

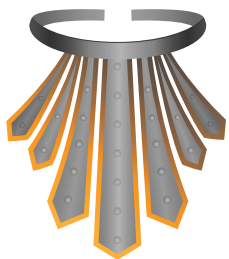
Youth messenger

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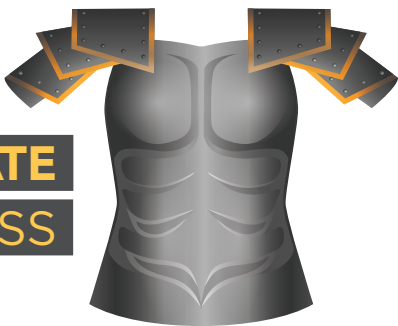
FIGHTING AGAINST THE WORLD'S
DEADLIEST VIRUS



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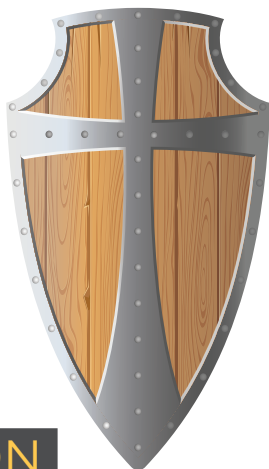
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Dear youth, in my conversations with you, I have come to understand a great part of what you are going through. I have become familiar with what you are experiencing on a daily basis and I have come to the conclusion that every new generation of youth is facing situations that past generations have faced. The enemy of souls has devised ways for every generation of Christian youth to become distracted from their God-given purpose. He tries to lure them into things that are not eternally satisfying—to commit their lives to the secular leaving God with leftovers . . . if there are any left to give. Today, more than ever before, Satan is subtle in his approach and the new generation of youth seems less likely to detect his trickery.

The most worrisome part is not even the fact that Satan is changing strategies so he can succeed in turning the great potential of our youth toward the projects of his kingdom. The saddest thing is that Christians seem to have let their guard down. We tend to forget with whom we are dealing, that “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 6:12).

The articles in this magazine are not meant just to awaken young people from sleep and motivate them to fight. They are meant to raise awareness and to lead us to the source of strength, to the One who created Lucifer, who knows his strengths and weaknesses, who has overcome him over and over again—and has won the final victory on the cross of Calvary. He is the One who is telling us today just as he told Jehoshaphat: “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle” (2 Chronicles 20:17).

All you need to do, dear youth, is “take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day” (Ephesians 6:13). As you do that, please make sure to pray for us, too—the older generations of Christians who still have a battle to fight, and also need to wear the same armor of God as you.

Adrian Finaru



THE BELT OF

Truth

BY BIANCA SIRBU

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

What is this truth? In the gospel according to John, Jesus explains: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

In the present world, truth is perhaps one of the most difficult concepts to define and understand. Amidst the present corruption and depravity in the world, it has become extremely

difficult to distinguish between what is good or evil, what is truth or a lie. This conflict between what is true and what is false has been ongoing since the fall of Adam and Eve. In Eden, the first pair knew only the truth, which is God and His word—but with their sin, they also learned the falsehood that Satan has always tried to portray as something better than the truth.

It is often hard to understand why Eve would ever want to know

anything more than the truth which God had given them. The first couple had known only joy and purity in that truth. God, the loving Father, had created them in His own image, giving them the ability to decide for themselves. He did not force them to believe His truth, but hoped, in His mercy, to make them understand that only in this truth could they find happiness. Only by knowing this truth could they be completely pure from all evil. God let the first pair decide whether or not this truth was enough for them.

The test that our first parents had to pass was a small test. God warned them that in the day they would eat from the forbidden tree, they would know evil as well as good, and thus would die.

CONSEQUENCES

Adam and Eve did not understand the meaning of evil nor of death. They did not understand that Satan's words were a lie because all they had known was the loving truth of God's love. As soon as their eyes were opened, they saw Satan's lie in its true light for the first time. Their remorse was insurmountable, and only when they were driven out of the garden of Eden, did they really understand the depravity of Satan's lie.

