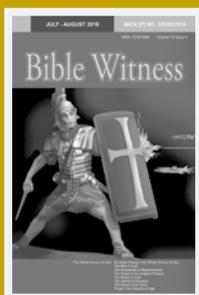


Bible Witness



The Whole Armour of God: Be Battle-Ready in the Whole Armour of God
The Belt of Truth
The Breastplate of Righteousness
The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace
The Shield of Faith
The Helmet of Salvation
The Sword of the Spirit
Prayer: The Channel of Help



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Printer

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

The magazine is distributed free from 2006 onwards. "Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). Postage and handling charges for 2 years (12 issues)

SURFACE MAIL	Singapore/Malaysia S\$10.00	Other Countries S\$14.00
AIR MAIL	Asia S\$26.00	Other Countries S\$34.00

International bank draft, money order or postal order drawn on a Singapore bank in Singapore dollars may be made payable to "Bible Witness".

LOVE-GIFT

Bible Witness Media Ministry welcomes love-gifts from readers to meet the cost of publishing and distribution. The Ministry also sends the magazine freely to churches in poorer countries. Hence your generous support is much needed and greatly appreciated.

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Editorial

Esteemed Reader,

As a sequel to the last issue on “Know Your Enemy”, we are glad to publish a series of articles in this issue, urging Christians to be battle-ready with “The Whole Armour of God”. These articles are based on the exhortations of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:10-17.

Every Christian ought to be combat-ready, for Satan and his devils are hot on his heel. Spiritual warfare is real. Vicious and relentless attacks are directed at him. An unprepared Christian has no possibility of escaping the ferocious onslaughts of Satan.

Satan’s mode of attack against Christians is complex and cunning that one cannot possibly know every subtle movement of his assault. In view of this, how should Christians deal with the craftiness and deceitfulness of this enemy?

The Scriptures exhort us, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). What matters most is that we are fastened securely with the whole armour of God that we may stand up to the army of our wicked assailants.

However severe the attacks may be, a fully-fortified Christian will be able to defend and parry such attacks, and to remain unscathed and safe. Paul wrote: “... take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13).

Three times, Paul used the word “stand” in Ephesians 6:11-14 to indicate how strong and steadfast a Christian can be even when he is the target of Satan’s fierce fury. No Christian, who stands in the might of the Lord and is fully equipped with the whole armour of God, shall fall.

After exhorting Christians to put on the whole armour of God to stand against the wiles of the devil, Paul urged them to pray – “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18). While Satan and his hosts are constantly looking to defeat us in our spiritual battle, wouldn’t it be foolish of us not to seek help from our omnipotent God all the time? Prayer is the all-pervasive strategy in which spiritual warfare is to be fought.

Brethren, pray for us too. This magazine is produced with the sacrificial labour of a cheerful team of brethren. A photograph of the full-time staff of Bible Witness Media Ministry is published on the back cover page of this issue. We also have a list of the names of brethren who help us periodically with the publication of this magazine; and their names do appear on the inside of the front cover page. I covet your prayers for all of us who co-labour in the proclamation of God’s Word through the various channels of Bible Witness Media Ministry.

May God be pleased to spur you on through the pages of this magazine to stand in the might of the Lord to fight a good fight of faith. To God be the glory.

Yours faithfully in His service,

Prabhudas Koshy

Be Battle-Ready in the Whole Armour of God

Ephesians 6:10-13



The Scriptures sound a clarion call to God's people to rise up in spiritual arms for the battle that is being waged against their souls. There is a battle to be fought by every Christian and it must be fought well. The Apostle Paul exhorted Timothy that he "mightest war a good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18) and "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12).

Nowhere in the Scriptures is this call unto battle more explicit than in the concluding chapter of the epistle that Paul wrote to the Ephesians. Here, the reader's attention is drawn to three pertinent points that delineate how Christians are to engage in this spiritual warfare.

The power for the battle

Paul began his call to be ready for the spiritual battle with these words: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10). Christians are called

to be fit soldiers, always ready for battle. Yet the strength needed for victory in the battle can be found only "in the Lord and in the power of his might". No other strength is equal to the task except the strength of the Almighty God. All other strength will prove to be impotent.

Christians who trust in their own strength will become all too vulnerable, for the strength of the human flesh is weak and insufficient in overcoming the enemy (Mark 14:38). The 19th century hymn of George Duffield, *Stand up, Stand up for Jesus*, echoes the same sentiment in this line, "The arm of flesh will fail you. You dare not trust your own." So well did the psalmist say, "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him" (Psalm 28:7).

"... be strong in the Lord" - A Christian separated from Christ is like a branch

separated from the vine, or a limb cut off from the body. He will become powerless, even lifeless (John 15:5). Anyone who rushes into the spiritual battle without putting his trust in Christ, and without continually looking to Him for strength and wisdom is in grave danger. He would not have the strength even to reach the battlefield. "... for the battle is not yours, but God's" (2 Chronicles 20:15; cf. 1 Samuel 17:47).

"... in the power of his might" - This phrase means "in the vigour derived from His strength". The Lord's power is available to all who believe in Christ. The nature of His power available to the believers includes His resurrection power (Ephesians 1:19-21), His glorious power (Colossians 1:11), His perfecting power (2 Corinthians 12:9-10), and His protecting power (John 10:29; Psalm 91:1-7).

In more ways than one, believers are to appropriate the Lord's strength for themselves. This requires emptying ourselves of all self-confidence (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Galatians 2:20), being earnest in prayer (Psalm 138:3), waiting upon Him (Psalm 27:14), and following Him closely in His path (Psalm 63:8).

The protection for the battle

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:11-12).

No less than the full armour of God is the requirement for the complete protection of the Christian. It is the only sure and

impregnable defence against the wiles of the devil, for we wrestle not against flesh and blood. If our adversaries were mere human beings who possess nothing beyond physical strength and ingenuity, we might be able to defend ourselves. But as we have to contend with Satan, who is a powerful spirit-being, we need the divine protection of the whole armour of God.

