

## EPHESIANS 6:11

### THE RAGING BATTLE

“Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”<sup>1</sup>

If you seek a religion that will make you comfortable, Christianity is not for you. Despite the emphasis on peace and benefit that emanates from Christian pulpits, Christianity is not a religion for the weak or the lazy. Christianity is a religion that demands strenuous effort, ongoing sacrifice and a willingness to engage in spiritual warfare. *There is a battle going on!* Though many people imagine that spiritual warfare has nothing to do with them, Christians do not live in neutral territory—we are on the front lines.

For the average Christian, this means that our goals are wrong. Contemporary Christians tend to seek a life defined by an absence of conflict—a life that is carefree and quiet. However, honesty compels me to remind you that we Christians are not called to tranquility, but to war. To be certain, we who are followers of the Risen Son of God are called to peace, but the peace to which we are called is peace in the midst of struggle. We will know that peace only when we have been thoroughly trained and when we have confidence in the training we have received. The peace of God will not permit us to become passive Christians, nor will it permit us to be inactive in time of battle. Rather, the peace of God will demand obedience to God’s will; and that means that we must engage the enemy at every turn, resisting his attacks and holding the ground that the Master has entrusted to us.

This is war! Though western governments spend incredible amounts of money on defence, our way of life is nevertheless being destroyed. Our heritage as a nation founded on Christian principles is being jettisoned as rapidly as possible by cultural mavens. Our houses are equipped with locks to deter wicked people from entering to rob or to kill; yet, we sacrifice our integrity and yield our children to the prevailing culture without a murmur of dissent. Our schools and universities have largely capitulated to evil; they are, for the most part, no longer willing—perhaps even unable—to encourage righteousness in the students entrusted to them. The judicial system and governments at every level have surrendered their responsibility to do good; today, they promote wickedness and attempt to indoctrinate the citizenry to call good evil and evil good. Our entertainment, in large measure, consists of viewing the vilest forms of depravity and listening to the most demeaning speech, as if lewd and lascivious behaviour or crude and salacious talk will make us a better nation. Many churches that once stood solidly for truth and righteousness have deserted the field. It seems that in the midst of these spiritual hostilities, many of our fellow saints have been taken captive, and the churches that once trumpeted forth a militant note are now silenced. There seems to be scant difference between the professed people of God and the world in which they momentarily reside.

We did not start this war now raging, but we are certain how it will end. During the course of repeated assaults, we have seen some of our fellow believers injured—and many more will be wounded as the enemy continues his ferocious assaults. Of those wounded, some will be dreadfully disfigured and incapacitated—removed from the conflict as result of their injuries. Tragically, some of the wounds are self-inflicted, and some are the result of “friendly fire.”

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible, English Standard Version**, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Whether we fight with honour or whether we cower in the trenches depends on whether we recognise the nature of the enemy and the nature of the battle. We are fighting as mere mortals in “the heavenly places.” Most of us are sensible only of the physical world, but we must make ourselves aware of the spiritual realm. In order to prepare us for the conflict, let’s learn about the enemy and the conduct of the war through looking into the Word of God.

**THE ENEMY** — We had an introduction to the enemy in a previous study. We must not underestimate the wicked one; however, neither should we give him more credit than he deserves. Satan is a created being—he is neither omnipotent nor omniscient, he cannot be omnipresent. In short, the devil is not a god—he is an angel created by God.

In adhering to God’s Word, we walk a narrow line. Though the Bible speaks of Satan’s existence and warns against his schemes, it does not glorify him or exalt his power. Satan is a powerful individual; but his doom is certain. On the other hand, we live in a day in which the majority of preachers no longer believe there is such a being as the devil. They have imbibed deeply of the intoxicating philosophies of this dying age, and thus dismiss any talk of the devil as hopelessly out of touch with reality. Therefore, if we will be faithful to the Word, we must know our enemy without giving him authority that he does not possess.

Within Christendom, I suppose that the majority of theologians and preachers have either openly dismissed the idea of Satan—if not openly then tacitly through ignoring the reality of his existence. They sometimes ridicule the man of God who dares speak of spiritual struggles, suggesting that we are ignoring “real” problems through attending to the spiritual needs of mankind. They say they are dealing with real problems by addressing poverty, oppression, hunger and various forms of injustice, even as they castigate the fundamentalist for daring to speak of spiritual warfare. To be certain, these are real problems and we should do all we can to alleviate or abolish them. However, we should ask, “If the real problems of the world are merely material, why weren’t they eliminated long ago?” Obviously, there are unseen forces at work.

