heart, so is he*” (*Proverbs 23:7*). Ponder that. Our thoughts determine the quality of our lives. We often hear someone say, “You are what you *eat*.” It’s more accurate to say, “You are what you *think*.” If you can win the battle for your thoughts, you’ll win in life. If you lose the battle for your thoughts, you’ll lose in life.

For the Roman soldier, his helmet was a “metal protective headgear.”¹² For the Christian, “*we have the mind of Christ*” (*I Corinthians 2:16*). In other words, we have the God-given ability to choose to think like Jesus thinks. We can control our thoughts. We can choose to think on things that are true, peaceful, positive, and godly instead of on things that are false, tormenting, negative, and ungodly.

Now I would concede that we can't prevent a thought from popping into our minds. Sometimes, out of the blue, we have an impure, fearful, hateful, selfish, irrational, judgmental, panicky thought that races across our minds. We can't help that, and we can't prevent that. But we can control what we do with that thought. Martin Luther used to say that you can't prevent a bird from flying over your head, but you don't have to let it build a nest in your hair. That's so true. And the same thing is true of our thoughts. We can't prevent a thought from coming into our minds, but we can control it once it's there.

Your thoughts are like a wild horse. You have to tame them. You have to take control of them. *You are not at the mercy of your thoughts; your thoughts are at your mercy.* You are in control of them. When you have a

wrong, negative, sinful, or fearful thought of any kind come into your mind, let me suggest a couple of things you should do with it.

First, *arrest that thought*. Just like a police officer would arrest a criminal, you have to arrest that thought. That means you stop the thought. You don't let it run wild. The Bible says that we are to bring "*every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*" (*II Corinthians 10:5*). In other words, we are to stop wrong thoughts in their tracks. We simply say to wrong thoughts, "No. That's wrong. You will not be allowed to remain in my mind. You are under arrest."

After we have stopped the thought, we need to immediately *replace it* with a true thought. For example, if you have a thought about someone whom you don't really like, instead of thinking about all the reasons why you don't like that person, think about the fact that he or she was made in the image of God and that Jesus died on the cross for him or her just like He died on the cross for you. Try to see that person through God's eyes of love. Similarly, if you get a bad medical report, instead of thinking of all the worst-case scenarios, remind yourself that God is in control and that He holds your life in His hands. Think about the fact that God is your Healer.

It is imperative that we learn to replace wrong thoughts with right ones. The Bible says, “*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things*” (Philippians 4:8). We choose what we think about. That is one of the privileges we have as human beings. I encourage you to choose your thoughts carefully. Think biblically. Think confidently. Think on things that are pure and clean. You can only focus on one thing at a time so focus on positive, true thoughts, not on negative, false ones. The Bible says, “*To be spiritually minded is life and peace*” (Romans 8:6). Who doesn’t want *life and peace*? We can experience both if we learn to think properly.

Take control of your thoughts. Meditate on things that are true. Fill your mind with Bible promises. Begin to articulate Bible truths. Throughout a given day, I frequently say things to myself like: “*God is in control. I’m trusting Jesus. Jesus is with me now. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” Those affirmations of faith keep my mind working *for me* instead of *against me*. They will do the same for you. When you wake up

in the morning, put your helmet on. Take control of your “thought life.”

The Sword of the Spirit

We come now to the final piece of the believer’s armor. Paul made clear that we are to take “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Ephesians 6:17). Of the six pieces in *the armor of God*, *the sword of the Spirit* is the only one that is *offensive* in nature. The other five pieces are *defensive*. They protect us in some way. But *the sword of the Spirit* allows us to effectively fight back. With it, we can strike the enemy. I think it was Napoleon who said, “The best *defense* is a good *offense*.” I think he was right. Sometimes we have to be aggressive and pro-active. If a thief breaks into your house, he won’t leave just because you tell him to leave. But he will leave if he sees a pistol in your hand. The Word of God is our pistol. It is our sword. And it is what causes Satan to flee.