"For we wrestle... against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The battle can be a very close and intense hand-to-hand combat, like that of wrestling. Though we have to face this wicked enemy, we fight him only when he comes to attack us. The Scriptures never teach us to go around challenging the devil to battle. We wrestle and contend with him only in defence against his attacks.

We are fighting against a superhuman force. Satan is not a solitary enemy; he has an army of demons beyond our ability to number. They are a much organised force and they have distinctive roles in attacking Christians (Ephesians 6:12). Yet we are reminded by the Word of God that Christ has already triumphed over these evil forces at Calvary's cross (Colossians 2:15) and they will continue to suffer defeat till the very end (Revelation 20:10).

With the Lord's help and armed with His strength and armour, we can overcome the ferocious demonic beings that come against us. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)" (2 Corinthians 10:3-4).

The protagonist of the battle

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand” (Ephesians 6:13).

The Christian, who is to take up the whole armour of God, is the main protagonist in the battle. He is called to stand firm; for there is a wily, scheming villain to overcome in the evil day.

When is “the evil day”? Since the fall of man, every day of his life can be an “evil day” (Ephesians 5:16). But here is a reference to a specific day when the forces of the devil will pounce upon a believer. It is the day of test. It is when things are at their worst because of the devil’s schemes. It can be today or tomorrow!

“... and having done all, to stand” - The Greek verb which Paul used here has to do with achievements in war. This is understood as having done all things not only in preparation for victory but also in pursuing it. All

opposition will be overcome and having conquered them all, the protagonist then stands and maintains his ground in victory.

Such was the Apostle Paul’s testimony of triumph in the midst of Satan’s opposition when he wrote: “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me... and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:17-18).

Thus he enjoins all Christians to enter the battle with these words of full conviction: “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:37-39).



The Belt of Truth

(Continued from page 8)

let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to

you of salvation, and that of God” (Philippians 1:27-28).

Only when the knowledge of God’s truth renews and shapes our minds can we find victory in the daily conflicts of our Christian life. As this knowledge is put into practice, it becomes our sure protection, especially when we believers come

face to face with real evil. The truth is the safety belt for Christians in the day of evil. A life that is not tucked under the belt of truth will be an easy prey to the temptations and trials of the devil. So let every Christian make sure that he is girded with the belt of truth.

The Belt of Truth

Ephesians 6:14a



The first armour of God that a Christian is presented with is the belt of truth. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:14a: “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”

Our chief adversary, the devil, is a liar and master deceiver (John 8:44b; Acts 13:10; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 13-15; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10; Revelation 20:2-3). He uses his lies as a lethal weapon against God’s people, and because of this, the Apostle Paul expressed his concern to the Corinthians that they would be beguiled by Satan. “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3).

The belt of truth is given to protect us against the lying deception of Satan

and his army. Let us “stand therefore” against the devil’s onslaught. Every believer must stand firm, fully-equipped with the armour which God has provided. The Christian must not cower in fear, but should stand fast in the Lord (Philippians 4:1), being watchful and mindful of his own frailties, “that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:5).

“...having your loins girt about with truth...”

What does Paul mean by “having your loins girt about”? Herein, he uses imagery. In the apostolic period, even the Roman soldiers wore loose robes. These soldiers would not go into a battle with their tunics impeding

their movements. It was dangerous to be entangled in their own robes while the enemy closed in on them for the kill. So what they did was to gather up their clothing and tuck it under their belt, as they prepared to fight the battle. As such, warriors in those days never marched into battle with loose, ungirt tunics. This is what Paul referred to as “having your loins girt about”. This act of girding up the loins was a picture of preparedness or readiness.

Such idiomatic phrases are used elsewhere in the Scriptures to indicate the idea of preparedness. In Exodus 12:11, God commanded the Israelites to eat the Passover feast with their loins girded about in anticipation of their journey out of Egypt. Likewise, the Lord Jesus told the disciples to prepare for His second

coming: “Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning” (Luke 12:35). The Apostle Peter also used similar words to admonish his readers. He wrote: “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:13).

Thus, having one’s “loins girt about with truth” implies wearing the truth as a tight lash to gird up one’s thoughts, desires and actions. Just as a Roman soldier girds his loins to prevent his tunic from obstructing his movements, the Christian must also tuck his life under the belt of God’s truth, even His Word. “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier” (2 Timothy 2:4).

The Bible issues a strong warning to those who were supposed to have been called out of the world’s darkness and yet have drifted back to their old ways. “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the

knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20).

Paul named Demas as an example of someone who got entangled with the affairs of this life, “having loved this present world” (2 Timothy 4:10). Most likely, Demas’ attraction to the world caused him to become ambitious and covetous. This could be the main reason why he was not able to fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:9-12). Getting entangled with the sinful activities and aspirations of the worldly life can render us ineffective as soldiers for Christ.

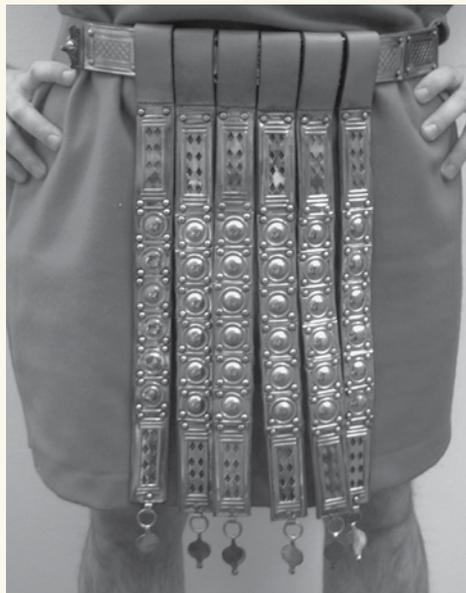
To be freed from every entanglement and to fight

without obstruction, a Christian should be girded with the “belt of truth”. It means to be well-instructed, guarded and guided by the gospel truth (Christ and His Word) as if it were firmly girdled around his body. A Christian soldier must be a man of truth - being convinced of the truth and living by the truth. Otherwise, his ignorance and lack of conformity to the truth will be easily taken advantage of by the devil.