I want to point out one other truth before we pursue a study of our enemy. Many times when people read Paul’s words, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood,” they imagine that we have no physical struggles. Of course, we do have physical struggles. Many of us, perhaps all of us, struggle against the desires of the flesh. Our desires are opposed to righteousness, and we realise that we must master our own lives. Many of the saints of God came from backgrounds in which they were addicted to tobacco, alcohol and possibly even drugs. Such people often speak of a lifetime of struggle to avoid succumbing to their desires.

There is no question but that the explosive growth of the Internet has permitted many of the people of God access to pornography. Previously, if a person wanted to view pornographic materials, they had to go to a sleazy theatre or purchase a magazine. The fact that they were compelled to openly enter such venues deterred many of the professed saints. Now, however, with the click of a mouse people can access some of the rawest material imaginable. Many of God’s people have succumbed to the lure of the forbidden, ruining their testimony and wounding themselves to such an extent that they were unable to continue the fight.

Tragically, the desire for possessions has turned many of the saints away from pursuing righteousness. They sometimes contend that they only seek wealth to permit them one day to support the work of the Kingdom; others simply ignore Kingdom work, choosing to live for this present, dying world. Other believers are tempted by power or by pleasure. Tragically, many of God’s choicest saints have been mastered by their desires, proving that as was true of Demas, they are “in love with this present world” [2 TIMOTHY 4:10].

If our own desires were not enough to lay to rest any thought that we need never struggle physically, there are always the struggles that we have as we pray for the lost souls, or as we plead with the lost to believe the Gospel, or as we tend to the hurting and sin-sick within society. The Christian Faith will demand that we get our hands dirty and that we sacrifice comfort for the welfare of others. There are physical struggles and we cannot deny that.

Understand, then, that Paul is not saying that we never struggle on the human, physical level. He is saying that this is not the sole dimension of our struggle. Moreover, he is acknowledging that behind many of the struggles that we see as human struggles is a spiritual opponent. Such thinking flies in the face of contemporary philosophy, which cannot imagine a spiritual world. Nevertheless, the Bible is quite clear that there is a spiritual world, and warns that the evil one seeks to destroy righteousness and godliness.

Flip Wilson made a comedic career out of claiming through the persona of Geraldine, “The devil made me do it.” While that may make for hilarious entertainment, it is poor theology. A review of the Word of God will demonstrate that on only six occasions do we witness Satan actually tempting an individual.

Of course, he tempted our first mother, though he did not tempt Adam [GENESIS 3:1-6]. Job was incited by Satan [JOB 1:12; 2:7]. Judas received special attention from Satan [LUKE 22:3], as did Peter [LUKE 22:31]. Ananias, but not his wife Sapphira, appears to have been tempted by Satan [ACTS 5:1-9; see esp. ACTS 5:3]. Finally, Jesus Himself was tempted by Satan [LUKE 4:1-13]. Satan does not make a career out of tempting individuals. James brings us up short when he says, “Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire” [JAMES 1:14]. Thus, much of what is ascribed to Satan is actually due to our own fallen nature and our willing surrender to gratify our own desires.

There were undoubtedly other people who were tempted by the devil that are not recorded in the Bible, but these are the only ones that are said to have received Satan’s attention. It is doubtful that we know anyone who has received the devil’s attention. Satan is identified as “the prince of the power of the air” in this Ephesian letter [EPHESIANS 2:2]. The Apostle also identified him as “the god of this world” [2 CORINTHIANS 4:4]. Moreover, John said of the devil, “the whole world lies in the power of the evil one” [1 JOHN 5:19]. On at least two occasions, our Lord spoke of Satan as “the ruler of this world” [JOHN 12:31; see also JOHN 14:30]. Among the satanic temptations the Master endured was that in which the devil “showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment and time.” Satan then offered them to the Master, saying, “To you will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will” [LUKE 4:5, 6]. Notice that Jesus did not deny that the kingdoms of this world were in thralldom to the devil. Through his silence, He acknowledged that this was the reality.