The Greek word that Paul used here when he described *the sword of the Spirit* as the “*word*” of God is the word “*rhema*.” As Harry Ironside, a respected pastor of long ago, once pointed out, “There are two different terms in Greek for ‘word.’ There is ‘*logos*’ which is the

term we usually use, but the other word, ‘*rhema*,’ is the one used here. It means, ‘a saying.’”¹³

Think of the word “*logos*” as the Bible itself. It refers to the whole of the Word of God. Think of the word “*rhema*” as a verse or a phrase from the Bible. When we are under a spiritual attack of some kind (whether it is a temptation to sin, or an attempt by others to destroy us, or an oppressive spirit, or an intense fear), Paul said we are supposed to take a verse from Scripture, or maybe just part of a verse, and quote it to the devil. That’s what it means to use *the sword of the Spirit*. We don’t swing the Bible *at* the devil. We quote something *from* the Bible *to* the devil.

I find it interesting that in my personal Bible reading this morning I read *Matthew 4*. I read about the temptations of Jesus. Three times the devil tempted Jesus to do something wrong, and three times Jesus resisted by quoting the Word of God. He quoted from three different verses in the book of Deuteronomy. And He only quoted part of each verse. What was Jesus doing? He was using *the sword of the Spirit*. He was quoting three different “*rhemas*” to the devil. And when He finished doing that, the Bible says, “*Then the devil left Him*” (*Matthew 4:11*). When we are under a spiritual attack,

that's what we want the devil to do. We want him to leave. But remember, he won't leave just because you tell him to leave. It's *the sword of the Spirit*, the specific "*rhema*" of God, the specific verse, the phrase from the Bible, that Satan can't handle. This is why we need to memorize Bible verses. So we can quote them not only to ourselves, but also to the devil when we are under attack. It is the Word of God that drives him away.

Let me share a "*rhema*" that God gave me on October 3, 2001. It was such a real experience that I can still remember the day it happened. I knew I was in a spiritual battle at the time, and I was very concerned, confused, worried, and afraid. I didn't know what to do. I was driving down Fairmont Parkway in Pasadena on that fall day thinking about my situation when all of a sudden a Bible verse popped into my mind. The verse was this: "*No weapon formed against you shall prosper.*" I knew in my heart that God had spoken. I knew the devil was behind the crisis I was facing and now God had assured me that his scheme wouldn't prevail. When I got to church that day, I went to my study and looked that verse up in a concordance. I didn't even know where it was in the Bible. I discovered that the verse the Holy Spirit had placed on my mind was *Isaiah 54:17*. I underlined and dated

it in my Bible. And, more importantly, I claimed it in my life. As the years have passed, that verse has proven itself true. The weapon Satan formed against me didn't prosper. I'm incredibly thankful for that.

Since that experience, I've faced other battles, and I have repeatedly taken up my sword and quoted that "*rhema*" from *Isaiah 54:17*. I have said on more occasions than I can count, "*No weapon formed against me shall prosper.*" And, by God's grace, no weapon has.

What is true for me is true for you... "*No weapon formed against you shall prosper.*" Memorize that. Believe that. Claim that. Personalize that. And say that out loud to the devil. It's your pistol. It's your sword. It's the only thing you have to use against your adversary. But it is more than enough. It will silence his voice and stop him in his tracks.

At the end of the age, at *The Battle of Armageddon*, it will be "*a sharp sword*" coming out of the mouth of Jesus that will defeat the devil in that great war (*Revelation 19:15*). It's interesting to me that Jesus used *the sword of the Spirit* at the beginning of His ministry to defeat the devil when He was tempted by him. And He will use that *same*

sword at the end of the age to deliver a fatal blow to the forces of evil.

In the meantime, we should follow Jesus' example. When we find ourselves in a spiritual battle, we don't give up; we don't give in; we don't despair. Instead, we reach into our *belt of truth* and pull out our *sword*, a specific "*rhema*" from the Bible, and we quote it to the devil. And we quote it again. And we quote it again and again until finally the devil says "I can't take it anymore. They have learned how to use their sword. They are doing what Jesus did. Their weapon is stronger than mine. I can't stand in the presence of the Word of God." And just like Satan left Jesus, he will leave us. Remember the Bible promise: "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (*James 4:7*). We resist the devil by standing on the Word of God. We resist the devil by using our sword.