It is interesting to note that the belt of the soldier is not just a garment accessory. It is part and parcel of his full armour, for this is where his sword will be attached to. This means that a Christian who does not have his “loins girt about with truth” may not even have the access and ability to use his sword. The “sword of the Spirit” in biblical terms refers to the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). So unless we have the commitment to know, believe and practise the truth, we will not be able to use “the sword of the Spirit” effectively.

Paul instructs Christians to live according to the knowledge of the truth of Christ’s gospel that they may be effective and courageous soldiers of the cross. “Only

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The Breastplate of Righteousness

Ephesians 6:14b



The second piece of armour that God has given to Christians for their spiritual battle is “the breastplate of righteousness”. Paul mentions this in Ephesians 6:14b: “... and having on the breastplate of righteousness.”

Herein is another imagery taken from the armour of a soldier. The breastplate is an important piece of the armour that protects the soldier’s vital organs like the heart, liver, lungs and kidneys from being pierced by the enemies’ weaponry.

Roman soldiers in those times had different kinds of breastplates. The most common kind of breastplate that Roman soldiers wore as they went to battle was the moulded metal chest plate that covered the vital areas of the torso from the base of the neck down to the upper thigh area. It would normally cover both the front and back of soldiers. As such, this piece of the armour will keep them well-protected even if they were struck from behind.

For the Christian soldier, the breastplate of righteousness is the vital protection against the deadly pierce of sin. A believer who lives unrepentantly in his sins will become the

target of Satan’s attack. As an accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), Satan will be quick to attack a sinning believer with his vile accusations. He will try to discourage and even prevent such a one from making spiritual advancements (Zechariah 3:1ff). To remain in sin is therefore the devil’s great delight, for it hinders one from drawing near to God in true worship and service.

Naturally, every man is inclined to sin (Genesis 6:5) and will never find a way of escape out of his sinful ways if left on his own. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10; cf. 3:23). Even our best efforts in attaining our own righteousness fall far short of God’s standard. “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...”, as the prophet Isaiah puts it rather frankly (Isaiah 64:6).

Since man’s self-righteousness is unprofitable, where then can we find this much needed righteousness that we may wear as our breastplate? Paul gives the answer in Philippians 3:9: “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Positional or imputed righteousness:

This is a theological term that refers to the righteousness of Christ imputed upon the believer by virtue of his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our righteous Saviour. James 2:23 speaks about this doctrine clearly: "And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God."

The only defence against the devil's fatal attack spurred by our sinfulness is the imputed righteousness of Christ upon the believer. When we trust Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, God justifies and sanctifies us as He imputes His righteousness upon us. This is also known as the positional sanctification of the believer.

Every believer that has been imputed with Christ's righteousness wears this as his breastplate. He can then boldly declare together with Paul, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:33-34).

Having put on the breastplate of righteousness which Jesus Christ has provided to all those who believe on Him, we really have nothing to fear in facing our foe in the spiritual battle. As the ancient prophet wrote: "He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let

him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they all shall wax old as a garment; the moth shall eat them up" (Isaiah 50:8-9).

Ultimately, our accuser, the devil, will be cast down as believers will overcome him through the blood of Jesus. "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:10-11).

Practical or progressive righteousness:

Being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, believers are also given grace to live in His righteous ways. To live up to God's righteousness is just not possible if we are apart from Christ. But after being transformed and renewed by the power of God, we are able, by His grace, to live a righteous life in Christ. This is known as progressive sanctification.

That is why Paul exhorts in Ephesians 4:24: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Having put on the new man and being armed with the breastplate of Christ's righteousness, it is imperative to pursue holy living. Anyone who claims to be a Christian and does otherwise should take heed of the warning: "Follow peace with all men,



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The Shoes of the Gospel of Peace



Ephesians 6:15

The third piece of armour that God has given to Christians for their spiritual battle is the shoes of the Gospel of peace. Paul mentions this in Ephesians 6:15: “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

In continuing the illustration of the Christian's God-given armour, Paul refers to a Roman soldier's footwear. Every Christian soldier who wants to be fully equipped must get to know what this piece of armour is all about and how it will help him win the battle.

A Roman soldier would not go to battle wearing ordinary shoes with slick or worn-out soles. If he did, he would not get a firm foothold while marching through various kinds of ground. If he had to fight the enemy on a slope, he would most likely slip and slide. It would be even more dangerous if the battleground was a rocky terrain, for he would be apt to lose his balance and flip over. That was why the soldier had to have special shoes, for these could be one of the decisive factors in winning the war.

Roman soldiers were equipped with shoes that would last for long journeys, for they would often march over vast expanse of rugged terrain. Many battles had been lost just because soldiers were not fitted with shoes that were thick and durable enough. A known battle strategy in the days of Paul was that soldiers would plant razor-sharp objects on the ground facing the opponent. The idea was for these spikes to pierce the soles of the enemy soldiers when they came charging in. Those without adequate protection under their feet would be severely wounded. Even the best soldier would be rendered useless once he became debilitated by such injury. To protect themselves, Roman soldiers would wear boots with thick, heavy soles that could not be pierced or punctured by these spikes.

Roman soldiers wore the *caliga*, a thick-soled, hob-nailed, half-boot which had leather straps that were tied around and fastened tightly to each foot. It was heavily studded with metal nails to give stability in all forms of terrain. It was not

strictly a weapon but part of the soldier's equipment, especially in long marches.