"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Genesis 3:22). God knew about the cause and existence of evil, but He

wished to spare man from knowing and experiencing its depravity. He had hoped to make man stronger against the allurements of evil through this test. However, when the first couple failed the test, God showed them the consequences. Adam and Eve could not think of God as cruel for driving them out of Eden because they knew it was their own choice that had caused their fall. When their communion with God, their closest Friend, was interrupted, the pain they felt could hardly be described. But for the grace of God, their separation would have been forever.

"When Adam, according to God's special directions, made an offering for sin, it was to him a most painful ceremony. His hand must be raised to take life, which God alone could give, and make an offering for sin. It was the first time he had witnessed death. As he looked upon the bleeding victim, writhing in the agonies of death, he was to look forward by faith to the Son of God, whom the victim prefigured, who was to die man's sacrifice.

"This ceremonial offering, ordained of God, was to be a perpetual reminder to Adam of his guilt, and also a penitential acknowledgment of his sin. This act of taking life gave Adam a deeper and more perfect sense of his transgression, which nothing less than the death of God's dear Son could expiate. He marveled at the infinite goodness and matchless love which would give

such a ransom to save the guilty.”—*Lift Him Up*, p. 25.

THE BATTLE

Looking back through the ages, one recurring conflict stands out above all others—the conflict between good and evil. The Bible clearly shows the similarity and connection between good and truth. In Mark 10:18, Jesus explains, “there is none good but one, that is, God.” He also explained in the gospel according to John: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6), declaring that He and His Father “are one” (John 10:30). If Jesus is the truth, then so is God, because they are one. Thus, God can be defined both as good and as the truth. The **truth** is God’s goodness and love. Evil, on the other side, is the opposite of good, and therefore the opposite of truth—it is falsehood. Thus, we can conclude that the battle between good and evil is also a battle between truth and falsehood.

Today, we see the consequences of the sin of Adam and Eve. We live in a fallen world, where sin and evil abound. The line of demarcation between truth and falsehood has become blurred with time. Satan and his angels have become more and more experienced over the last 6000 years. He knows that the biggest lie He can inflict upon man is that they can live separated from God. Peter warns God’s people: “Be

sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). As God has had His remnant people in every age, He has His people today that will stand for the truth no matter what. When Jesus ascended to heaven after His crucifixion, He sent His disciples a Comforter—the Holy Spirit. John says: “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13). Only through the Holy Spirit can we comprehend the true meaning of this truth. Although it may seem like we are constantly surrounded by evil, God’s truth is still available to all those who want to partake of it: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). The only real truth is God’s word.

Without this truth, we cannot stand up to Satan’s temptations. The meaning of temptation is: “something that causes a strong urge or desire to have or do something and especially something that is wrong.” How can we know if something is wrong or not? Imagine a society where there is no law. There would be only chaos, and morality would not exist. From the beginning, God gave His people a set of rules to follow. At Sinai, He wrote these laws on two tablets of stone with His own finger. These laws

were not given to make us feel restricted. At the basis of these commandments lies the truth of God's love. The apostle Paul said, "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). Because our human nature has been so corrupted, the law seems like a burden or restriction rather than a return of God's love. If we love God, keeping His law would not be a requirement but rather a joy. Imagine if one of your best friends asked something of you, something which may not be important to you, but is to them. Would you do it? Most likely yes. Why would you do this? The answer is simple: because you love them. It is the same with God. If He is your best friend, will you not do what He asks of you? All He asks is: "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Imagine a friend who would

choose to die for you so that you would be able to live. God sent His only Son to this fallen world so that through His sacrifice we would be able to partake of eternal life.

THE BLESSING OF SALVATION

"Without the atonement of the Son of God there could be no communication of blessing or salvation from God to man. God was jealous for the honor of His law. The transgression of that law caused a fearful separation between God and man. To Adam in his innocence was granted communion, direct, free, and happy, with his Maker. After his transgression God would communicate to man through Christ and angels.