I point out these facts in order to remind you that Satan is king over the demonic powers [see REVELATION 9:11]. As king, he commands his minions to do his bidding. Just as a general does not take up arms to fight an enemy, but directs his troops, so Satan does not often engage directly in conflict, rather directing “the rulers,” “the authorities,” and “the cosmic powers.”

This brings up a point that may have great significance in our study. Notice that Paul says in verse 12 that we wrestle “*against* the rulers, *against* the authorities, *against* the cosmic powers over this present darkness, *against* the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.” Modern editors would have undoubtedly removed the repeated use of the word *against*, but they would have removed an important point that the Apostle stresses. By repeating the word, Paul is saying that this is a real battle. It is not simply a series of problems that we encounter; rather, we Christians are struggling against all the forces of evil.

When Paul speaks of “the rulers,” he is undoubtedly speaking of demonic control over territories. There is no question but that in some regions of the earth, demonic power seems to be more openly expressed and the evil of those regions is evident. When Daniel fasted and prayed, God’s angel was sent with an answer. Listen to what this powerful angel of God said. “Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.” Now, pay special attention to the next verse, “The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia” [DANIEL 10:12, 13]. Soon after saying this, the angel said, “I will return to fight against the prince of Persia; and when I go out, behold, the prince of Greece will come” [DANIEL 10:20]. There appears to be territorial rulers assigned by the evil one serving to influence kings and kingdoms. Reviewing the bent of the nations of the world, it is not difficult to imagine that the nations of the world are manipulated by the devil. John heard the cry that all nations had drunk of the wine of the passion of the immorality of Babylon the great [REVELATION 18:3], and thus “all nations were deceived” by her sorcery [REVELATION 18:23]. After the Millennial reign of the Master, “Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations” [REVELATION 20:8], performing the same nefarious work that he now does among the nations.

Again, Paul spoke of the Christian’s warfare against “the authorities.” It should be obvious that authority is not the same thing as rule. A person may have great authority without having the power to rule. When the Apostle speaks of authorities, I believe he is speaking of demonic control over the values we embrace as a culture. We have witnessed a paradigm shift in cultural values within a few short decades. Whereas Canada was once known for its Christian ethic, today it is more likely known for tolerance of wickedness, for the desire to accumulate things, for the pursuit of pleasure. These values are not Christian; rather, they are controlled and manipulated by demonic authorities. We are at war with these spiritual authorities.

Finally, when the Apostle speaks of “the cosmic powers,” it seems that he is speaking of control. In other words, behind those powerful entities that seem to promote wickedness—the news media, the entertainment industry, perhaps even movements that promote and agitate for acceptance of sinful activity—are “the cosmic powers.” Behind every powerful person or movement that promotes evil are demonic powers that are manipulating and controlling. These cosmic powers are wicked and they are destructive; it is against such powers that we struggle.

Ours is not merely a struggle between truth and lies, though it certainly includes that dimension. Neither is this a struggle simply between good and evil, as most people understand those terms. The emphasis in Paul’s letter is upon the evil that comes with spiritual control.

People sometimes imagine that there was an increase in demonic activity during the days of Jesus’ ministry, and that we have not seen such things since. However, I must believe that the demonic powers are very much at work in our world, and that they have been working throughout history. One of the great victories Satan enjoys presently is the fact that so many professing Christians deny the existence of the spiritual world, and they certainly deny the existence of the devil. This leads me to next consider “the schemes of the devil.”

**HIS SCHEMES** — Many Christians would consider the truths of our text to be unimportant today. Perhaps there were problems that Paul and other writers of Scripture ascribed to demons, but in the view of many Christians we have become more sophisticated than that. One of the schemes of the devil is undoubtedly to lead people to deny his existence. Nevertheless, the Word of God warns Christians against ignorance either of the devil or of his schemes [see 2 CORINTHIANS 2:11].

What sort of schemes does the devil employ?<sup>2</sup> Always, the enemy chooses the time of assault, for which reason we must be watchful. However, we know there are times of greater vulnerability to attack. If we know the times that we are at risk, we should watch ourselves.