A firm footing was necessary for the soldier to charge forward in the battle. It helped him to hold his ground and make quick moves without slipping, sliding and falling. It was said that the military success of both Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar was due in large measure to their soldiers' feet being well shod and thus able to undertake long marches at incredible speed over rough terrain.

"... feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"

Herein Paul employs an unusual expression that speaks of having our feet fitted with the "preparation of the gospel of peace". The word "preparation" (*hetoimasía*) signifies "a prepared base" or "a foundation", which has already been laid. In other words, the firm foundation of the Gospel of peace enables the Christian soldier to stand firm (Ephesians 6:11, 13, 14), and not slip and fall.

"The Gospel of peace" is the Gospel of Christ that brings peace to us. First of all, the Gospel of Christ reconciles us to God and thus helps us to be at peace with God.

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

"And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Colossians 1:20-21).

We were God's enemies (Romans 5:10) but by faith in Christ, we have become God's people. God is no more against us, but He is our strong ally. He now stands with us and fights for us!

Every Christian soldier must always have "peace", even the prepared Gospel of peace under his feet, like the "shoes" one treads in, carrying it with him as the base upon which he stands. He must stand always in God's "peace". It is not something which we are to reach by and by, but a firm foundation on which we stand.

What great firmness in the soul that can say, "Christ is mine! The enmity is gone! I am forgiven! God is my redeemer and defender!" How strong will be his step when such assurance fills the soul! Such a holy confidence belongs to everyone who can say, "My feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

A Christian needs to have a strong assurance that there is nothing to fear though Satan is in hot pursuit at his heels. He who is shod with the Gospel of peace will be able to tread firmly on his feet. He stands secure and well protected from the spikes and



snare of sin. He cannot be debilitated and eventually collapse in the heat of the battle.

When we stand on our feet shod with the Gospel of peace, we ought not to fear the battle that the devil rages against us, for the Lord has promised, "He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail" (1 Samuel 2:9). The psalmist held on to that same assurance when he wrote: "When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up" (Psalm 94:18).

As pointed out earlier, unshod feet will not be well protected nor will these be stable in the battlefield. Once inflicted with severe foot injuries, the soldier will no longer be able to stand to resist the foe nor will he be able to flee if defeat becomes apparent. Thus, the person bereft of the Gospel of peace is already deemed vanquished even before the

battle has begun. But when we stand on our feet shod with the Gospel of peace, we fear not the battle that the devil rages against us.

The Christian with feet well shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace will not only be able to stand his ground in the day of evil, he can even go forth to battle under Christ's banner with a readiness to publish the Gospel of good tidings. How wonderful it would be indeed if every soldier of Christ is not only engaged in battle, but also occupied with advancing and disseminating the Gospel of peace to the far corners of the world. As it is written: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" (Isaiah 52:7; cf. Romans 10:15).



The Breastplate of Righteousness

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and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Satan, the accuser, will have no grounds whatsoever to accuse the believer who is perfectly armed with the double-sided shield of positional and practical righteousness in Christ. Though Satan reproaches Christians before God, their salvation is completely shielded and assured by the imputed righteousness of Christ. When Satan's darts of accusations are directed at Christians, their holy living will deflect

Satan's malicious charges. The same armour gave the Apostle Paul this double protection in facing his adversities as he wrote: "...by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left" (2 Corinthians 6:7).

Positional (imputed) righteousness in Christ, together with practical (progressive) righteousness in daily life, will leave no room at all for harassment from Satan. So having the righteousness of Christ by faith, let us follow after His righteousness in obedience to His holy Word.

The Shield of Faith

Ephesians 6:16



The fourth piece of armour that God has given to Christians for their spiritual battle is “the shield of faith”. Paul mentions this in Ephesians 6:16: “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

Depending on the nature of the battle, the Roman armies used several kinds of shields. Among these are two which stand out.

One was a small, round shield that looked like a giant Frisbee having curled edges. It was light and usually strapped to the left forearm of the soldier while his other arm wielded his sword. In a hand-to-hand combat, the soldier would thrust the sword with his right hand while he parried the blows of his opponent with the shield on his left. But that was not the kind of shield Paul was referring to in this verse.

Another type of shield is what is known as *thureon* in Greek. This is the original word that is translated as “shield” in this verse.

This shield, measuring 4½ feet by 2½ feet, was made of a thick and hard wooden plank, covered with either metal or leather. The metal would deflect the enemies’ arrows, while the leather was treated with some oil to extinguish the fiery pitch on the arrows.

This shield was designed for maximum protection and deployed for a specific strategy in a major battle. A long line of soldiers carrying these shields would stand in front, being followed closely behind by the rest of the troops. As the entire army moved towards the enemy, the soldiers in front would plant their shields side by side, creating a huge, wide wall of protection. From behind that wall, archers would fire their arrows to inflict injury upon the enemies.

It was in this manner that the whole army advanced until they would be close enough to engage the enemies in a hand-to-hand combat. So the troops carrying these shields would provide the frontline protection to their comrades and keep them hidden

from the enemies' view. Without these shields, the entire army would be in great peril from the barrage of flaming arrows that would come upon it. As the *thureon* shield was to the Roman army, so is the shield of faith to the Lord's army.

"Above all"

Verse 16 opens with these two words to convey to the readers that above all the armour components already mentioned in the preceding verses, here is another vital piece that the Christian soldier should also bring with him to battle. It simply means that in addition to the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the gospel shoes, the believers must take up the shield of faith.

This is like carrying an extra protection to the battle. Every soldier who has already taken up the pieces of armour, mentioned in verses 14 and 15, will have the shield of faith as an added protection. It is the spiritual shield that tucks and hides the believer's life away from danger. "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," so says Paul in Colossians 3:3.

Lives that are shielded and hidden in Christ are guaranteed of security even unto eternity. For the Lord Himself declared: "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29). To put it simply, no enemy can ever snatch away a child of

God. The shield of faith that he carries with him gives that full protection.