"Such a sacrifice was of sufficient value to save the whole world. . . . This sacrifice was of such infinite value as to make a



GOD HAS HIS PEOPLE TODAY THAT WILL STAND FOR THE TRUTH NO MATTER WHAT.

man who should avail himself of it more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.”—Ibid.

STANDING FIRM

With every passing day, we are getting closer to the end of this world. In an article named “Truth,” R. F. Cottrell said: “The truth always meets with opposition.” This will be seen more in the future, and in the final conflict. Therefore, knowing the times we are living in, and seeing prophecy fulfill with our own eyes, we have to decide on which side we stand. Are we going to be able to stand for the truth on that final day? Or will we be part of those who only claimed to know the truth, but when tested, will not be able to stand for it? Jesus said: “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). We cannot claim to know this truth and not carry it out. When we really understand the truth of God’s goodness and love for us, we will obey the Lord’s commands. We cannot trust in our own selves, because as Jeremiah said, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). God is stretching out His helping

hand, waiting to help us stand strong for the truth. All we need to do is ask in faith. The apostle Paul said: “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14). In order to “gird” ourselves with the truth, we must first understand this truth. Psalm 119 defines the law of God as the truth: “Thou art near, O Lord, and all thy commandments are truth” (Psalm 119:151). By keeping God’s law and standing up for His truth, we can be protected from falling prey to the lies and deceptions of Satan. The psalmist says: “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord” (Psalm 119:1). Those who keep the commandments of God and who are a living example of His truth, will find happiness not only here on earth, but also in the life to come. Others will be able to see this truth living in us, and will also want to find that happiness that can be found only in knowing the truth. May the Lord help us to be a part of those who strive every day to better understand the truth of God’s goodness and grace. Only by doing this can we use the truth as our armor against the error and falsehood that exists in the world. 🍎

THE BREASTPLATE OF *Righteousness*

BY WILLY ACOSTA

From the beginning, since the fall of man in the garden of Eden, humanity has had a mortal enemy—an enemy that would take dominion of their world and turn it into ashes. As we open our Bibles during our daily meditation, we come to see that there is one common perspective all throughout its pages. It is a perspective that remains constant from Genesis to Revelation. Under every testimony written, under every page in which the word of God was transcribed, we can see a conflict that had been stirred much before our time. It is a controversy initiated by the angel Lucifer, our antagonist. The Bible narrative that pieces together this story shows how Lucifer's ideas were to be expressed openly and naturally by humanity. Feeling touched by our defeated condition, and our need of help, Jesus came to heal our ailments.

Sin was at the root of every human interaction, ready to stain

that which was created perfect. Our nature became infected by the disease of sin. In this dark moment of human history, Jesus shielded us. He covered us with His perfect sufficiency to counteract the claims Satan had over our feeble bodies. He became our safest recipient against sin. Jesus was willing to give us a chance by justification, if we would only accept it. In other words, Jesus has claimed us away from the potency of a fallen destiny. What I mean to say is that, we are free! All we must do is take the offer of justification, and live a life of obedience, a life like His.

HOW DOES THIS WORK?

Even though our token of freedom is a guarantee given by Jesus, freedom is not to be confused with liberation from our duty. Christians must show obedience under all circumstances. We are not called to be faithful at our own level, but we are

called to be obedient just as Jesus was. Jesus was always faithful. The disciple Matthew heard Jesus uttering the words: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). Yes, the requirement God has set for all Christians throughout history is perfection. When speaking of perfection, one must note that it is a term that refers to the immaculate condition expected from an individual’s present as well as their past. So here the issue stands: We have all made past mistakes in sin. Intentionally or unintentionally, our life has been stained. Our history holds our present accountable, our nature has held humanity hostage to sin, and temptation is knocking at our door. What should I do?