**For those newly converted to the Faith**, Satan mocks us in our weakness. As newborn members of the Faith, we are often tripped up. At such times, the enemies of the soul come to say, “Well, there you have it—you sinned! I guess you are not a Christian after all. Your conversion was temporary. You might as well quit now.”

Again, **when the Christian is troubled**—whether through financial reversal, or illness, or conflicts in our relationships, Satan attempts to destroy us. When things go well, we seldom struggle with doubts. However, when things go wrong we tend to ask, “What is wrong with me? If I am a Christian, why do I experience such trials?” At such times we open ourselves to demonic assault as the forces of evil whisper to our souls, “If God loved you, He wouldn’t let you suffer like this. If God is good, he obviously doesn’t care about you. And if He isn’t good, why should you worry about serving Him?”

This was the temptation that Job faced. His friends made precisely such suggestions, arguing that this is a moral universe. Bad things don’t happen to good people. Therefore, if bad things were happening, it was because Job had done something terribly wrong. According to them, God couldn’t love someone who was bad. Job’s wife was even blunter. “Curse God and die,” she counselled [JOB 2:9].

Again, **at times of our greatest achievements**, we are attacked. This was Peter’s experience. You will recall that Jesus asked the disciple who they thought He was, and Peter responded, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” [MATTHEW 16:16]. This was incredible insight. In fact, Jesus informed you, “Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” [MATTHEW 16:17]. Then, the Master continued by speaking of his death and resurrection. However, Peter, riding high on his good performance, tried to persuade Jesus that He did not need to die. For his effort He received a stinging rebuke, “Get behind Me, Satan! You are a hindrance to Me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man” [MATTHEW 16:23]. Similarly, when we experience our most notable victories, we are exceptionally vulnerable.

**When the Christian is idle**, they are susceptible to spiritual attack. We have in our English tongue several proverbs that address this matter: “Idle hands are the devils workshop.” “If the devil finds a man inactive, he will soon find work for him to do.” It was when David was inactive about the palace rather than fighting the Lord’s battles that he fell into grave sin with Bathsheba. He left the battle in the hands of his commander, Joab, and was thus left alone in Jerusalem with little to do and lots of time on his hands [2 SAMUEL 11:1-27].

One of the most commonly, and gravely, neglected periods of susceptibility to spiritual attack occurs **when the Christian is isolated from others who share the Faith**. We need one another, and uniting as the Community of Faith permits us to serve one another, building one another, comforting one another and encouraging one another. Within a congregation that functions as the Body of Christ, Christians watch for one another. However, when we wander away from the flock, we shortly become a victim of the enemy who, as Peter says, “prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” [1 PETER 5:8]. Many eyes create an environment that is safe. The church is designed to operate as a flock, and not as a loose confederation; we are a Body, not a mob or a political entity.

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<sup>2</sup> I’m grateful to Dr. James Montgomery Boice for this summary. See James Montgomery Boice, **Ephesians: An Expository Commentary** (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1988) 232

Dr. Boice lists one final period of heightened susceptibility to spiritual assault, and that is *when the Christian is dying*. When bodily strength is ebbing and the saint is on the verge of eternity, you may be certain that the wicked one will have his forces present, attempting to destroy the work of God. Those witnessing the departure of the child of God will report to others what the exodus entailed. If there are multiplied doubts, you may be certain that this will be reported, as the forces of darkness seek to turn others from the Faith.

What methods are used in spiritual attack? We have already heard Peter testifying that the devil *comes as “a roaring lion”* [1 PETER 5:8]. Frequently, Satan will attempt to intimidate the child of God through frightening him. This seems to be a frequent tactic in our day, as Christians are cowed into silence. The judicial system and the human rights tribunals that spring up like fleas on a dog, each attempt to silence the Christian. In a former church, I received almost weekly judicial updates from the “denomination serpents” informing pastors of the dangers of speaking urging them to avoid presenting messages that attack sinful behaviour. These leaders seemed to prefer that their pastors be deferential to the point of becoming ineffective, so long as they maintained a patina of religiosity. Contrary to Christ’s command, their efforts led to neutering the pulpit and training the pew to keep their religion to themselves. Where are the people who can be charged with turning the world upside down [see ACTS 17:6]?