"Taking the shield of faith"

"Faith" mentioned here is the faith that we place in Christ as we come to Him, knowing that He will give us full salvation. It expresses a strong confidence in the Saviour and His promises to forgive, save and secure forever.

Such faith will persevere amidst sufferings, having been persuaded that our Lord is faithful to keep all His promises. This was Paul's sentiment written in 2 Timothy 1:12: "For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

"Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked"

The very same shield of faith protects us from Satan's fiery darts. The "fiery darts of



the wicked” refer to the devil's fearsome attacks on the believer to destroy his faith. These fiery darts hurled at the believer may vary in frequency and intensity, but usually appear in either of these two forms:

Fiery trials: The Apostle Peter wrote: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” (1 Peter 4:12). This flaming dart of the devil comes as a matter of test to purify as well as to fortify our faith in Christ.

This form of trial is intended to discourage the believer with all sorts of hardships in life. It may come by way of persecution, sickness and death, or a reversal of fortunes. Nevertheless, the Lord will work it out to His own glory and honour. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7).

Fiery temptations: All satanic temptations that lure men to commit sin can definitely be spoken of as “the fiery darts of the wicked”. In 1 Corinthians 7:9, Paul uses the imagery of being burned to describe sexual temptations and sin. It is designed to destroy the believer and his profession. “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15).

Without the shield of faith, we will be easily drawn to the devil's temptations and fall into

sin. But a strong faith in the Lord not only shields us from Satan's fiery darts, but also enables us to resist the devil himself. Peter gives this warning about the devil's agenda and how we are to repulse his advances. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The shield of faith enormously aids us in battle that we may overcome the enemy and emerge victorious. “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

Conclusion

Our faith in Christ will be challenged along the way and yet without a doubt, victory is assured. So let us take heed of Paul's admonition: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:12).

In the end, we will be able to say together with the same apostle, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7).



The Helmet of Salvation

Ephesians 6:17a



The fifth piece of armour that God has given to Christians for their spiritual battle is “the helmet of salvation”. Paul mentions this in Ephesians 6:17a: “And take the helmet of salvation...”

Another very important gear in the Roman soldier’s armour was the helmet. This protected the head, the most vital and most often targeted part of the soldier’s body. It would be strange to see a warrior rush off to battle without taking his helmet with him. Even our modern troops today always have their helmets on when they report for duty; all the more when in the thick of battle.

In the earlier days, Roman soldiers had helmets that were made of leather, with some patches of metal on it. Sometimes it would be made of pure, solid cast metal for heavy-duty protection. It protected the head from arrows, but its primary function was to ward off blows from a broadsword. When faced with a fearsome deadly weapon like the broadsword, a solid helmet was necessary to deflect or lessen its impact. The helmet is the ultimate protection against crushing blows to the head.

But what is the helmet of salvation? It is not a reference to being saved. Paul is not saying that in fighting Satan, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, and the shield of faith, you will be saved. It is obvious that salvation has already taken place before that. You cannot be a Christian soldier unless you are already saved in the first place.

The helmet of salvation therefore is not worn as a means to getting saved. Rather, it means being assured of one’s salvation. It is about a Christian’s need to cultivate a strong assurance regarding his salvation though Satan’s advances at times may seem so overwhelming. He must be able to stand on his feet, for he is endowed with the necessary weapons to defend himself from head to toe. It is the assurance that he will neither be debilitated nor destroyed in the midst of battle.

In order to grasp the significance of “the helmet of salvation”, one must understand the three aspects of salvation as found in the Scriptures.

Justification: Paul extensively taught this doctrine in the book of Romans. When a sinner repents from his sins and places his faith in Christ as his Saviour, he is declared not guilty and thus justified. In being justified by faith, all believers are made righteous by the imputation of Christ's divine righteousness upon them and thus, judgment unto condemnation is removed. Paul stressed this in Romans 5:18-19: "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." He also wrote in Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Christians are freed once and for all from the guilt and punishment of sin as they place their trust in Christ Jesus.

Justification is not a continuing process but a once-and-for-all action occurring at the very moment when a person trusts Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of his life. Thus, every one of us who believes in Christ is justified, and will remain so eternally. "That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:7).

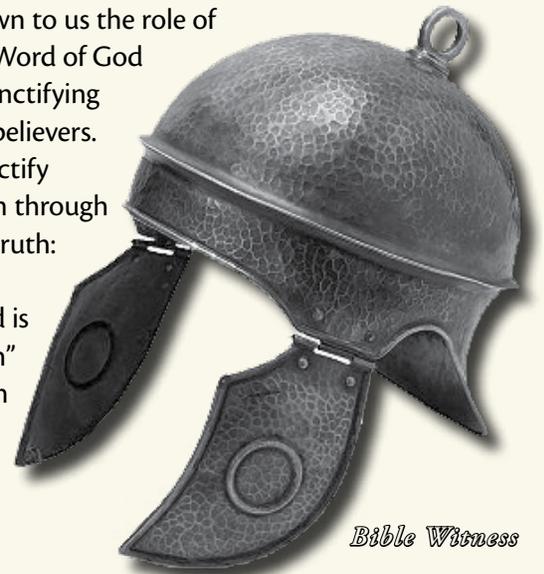
Satan often swings his sword of doubt at believers. With every strike, he tries to hack away our confidence and security in our salvation. He will buffet our thoughts with the remembrance of our past sins and vile tendencies. But this malevolent attack cannot injure believers whose minds are being guarded by the knowledge of this great doctrinal truth – that they have donned the helmet of salvation in their justification.

Sanctification: This is God's ongoing work in the lives of believers through His Spirit and truth in order to remove their impurities. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians about this doctrine. "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Lord who has chosen us will never leave us open to Satan's assaults of accusations. He will protect us with the Spirit's sanctifying work that our spiritual lives may progress day by day as we await the soon coming of the Lord. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

To this, the Apostle Peter concurs: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ..." (1 Peter 1:2). Sanctification is a progressive work of the Spirit who transforms believers, that they may be more and more conformed to the image of Christ.