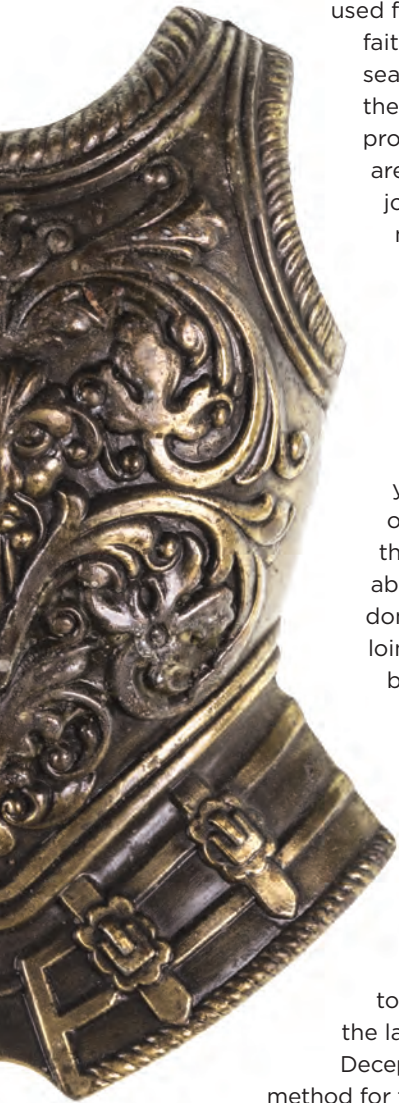
In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul was very much aware that Satan was targeting the church in an incredibly unique way. The result of continuous sinning had made humanity unable to justify itself before the eyes of God and His holy law. Not only could they not justify themselves before the law, but they would be utterly incapable of saying no to sin! Temptation was the coercive method used by Satan to prove destruction to so many young Christians. In addition, the condemnation the “holy law” brought upon the sinner hinted hopelessness. Times have not changed. Four thousand years later, the enemy still continues to use temptation to break down spiritual principle.

THE FIGHT OF YOUR LIFE

Viewing this within the landscape of a great spiritual war, the book of Ephesians describes our spiritual foe, “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 6:12). The description given by Paul seems to show that we are unfairly matched in this war.

We are fighting against the same dark powers that have made it their life mission to make our story end in sadness. Our enemies are enemies of high intellectual caliber, with psychological tactics and advantages





used for the destruction of the wisest and most faithful. Our war is with a countless number of seasoned officers of evil that have mastered the subject of human tendency and sinful propensities. Considering this, in what scenario are Christians to assert their confidence? The joy we have is in knowing that our Jesus was never prompted to provide a solution to this exact problem, yet He did. In Ephesians chapter 6, we see how Paul provides some simple steps given to him by God to help man defend himself from temptation.

TAKING THE STEPS

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. . . . 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. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:11, 13, 14). Paul stresses that we wear the armor of God so that we are able to stand. It is worthy to notice that there is so much urgency in this statement. When reading the verses, we cannot help but to feel the heart of Jesus urging us to protect ourselves with this protective equipment. Christ speaks to us in urgency so that we will take immediate action towards application and be found standing in the last day.

Deception has always been Satan’s most trusted method for the degrading of the human race. He has employed his highest mental capabilities to factor out the alarming appearance of sin. Skillfully re-crafting every temptation to unnoticeably suit every human tendency, Satan has brought the fall of humanity, and continues in constant progress. He has tried to engage youthful talent to reinvent sin in ways to conceal it under the pretext of youthful naïveté and self-exploration. As a result, our daily life is turned into a spiritual nightmare. Though the future may glare at us in a disapproving light, our hope stands in Jesus. Every piece of this armor is essential in order to overcome temptation and to protect your soul in

this spiritual warfare. Yet there is one piece within this protective gear that should delight us all in a special manner.


