

## THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

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Have you ever wondered why the New Testament Scriptures refer to *soldier, captain, armor, discipline, fighting and warfare*? War was a way of life for many countries at our Lord's first advent, just as it is today. Rome had conquered much of the eastern world and established itself as the supreme authority over those conquered, having garrisons of Roman soldiers to watch over their spoil. This was the culture that was in place when Jesus came upon the scene and which continued when the writers of the New Testament set down their words, inspired by God's Holy Spirit.

When we think of the word *soldier*, we associate it with war and someone who has been trained to defend or kill. Though the Christian soldier is not trained to kill carnally, his warfare is defensive and very real. As with this world's soldier, the Christian must be totally dedicated and focused upon the task for which he is being trained. Listen to the words of 2 Timothy 2:4: *"No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs - he wants to please his commanding officer"* (NIV). The KJV says, *"No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please Him who has chosen him to be a soldier."* Who is the Christian's *"commanding officer"*? Hebrews 2:10 answers for us: *"... it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* Even as a soldier is under the authority of his captain or commanding officer, so as Christian soldiers we are to be obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ who is our Leader and Captain, *"enduring hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"* (2 Tim. 2:3).

Who is the enemy with whom we are to do battle? In the context of the armor, it is Satan and all those who align themselves with him, which would also take in this evil world and carnal flesh. Let us look carefully at the words of Ephesians 6:10-18: *"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet shod with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests."*

Let us walk through these verses and note some very pertinent points. We must remember that the Apostle Paul pictured in his mind a Roman soldier and his equipment when he wrote this letter. Roman soldiers were everywhere in Israel and all the surrounding countries, being stationed to oversee and keep the peace in the countries they had conquered.

First, let us note the source of the armor. Verses 11 and 13 direct us to *"put on the full armor of God."* Yes, this is a God-provided armor and not anything we are capable of producing ourselves. All human devices and power can never withstand the terrible forces of Satan and the hosts of evil. Our God will give us all we need to be well-outfitted soldiers of the Cross. The Apostle assures us of this in Philippians 4: 19: *"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* Also in 2 Corinthians 9:8 he states, *"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."*

Verses 11 and 13 also tells us why we need this armor: "So that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes" ... "that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand." Taking our stand is a defensive posture. It means we face the enemy head-on using the provisions we have been given; not giving in to fear, but drawing upon the power of God to overcome the foe. There are seven items listed with our spiritual armor. Sometimes the last item, prayer, is overlooked, but this is very important and one we will consider last.

### **Belt of Truth**

The belt is used to draw the clothing close to the body. This allows the arms of the soldier to move freely so he can defend himself. His sword is also hung from this belt. When he needs to draw his sword and use it, he is not hindered by loose clothing. So it is with the Christian; he does not need to guess where the truth is to be found for it is firmly pressed against his side. We could say that the truth has made us free as John 8:31-32 states: *"If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* The truth will keep us free from all that would come against us so we are always ready to defend ourselves with God's word from Satan's onslaughts.

### **Breastplate of Righteousness**

The breastplate is made up of metal armor, protecting the upper front part of the soldier's body. It will withstand the thrust of a sword or a spear and deflect arrows shot by the enemy. If we stand our ground on the solid foundation of Jesus Christ, nothing can move us. Righteousness will withstand all evil. We should let the attitude of Jesus dwell in us, "who loved righteousness and hated iniquity" (Hebrews 1:9). If we do this, then we, too, will be victorious over our foes. In Romans 8:38-39 we have beautiful assurance on this very point: *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* God has also provided us with the mental capacity to stand fast as 2 Timothy 1:7 tells us: *"For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."* Remember, the breastplate offers no protection to the back of the soldier. For it to be effective, he must face his enemy at all times. A retreating soldier is very vulnerable to a fatal blow by the enemy. That is why a soldier must stand his ground.

### **Feet Shod With the Gospel Of Peace**

When a soldier is taking his stand against the onslaught of his enemy, footing is very important. The sandals of the Roman soldier were very sturdy, enabling him to shift positions quickly and yet not slip back when a blow was thrust at him. Often the sandals were equipped with cleats or spikes when the battle was to be fought in open fields to insure secure footing. As the Christian defends his position, he has the peace of mind that his equipment will accomplish the work for which it was designed by God. He does not "beat the air" in a frenzied reaction (1 Cor. 9:26), but moves confidently with total assurance. If we stand our ground shod with the peaceful gospel of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom, nothing shall move us. We should be ready to spread the message the angels gave to the shepherds on Bethlehem's hillside: *"Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great tidings that will be for all people."* If we rely on God and His promises, we will defend ourselves confident of victory, for as David of old said, "The battle belongs to the LORD" (1 Sam. 17:47). So let us dig in for the attacks that will surely come, being on guard by watching, always ready to face the enemy in a quiet and confident spirit.