In His prayer to the Father, Jesus has made known to us the role of the Word of God in sanctifying the believers. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John



17:17). Thus, the Holy Spirit sanctifies the believers by dwelling in them and empowering them to know and obey the truth which is the Word of God.

When Satan points his accusing finger at our failures and sins in order to instil doubt and discouragement, let us remember that the Lord is still working on us through His Spirit and His Word. As He works, let us yield to Him with utmost obedience.

If we are convicted by the Spirit and the Word concerning certain sins which beset us, we can trust Christ for our sanctification. As John said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

As we do, we really have nothing to fear as we advance towards further spiritual pursuits even in the midst of battle, for we have donned the helmet of salvation in our sanctification.

Glorification: This is the ultimate end of our salvation, when we shall be fully delivered from the influence of sin and its consequences. Consider what glory awaits the redeemed of the Lord.

Jesus assures us, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14: 1-3).

The Apostle John says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet

appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:3-4).

No wonder the apostle Paul called this "... an helmet, the hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:8). With regard to this hope, the Apostle Peter related with much confidence and nary a doubt - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3-5).

When Satan harasses and confronts us with many trials, let us look forward to the day when we shall be with our Lord Jesus forever. The day is coming for believers when sin and Satan can no longer molest us. So let us never quit at any and every threat of the devil. We must fight on as we continue to don this helmet of salvation until the day of glorification.



The Sword of the Spirit

Ephesians 6:16



The sixth piece of armour that God has given to Christians for their spiritual battle is “the sword of the Spirit”. Paul mentions this in Ephesians 6:17b: “... and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

The first five components of God’s armour that Paul has enumerated thus far have been primarily for defensive purposes. This one last piece, however, gives both defensive and offensive might to those who carry it to battle. The imagery given is that of a sword.

One Greek word that can be translated as “sword” in English is *rhomphaia*, which refers to a large broadsword that can be as long as 40 inches. It was a heavy, double-edged sword that was wielded with both hands – the one often used by gladiators.

But this was not the type of sword that Paul refers to in his imagery of sword here. The Greek word for “sword” in Ephesians 6:17 is *machaira*. It was a typical sword, about six to eighteen inches long, carried by the common soldier. It was inserted in a sheath or scabbard attached to the soldier’s side and can be easily pulled out in the event of a hand-to-hand combat. It was a preferred weapon in the sense that it fulfilled the defensive as well as offensive requirements of

the soldier in battle. However, it is apparent that it had to be used in a precise and skilful way in order for it to be effective.

**“... the sword of the Spirit,
which is the Word of God”**

The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit because it is the Holy Spirit who handed this sword over to God’s people for their use. The Word of God is conveyed to the people of God by the Spirit of God. Consider the following Scripture portions that clearly depict the Spirit’s role in giving us the Word of God:

David, who authored many psalms, said in 2 Samuel 23:2, “The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.” This gives us the understanding that what David wrote were actually the words that came from God Himself.

The Apostle Peter sheds further light on this truth: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21). Although men were used as the instruments in speaking and writing down the Word of God, it

was through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God that these were done.

Peter further testifies about the Spirit's inspiration and role in the writing of the Old Testament as he alludes to a passage from the Psalms in this discourse: "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus" (Acts 1:16). Paul attests to the same truth of the Spirit's inspiration in the Old Testament Scriptures recorded also in the book of Acts. "...Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers" (Acts 28:25b).

It goes without saying that both the Old and New Testament books of the Bible are authored by the Spirit, for "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). And because the Word of God wields the omnipotent power of the Spirit, it helps us to overcome the supernatural abilities of our enemy, the devil.

An offensive weapon

The Word of God is utterly offensive to Satan as it snatches away many souls from his dominion. When it is preached and heard by men, women and children, it effectually calls them to faith in Christ. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17).

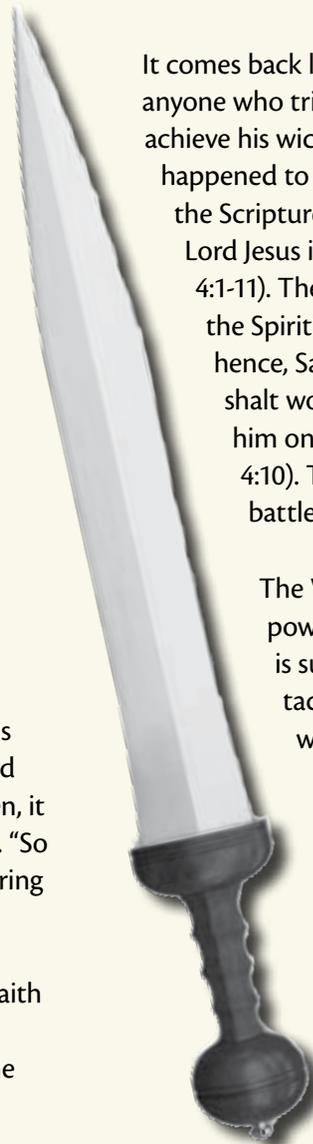
The Word of God, once engrafted by faith into the heart of an individual, is able to save his soul from the clutches of the

devil. James made that point as he wrote, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).

It is no marvel that God's Word is even pictured as superior to an actual sword. It can cut through dimensions where no real sword can ever penetrate. "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12).

It comes back like a boomerang to hit anyone who tries to twist God's Word to achieve his wicked agenda. That was what happened to the devil who came quoting the Scriptures as he tried to tempt the Lord Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11). The Lord Jesus merely brandished the Spirit's sword by saying, "Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matthew 4:10). Then the devil fled and the battle ended, just like that.

The Word of God is full of His power and judgment. By itself, it is sufficient to defeat the devil's tactics. It is the one offensive weapon that will finally bring an end to Satan's war against God and His people. Key verses depicting the end times highlight this very special weapon as the instrument that will inflict the fierce wrath of God upon the ungodly, including the devil himself:



“And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength” (Revelation 1:16).