The wicked one and his minions also *come as a friend*. When we are pouting, the forces of evil come telling us that we have a reason to be angry, that we can never forgive those who hurt us, that we are justified in holding onto our grudge. When we are smarting from betrayal, the wicked one will tell us that this is just the way of Christians. He sympathises with us, and encourages us to nurse our anger. The cosmic powers of darkness are not always threatening; sometimes they are friendly. This is how Satan came to our first mother. He came with an offer to help. You can almost hear the incredulity in his voice as he asks, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” Then, you can hear the sympathetic note as he says, “You will not surely die... You will be like God, knowing good and evil” [GENESIS 3:1, 5]. The child of God must know that Jesus is “a friend who sticks closer than a brother” [PROVERBS 18:24]. We dare not permit the rulers of this dark world to present themselves as the friend of the soul.

Then, Satan appears as “*an angel of light*” [2 CORINTHIANS 11:14]. In fact, he has many among the churches who are working on his behalf. The Apostle described these men as “false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ” [2 CORINTHIANS 11:13]. Martin Luther said, “When you look for the devil, don’t forget to look in the pulpit.” It is not my place to condemn those who occupy the sacred desk, but the Master did say of false prophets, “You will recognise them by their fruits” [MATTHEW 7:16, 20]. Christians are well advised to examine the fruits of those who purport to lead them in spiritual matters.

It is increasingly popular among the religious elite to dismiss the Bible as hopelessly outdated. In their arrogance, these supposed ministers dismiss the Word of God as a relic of an unenlightened age king past. “There was no creation—like Topsy, man just happened. Those stories of miracles are just myths to illustrate some truth. We are far beyond such things today. Scholarship has disproved all those ancient stories.” So, the emphasis from the pulpit is on “love” rather than truth. People come to church in order to feel good about themselves rather than to hear the Word of the Living God. Worship is judged by how it makes the participants feel, and the performers are compelled to work up a better program each week in order to keep the multitudes entertained. All the while, the deceived people are engaged in an endless quest to find a better program, a more satisfying liturgy, livelier music—something to make them want to come back the following week as they give God an hour.

It is true that truth without love will lead us to become cold and indifferent to the needs of others. Without love, we will be devoid of compassion. However, love without truth will always lead us into compromise and grievous error. Either extreme is an abomination. God calls us to a balanced life—not a life of extremes. However, the ministers of Satan are more concerned with giving people what they want than they are with delivering the message of life.

By no means is this list of satanic devices exhaustive; it is suggestive, drawing upon the evidence presented in the Word of God. This is the reason we are warned to “keep alert” [EPHESIANS 6:18]. We can never know precisely when we will experience attack or what form an attack will take. We can be certain that since we occupy conquered ground that we will experience attack, and that the attack will at times be ferocious. You must know that Satan’s design is to destroy the work of God, so he will do all he can to discredit the child of God and to hinder the work of the people of God.

**OUR DEFENCE** — Paul gives two vital commands for all who engage in spiritual warfare: “Be strong in the Lord,” and “Put on the whole armour of God.” These two commands confront us with the uncomfortable truth that we are unequal to the opponent we will face. We have no strength; our strength comes from the Lord. We are utterly defenceless without the armour God provides. Nevertheless, it has pleased the Father for us to engage the enemy—but we are not left on our own, for we are thoroughly equipped to defeat the enemy.

There is a teaching extant within evangelicalism that says we need not engage in spiritual combat. The thinking goes that we occupy conquered ground, and therefore we need not engage the enemy. Perhaps one of the books that has greatly influenced this concept is a study of Ephesians entitled “Sit, Walk, Stand.” Written by Watchman Nee, the book is insightful and helpful in many respects. The concept developed by Nee begins with the Christian sitting with Christ in heavenly places [EPHESIANS 2:6], that is resting in Christ’s achievements. It continues by urging believers to walk out the Christian life [EPHESIANS 4:1], or to live Christianity practically. Finally, it encourages Christians to stand on ground Christ has conquered [EPHESIANS 6:11, 13, 14].<sup>3</sup>

There is considerable truth in Nee’s book, but it is often twisted in Christian circles to become an excuse for avoiding spiritual conflict. You hear it in such expressions as, “Let go and let God.” The concept is that the battle is not ours, it is God’s; therefore, let God do the fighting. However, it should be obvious that when the Apostle describes the armour and armaments that are entrusted to us, he includes not only defensive armour, such as breastplate, helmet and shield, but offensive weaponry such as sword. Whether he is thinking that we are to fight defensively or offensively, he is clearly thinking that we are to engage the enemy! I happen to believe that we are to occupy ground Christ has won, but we are to engage the enemy. We will not need to seek out the enemy—he will come to us! And when he does, we are to resist him.