The Role of Prayer in a Battle

Paul concluded his discussion on spiritual warfare by instructing us to be people of prayer. He wrote that we are to be "*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*" (*Ephesians 6:18*). I encourage you to be a person of prayer. Have a time each day when

you meet alone with God. Pour out your heart to Him. Tell Him how you feel and ask Him for strength to press on. Pray for divine intervention in your situation. And then watch God work. Don't limit your prayer time to your daily quiet time. Always be in a spirit of prayer. Remember, God hears short, silent prayers, too.

Prayer is the most effective way to put your spiritual armor on every morning. You can begin your day by simply praying: *“Father, this morning I am putting on the **belt of truth** so I will live this day based on what You have said instead of on what others say or on how I feel. I put on the **breastplate of righteousness** to remind me that I am clothed in Christ's righteousness and that I should live like a Christian today. I put on the **shoes of peace** so I will be a peacemaker and a soul-winner today. I take up the **shield of faith** so I can extinguish the fiery darts of the enemy. I put on the **helmet of salvation** so I will think appropriately today. And I take the **sword of the Spirit** so I can fight back against the devil with Your living, active, powerful Word. In Jesus' Name I Pray, Amen.”*

Whatever you do, don't forget to pray. Prayer is our spiritual life line. It's our secret

weapon. And it's how we get dressed for the battle every morning.

Conclusion

As I said at the beginning, it would be wonderful if there were no devil. Of the 1,189 chapters in the Bible, only four of them are “devil free.” The first two chapters and the last two chapters discuss a time when the devil *was* and *will be* wonderfully absent.

The first two chapters of the Bible record the time in the Garden of Eden before Satan appeared as a serpent. Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect harmony with God and with each other. Their work was easy and rewarding. Their bodies were completely healthy. Their minds were uncluttered. And their spirits were light, joyful, and free.

The last two chapters of the Bible speak of a time yet to come. We read about “*a new heaven and a new earth*” (*Revelation 21:1*). The devil goes to hell in *Revelation 20*, so *Revelation 21 and 22* are absolutely perfect. The paradise that was lost in Eden is regained. The environment is wonderful. We read of a place where “*God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death,*

nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4). Oh happy day!

But, for now, we live somewhere between the innocence of Eden and the perfection of heaven. And, as life is today, we still have to contend with the devil. But we don't despair because *“the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” (II Corinthians 10:4)*. Remember, our primary weapons are *prayer and the Word of God*.

My advice is simple: *Be aware of the devil but don't be obsessed by him*. We are not supposed to fill our minds with thoughts about Satan. Instead, we are supposed to be *“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2)*. Fill your mind with spiritual thoughts, especially thoughts about Jesus.

From a spiritual perspective, Jesus defeated the devil when He died on the cross to pay for our sins and then rose triumphantly from the grave three days later. Since that time, He has come to live in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit. Since we have Jesus living inside of us, victory in the spiritual battles of life is more than possible. It is guaranteed if we will *“put on the whole armor of God”* and

courageously follow our Commander into battle (*Ephesians 6:11*).

My prayer is that we would follow Him daily and that we would not only *survive*, but that we would actually *thrive* during the spiritual battles we face. Why shouldn't we? If we're dressed in *the armor of God*, Jesus will always lead us to victory.

¹ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White, Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1985, p. 166.

² *Ibid.*, p. 547.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 528.

⁴ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 182-183.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

⁶ Max Lucado, *Unshakable Hope*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2018, p. 5.

⁷ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1989, p. 58.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Max Anders, *Holman New Testament Commentary*, vol. 8, B & H Publishing Group, Nashville, 1999, p. 191.

¹³ H.A. Ironside, *Galatians and Ephesians*, Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, NJ, 1985, p. 325.

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