“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Revelation 2:16).

“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15).

“And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (Revelation 19:21).

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

A defensive weapon

The precise use of Scripture makes it an excellent defence against every attack of the devil. In times of evil temptations, Proverbs 30:5 strengthens us: “Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.”

In times of trials and afflictions, we recall God’s Word from Psalm 119:49-50: “Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.”

Even in the darkest and most troubling times of our lives, we can look to the Scriptures for encouragement. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

May every Christian personally take up the sword of the Spirit, and learn the Word of God diligently. May every Christian family earnestly search the Scriptures daily. May the Lord help us to be skilful in using His sword for our own benefit as we face our spiritual battles.

The Lord has said in the Scriptures, “Surely I come quickly” (Revelation 22:20). He is coming soon to deliver the final defeat of Satan and all his demons. But till then we must continue to be fitted with the whole armour of God; to stand firm and to take up every piece of armour that we may fight the good fight of faith.



Prayer: The Channel of Help



Ephesians 6:18

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18).

Though "prayer" is discussed in the immediate context of the Christian's spiritual armour, it is not introduced as a spiritual weapon here. Nonetheless, it is presented to us as an indispensable spiritual exercise of a well-prepared Christian soldier. As believers put on the whole armour of God, they are to remain prayerful.

Paul is essentially saying, "Now look, you have the whole armour of God, but don't forget to call upon God who promises you the provision of His strength and armour. He who gives you the weapons can also teach you how to use them effectively to overcome all the wiles of the enemy." So prayer is a channel to ask and receive special divine help to be an overcomer in your spiritual battle.

We can never realise the full benefit of these spiritual weapons if we use them according to fleshly means. Whereas, prayer furbishes and scours our weapons of battle.

It is common for Christians, after piling up victory upon victory, and who seldom encounter defeat, to become rather complacent about the necessity of prayer. They can sometimes slip into spiritual egotism

where prayer cannot thrive. (1 Corinthians 10:12; Proverbs 28:14; Romans 11:20).

Our Lord Himself taught us, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41). He even taught us to pray: "And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13; Luke 11:4). By way of example, He prayed in the midst of Satan's attack as can be seen in these two instances. First, He prayed for Peter when the devil came to attack him: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). Second, Jesus Himself prayed in the solitude of the wilderness for 40 days and after which He overcame the devil's temptations (Matthew 4:1-11).

Paul's words "Praying always with all prayer and supplication" give us the idea that prayer must be constant and frequent. It also comes in general requests ("prayer" - in Greek, *proseuche*) and specific petitions ("supplications" - in Greek, *deesis*). Therefore, "all prayer and supplication" is a reference to all kinds of prayer.

Whether he is at war or at peace, in the battlefield or at home, he must thrive in prayer. Hence Paul concludes, "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Timothy 2:8).

"God Delivers"

A real incident from the life of
Jonathan Goforth,
a Canadian missionary to China.

Bibliography: "Goforth of China" by Rosalind Goforth.
The stories are retold by Sis Ruth Low.
Illustration are done by Sis Meilanie.

Jonathan Goforth, his wife and
4 children were living in Changte, China



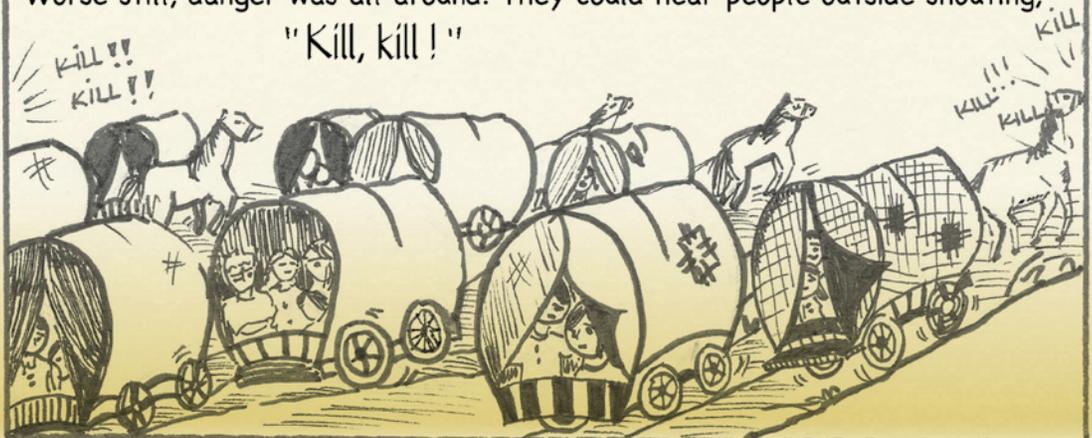
One day, the Empress of China
sent out an order commanding
all foreigners to be killed.

After praying for protection, Goforth and his family
hurriedly fled Changte westward to a safer place
together with 12 others.



They travelled in a caravan made up of 10 carts driven by animals. It was not
a comfortable journey because it was hot and crowded in the carts.
Worse still, danger was all around. They could hear people outside shouting,

"Kill, kill!"



A most fearful thing happened at the town gate. There was a group of several hundred men armed with stones and knives, waiting to attack the carts. Stones were thrown at them, followed by gunshots. They caused the carts to become tangled, bringing everything to a stop. How scared Goforth and his family must be!



Goforth jumped out of the cart and shouted,
"TAKE EVERYTHING,
BUT DON'T KILL!"