## Shield of Faith

The shield is one of the most versatile and effective parts of a soldier's defense armor. One of the most dangerous weapons of ancient warfare was *the fiery dart*. It was a special arrow dipped in pitch, set afire and then launched at the enemy. Upon contact the flaming pitch would attach itself and spread itself onto the object it hit. The shield would quickly deflect this away, and the flame on the shield could quickly be smoldered out on the ground. This shield was equally important for stopping sword and spear thrusts. We are admonished to have "*full assurance of faith*" in Heb. 10:22. The greater our faith, the greater our protection from Satan's fiery darts that will test our faith as to what sort it is. Let us be sure it is a faith that will fully protect us.

## Helmet of Salvation

The helmet was worn as protection for the soldier's head. We know the head, or mind, is the place of the knowledge. The Christian soldier is thereby assured of his salvation received by the costly sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, the Captain of our salvation. Salvation is a gift of God through Jesus. It cannot be earned. It comes from believing that Jesus died for our sins and that His meritorious blood has redeemed us from the penalty of sin and death. If we have this firmly established in our minds, then no blow to the head will have an effect on us. Salvation gives us a living hope. We read in Hebrews 6:19, "*We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.*" let us stand fast in the assurance of our salvation, always looking to the "*leader and perfecter of our faith*" (Hebrews 12:2 - Weymouth).

## Sword of the Spirit

While the sword can be used aggressively, a soldier who is standing his ground uses it defensively to ward the blows of the enemy. We are told that the "*sword of the Spirit IS the word of God.*" Jesus stood His ground against Satan's temptations and the Pharisees by using Scripture to defeat His enemies. In the wilderness after His baptism, He countered Satan's sword thrust by responding, "*It is written ...*" (Matthew 4:4-10). We also must become intimately acquainted with the Word of God, if we are to defend ourselves effectively against our most wily foe. This will mean taking time to read and study our *soldier's manual*, our Bible, where we will receive all the instruction we will ever need in any situation we meet. Most important is our need to rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us into a proper understanding of God's Word and to show us how to use these instructions in our daily warfare against Satan and his evil followers. Satan can easily overcome our personal arguments, but he is defenseless against the Word of God. Hebrews 4:12 tells us just how powerful and effective God's Word is: "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."

We recall the words of David, as a young shepherd boy, when he was face to face with the giant, Goliath. We mentioned this briefly before, but we would now like to read more of the context, for it bears repeating. In 1 Samuel 17:45-47 we read: "*David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and will strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD'S, and He will give all of you into our hands.'*" What great faith and confidence David had in his God. He trusted and then stepped out in fullness of faith against a seemingly invincible enemy. And the LORD honored his faith, giving him the victory. Truly "*the battle was the LORD's.*" May we face our enemy with the same courageous faith and have these words on our lips and in our hearts, "*It is written ....*" Then the victory is ours and Satan will flee.

## Pray In the Spirit

Prayer is our line of communication with our Captain. What soldier can be effective unless he is communicating and has received instructions from his leader? What better way can a Christian soldier prepare for battle with the enemy than by praying continually for guidance and victory. Note that our text said that we should be *"praying always."* This means that we should be in daily, hourly, moment-by-moment contact with our Lord, ever seeking directions and especially in the heat of battle. When we feel somewhat faint, discouraged and tired, let us ask quickly and always believe that we have what we ask for, the strength and power from above to continue fighting this spiritual battle. Remember! The battle we are fighting is not ours, but our God's. May we be always in instant and continual communication with the Captain and Leader of our Salvation. He is always there to encourage us and urge us on. *"Do not be anxious about anything; but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:6-7).

## In Summary

If we use every part of this marvelous armor God has designed and given to each of us, we will fight the battle victoriously to the very end. It will be His victory, not ours, and the praise will belong to Him. We are His humble servants, soldiers of the Cross, obediently using what has been given to us. Romans 8:31 gives us great assurance: *"For what shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"* Let us faithfully live up to the admonition given to Timothy and to us also by the great Apostle Paul in 2 Tim. 2:3: *"Endure hardship like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."* If we do this, we will be pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Pursuing the thought of a soldier a little further, we want to point out that the former clothing he had worn must be cast aside in order to put on the new armor. The enlisted soldier must also set aside his former lifestyle and replace it with a new, disciplined way of life. Colossians 3:2-12 describes this new life in great detail: *"Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things, for you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience."*

A true soldier must learn discipline and obedience. Both are essential to his survival and ultimate victory over his enemies. A disciple is a focused and disciplined follower of someone. Likewise the disciple of Jesus is in strict training. Jesus said that anyone who wanted to be His disciple must *"deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow him"* (Luke 9:23). We read in 1 Peter 5:8-9: *"Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour, whom withstand steadfast in your faith, knowing that the same sufferings are accomplished in your brethren who are in the world."* Being ever prepared to recognize and meet the enemy is essential to survival. Satan is a wily foe but our training manual, the Bible, has prepared us for his many sneaky attacks. It is by lowering our guard or by carelessness that 2 Corinthians 2:11 would apply to us: *"Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."* Alertness, watchfulness is all-important. We read in 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8: *"So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But*