Paul does not allow us to view call to arms as a passive concept; rather, this call to arms is quite an active concept. We are at war with a ferocious, vicious, heartless, brutal enemy. As one student of the Word has written of the enemies of the Faith, “They have no moral principles, no code of honour, no higher feelings. They recognise no Geneva Convention to restrict or partially civilise the weapons of their warfare. They are utterly unscrupulous, and ruthless in the pursuit of their malicious designs.”<sup>4</sup> No Christian can sit on the sidelines, for should they do so, they must know that they have already been taken captive by the enemy.

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<sup>3</sup> Watchman Nee, **Sit, Walk Stand** (Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, PA 1957)

<sup>4</sup> J. R. W. Stott, **God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians** (InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 1979, 1980)  
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So, we must stand our ground, and this requires courage. We need not imagine that we must stand in our own strength, but rather we are to stand in the strength of the Lord's might. Not even Michael the archangel when contending with Satan depended upon his own might. Rather, we read that He rested in the Lord, saying, "The Lord rebuke you" [JUDE 9]. That word was enough to win the conflict. The great Reformer, Martin Luther, has described the situation precisely in a hymn that he wrote:

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He—  
Lord Sabaoth His Name, from age to age the same—  
And He must win the battle.

Perhaps it is futile to speak of courage in a self-centred society. Perhaps it is a waste of time to speak of sacrifice or character in a culture that no longer esteems such qualities. However, the Word of boldly presents such concepts as not only desirable, but expected of those who would please the Master. Paul concludes his first letter to the Corinthians by admonishing, "Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong" [1 CORINTHIANS 16:13].

Because we will face such a powerful enemy, it is necessary that we be properly equipped. Religious men imagine that through reciting incantations or withdrawing into desert places they will prepare themselves for battle. They imagine that through cant and creed they will stand firm. They imagine that through magical rituals, or through the singing of songs or the reading of magical prayers they will engage the enemy. However, the armour of God does not include seclusion from the world or ascetic rituals. False religions invoke such things, and especially celibacy, voluntary poverty, monastic obedience or the invocation of saints and angels. Such things constitute false armour that has been substituted for the armour of God. Rather, we are commanded to dress ourselves with the armour of God and equip ourselves with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

We will be given "the belt of truth"—that truth is Christ the Lord, for He is the One who said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" [JOHN 14:6]. We are provided with "the breastplate of righteousness." Because we are in Christ Jesus, He has become to us "wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption" [1 CORINTHIANS 1:30]. For combat boots, we are equipped with the readiness given by "the Gospel of peace." This is nothing less than "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" [MARK 1:1]. We are also given the shield of faith—faith that is centred in "the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" [GALATIANS 2:20]. We are also equipped with "the helmet of salvation." This is salvation which was purchased by the Master when He offered His own life as a sacrifice because of our sin. So, we declare with the Apostles, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" [ACTS 4:10-12]. Above all this, we have received "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." We are prepared for the conflict.

Are you in the battle? Or have you already been taken captive by the wicked one? Are you standing firm, secure in the knowledge of the Master's call? Or are you cowering in the rear echelons? Prayer becomes the channel for access to the Master to receive fresh strength and new courage; are you availing yourself of His power? Or have you ceased to wage war? It is high time that the people of God again held their ground against the enemy's assaults.

Perhaps you are not in the battle because you have no right to be part of the Master's armies. Is it possible that some listening have never received the life that is freely offered in the Saviour? Then, hear this word, for it presents in clearest terms the divine offer of life in God's own Son. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation." God concludes with this promise: "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved" [**ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**].<sup>5</sup> Believe this message and be saved. This is our prayer. This is our invitation. Amen.

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<sup>5</sup> **NET Bible** (Biblical Studies Press, 2006)