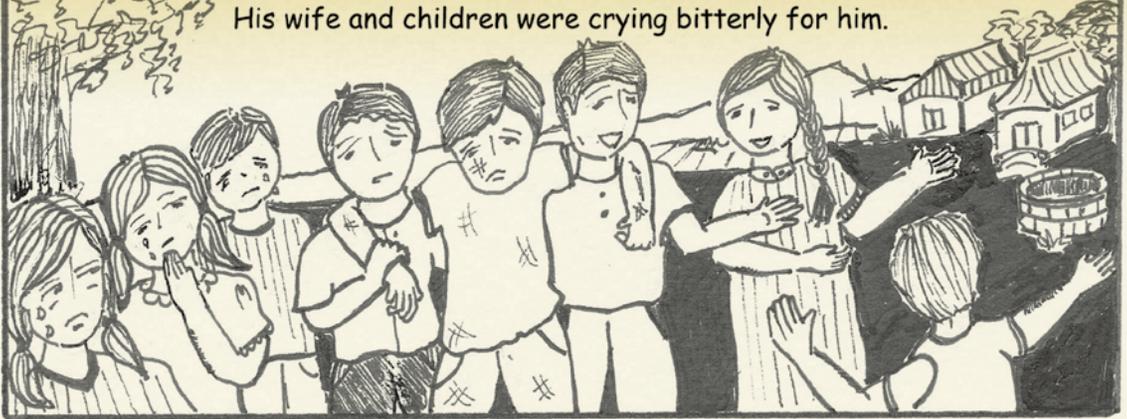
At once Goforth was attacked. He was bruised at his neck, slashed on his left arm which he used to protect himself and severely injured on his head. Goforth was bleeding and almost losing consciousness.



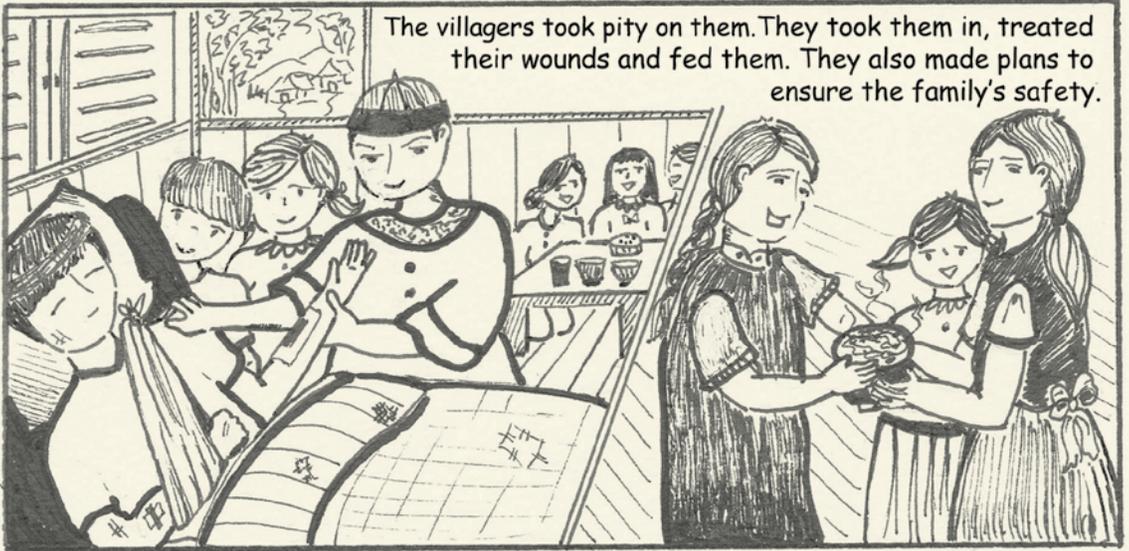
As Goforth and his family tried to escape, the men gave chase. Mrs Goforth turned and begged for mercy for her children. At that moment, the men stopped and listened, probably surprised that she could speak their language. By the mercy of God, the leader called out to his men not to harm them but to let them go.



Goforth and his family then went to seek help from a nearby village. By this time, Goforth was very weak and seemed to be bleeding to death. His wife and children were crying bitterly for him.



The villagers took pity on them. They took them in, treated their wounds and fed them. They also made plans to ensure the family's safety.



Due to the kindness of the villagers, Goforth was able to recover. In answer to prayer, God protected Jonathan Goforth and his family from being killed by the men. He also provided help through the villagers.

GOD IS THE ONE WHO WATCHES OVER YOU AND ME - EVERY MINUTE OF EVERY DAY.

Do you trust Him to deliver you from trouble according to His will?

GOD PROMISES US IN PSALM 50:15
"And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

BIBLE TRIVIA - GENESIS 49

Sarah Yong

READ THE TEXT FROM YOUR BIBLE. MATCH EACH SON'S NAME TO THE PROCLAMATION GIVEN BY JACOB.

Reuben •	• "...a troop shall overcome him..." (v. 19)
Simeon and Levi •	• "...is a strong ass crouching down..." (v. 14)
Judah •	• "...shall dwell at the haven of the sea..." (v. 13)
Zebulun •	• "...shalt not excel..." (v. 4)
Issachar •	• "...he giveth goodly words..." (v. 21)
Dan •	• "...thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise..." (v. 8)
Gad •	• "...shall ravin as a wolf..." (v. 27)
Asher •	• "...instruments of cruelty are in their habitations..." (v. 5)
Naphtali •	• "...shall judge his people..." (v. 16)
Joseph •	• "...he shall yield royal dainties..." (v. 20)
Benjamin •	• "...a fruitful bough by a well..." (v. 22)

FILL IN THE BLANKS BELOW (HINT: GENESIS 49:30).

Jacob commanded his sons to bury him in the _____ that is in the _____ of Machpelah, which is before _____, in the land of _____.

Answers to Vol. 10, Issue 3 - Bible Trivia - Genesis 48

p. 25 - ACROSS: (1) sons; (2) land; (3) buried; (4) kissed; (5) right; (6) refuse; (7) multitude.

DOWN: (1) Israel; (2) Luz; (3) Ephraim; (4) knees; (5) blessed; (6) firstborn; (7) Manasseh.

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