*since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.” Let us always be on guard and alert to resist our enemies as well disciplined, self-controlled and enlightened soldiers of Jesus Christ.*

### **A Future Battle**

There is yet another battle to be fought at a future time in which the faithful, overcoming soldier in this life will be involved with their great leader and Captain, the Lord Jesus Christ. We read of this in the book of Revelation, chapter 19 and verses 11-21: *“I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse, whose Rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of His mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: KING of kings AND LORD of Lords.*

*And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, ‘Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.’ Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the Rider on the horse and His army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the Rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.”*

*In agreement are the words of Jude 14-15: “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”*

The above texts are figuratively assuring us that the day is coming when Jesus will return with His army of faithful “soldiers” to rid the world of all evil and its source. The Rider on the white horse, the Faithful and True, the Word of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords, is none other than our Victorious Lord, Jesus Christ. The armies of heaven riding with Him on white horses are His glorified soldiers, those who faithfully wore the whole armor of God and overcame Satan and all their enemies during this Gospel Age.

Revelation 3:5 promises: “He that overcomes will be dressed in white.” Revelation 19:8 describes Jesus’ Bride: “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” Yes, our great Captain and His army will destroy all that is hostile to God and righteousness. Chapter 20 of Revelation goes on to tell us that Satan will be bound for a thousand years. Then, with all evil removed from the earth, the restitution of all things, as they were before sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden, will begin and all the inhabitants of the earth, living and resurrected, will learn righteous. We read of this grand restitution time in Acts 3:21: “(Jesus) Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Isaiah 26:9 states, “When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world WILL learn righteousness.” This describes the condition that will exist on this earth when Jesus returns, does away with evil, and sets up His righteous Kingdom.

The final battle to be fought is revealed in Revelation 20:7-10. Satan will be loosed after the thousand years and given the opportunity to deceive the nations and gather to himself those who would still oppose the Lord. This battle will be short-lived, for Satan and those who choose to side with him will be destroyed from the face of the earth. Evil will finally be totally eradicated and righteousness will prevail for all eternity. *Praise God for such a grand plan and hope!*

#### **Addendum – Some of Satan’s Fiery Darts**

Anger – Galatians 5:20; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8 Bitterness – Ephesians 4:31; Acts 8:23; Proverbs 14:10 Compromise – Luke 4:1-13 Covetousness – Romans 7:7, 13:9; Micah 2:2 Depression – (Elijah - 1 Kings 19:3-5)

Despair – 2 Corinthians 4:8; Ecclesiastes 2:20; Ecclesiastes 2:20, 2 Cor. 4:8

#### ***Discontent – Hebrews 13:5***

Discord – Galatians 5:20; Numbers 12:1-3

Discouragement – Ezra 4:4; Numbers 32:7, Joshua 1:6-9; Exodus 6:9

Disobedience – Heb. 3:18, 4:6 & 11

Distrust – Numbers 13:32, 14:11

Double-Mindedness – James 1:8, 4:8

Doubt – Matthew 14:31; Mt.21:21; James 1:6

Envy – Galatians 5:21

Evil Surmising – Zechariah 7:10, Matthew 9:4 KJV

Evil Speaking – Acts 23:5; Titus 3:2 KJV; Psalms 34:13; Ephesians 4:31

#### ***Fear – Proverbs 29:25; 2 Timothy 1:7; 1 John 4:18***

Greed – Colossians 3:5; Ephesians 5:3

Grudge – Leviticus 19:18

Guilt – (Remedy 1 John 1:9) Revelation 12:10

Hatred—Galatians 5:20; Leviticus 19:17

Jealousy – Galatians 5:20; Proverbs 6:34

Lust of Flesh – Galatians 5:19, 21; 1 John 2:16

Lying (Cover-up) Prov. 6:17, 19, 22; 26:28; Psa. 34:13, 2 Sam. 11:1-12:23

Presumption – 1 Samuel 13:12; Psalms 19:13 KJV

Pride – Proverbs 6:17; 8:13; 13:10; 16:18, 29:23; 1 John 2:16

Rationalization & Excuses – Exodus 32:24; 1 Samuel 13:12, 15:15

Rebellion - 1 Samuel 15:22-23

Revenge (Direct and Passive) – Jas. 4:17; Gal. 6:9-10, Isa.12:23; Lev. 19:18

#### ***Self-pity – Jeremiah 10:19, 45:3***

Self-sufficiency – Galatians 3:3; Ecclesiastes 1:10-2:11

Unbelief – Mark 9:24; Romans 4:20, 11:20; Hebrews 3:12,18, 19

Worldly Ambitions – Galatians 5:20; Philippians 2:3

Worry – Matthew 6:28, 31, 34; Mark 13:11

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