ARMOR PROTECTING THE HEART

In verse 14, Paul refers to a piece of armor known as the breastplate of righteousness. This piece that has lasted all of eternity is to be claimed by sinners in need. The breastplate of righteousness is a symbolic depiction of the righteousness Jesus wishes to provide us. He gives us the righteousness that we cannot claim anywhere else. It is the type of righteousness that completely reestablishes our spiritual qualification before the holy law. Seen in proper context, the breastplate of righteousness places us in a position to stand blameless before the law. We do not display our own imperfection. Instead, we shine with rays of Jesus' holiness. The breastplate Paul mentions has attributes of self-sufficiency which trace back to the reality of Jesus being sufficient to atone for our sins. When wearing the breastplate, young Christians will not boast in their own spiritual accomplishments, but they will experience the sufficiency of Jesus in order to forgive their trespasses. The breastplate shows patterns of the perfect life you and I can live in Him. This righteousness is the kind that has been harbored eternally. It points only to one direction, Jesus! He desires to win us to Himself. When we take hold

of the righteousness He offers, we are taken from our fallen nature and granted a position that holds us as forgiven before God. This forgiveness is the gift of God to us by His grace.

What happens when we wear this breastplate? Does my world change? Yes, the life of a young Christian changes, and a great potential to live a perfect life is realized. Jesus shows us our ability to be perfect only when we walk with Him. Daily walking with Jesus will enable us to turn from temptation when presented. Deception will no longer be Satan's powerful asset, and the Spirit of God will reveal the path of liberty from falling into temptations.

By walking with Jesus, the young Christian notices a difference between his/her own worthlessness and the worthiness of Christ. Not only does this touch the heart of the believers but it also strikes up a curious spirit that leads them to discover why Jesus was so selfless. The pure, unadulterated love of God is revealed, and the stark contrast that exists between Jesus and the sinner will become clearer than ever before. Contrition is triggered within the heart, and the appeal for pardon is born. The power behind the reception of forgiveness from God will be a living experience for all those who seek to wear the breastplate. There, Jesus attributes His perfect character to the soul, as innate in the human heart. Our nature is changed, and we are ready to be sanctified.



Because it is a spiritual battle, God has provided nonphysical ways to defend against spiritual assaults. The breastplate of Christ's righteousness is the means through which Jesus allows sinful men and women to stand as subjects of the sanctification process. His righteousness enables the young Christian to believe in a changed life. By tearing away our sinful record, it places us in a perfect position for further spiritual growth.

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

AVAILABLE TO EACH OF US

In His providential effort, Jesus has brought this blessing to each individual. This truth is accepted beyond denominational jurisdiction and has proven to be a doctrinal pillar for all Christian religions. There have been many debates as to how this wonderful promise can be claimed and lived, but due to doctrinal inconsistencies found among Christendom, many souls have gone astray.

How can a young man or young woman accept and wear the *breastplate* of righteousness? This is the urgent question at hand. Since being young does not prevent us from accepting this breastplate—nor is it an excuse to reject it—how can I wear it?

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,

WHEN WEARING THE BREASTPLATE, YOUNG CHRISTIANS WILL EXPERIENCE THE SUFFICIENCY OF JESUS.


for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). Profitability is the aim of every functioning business in this world. Naturally, our actions revolve around the potential of future profitability, and we spend our lives trying to make adequate decisions for ourselves.

Whether or not we live by such rule, the Bible is noticeably clear. We are instructed in righteousness within God’s word. Our daily impulse should be to search the scriptures in order to learn the proper way of righteousness. Would you like to know the true path to righteousness? The tool is readily available for all to use. The righteousness of Jesus is seen through biblical accounts of His journeying in Israel. The true Source of righteousness dwelt with the poor and the sick.

Jesus spent His life making the cares of others His own. He sought to comprehend human anxiety at an experimental level so that He may give us the formula for deliverance. Jesus risked His undivided relationship with His Father to carve a dangerous path of victory for you and for me. In the eyes of God, profitability was not a factor to consider. By wearing the breastplate, Jesus returns to us our intrinsic value as His chosen sons and daughters. Because of

this, every Christian is to express gratefulness. Jesus has reinstated us as true sons and daughters of the heavenly kingdom.

In the life of Jesus, we see the presence of an archenemy constantly seeking to achieve his destruction, and we are to expect no less. The apostle Peter warns us, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). This is a fact; we are being hunted by the enemy. Satan is seeking to claim us within our sin, constantly lurking to weaken the mind and stunt our faith. His first thrust of attack is directed at the young body of the church. Are we not to find profitability in wearing the breastplate of righteousness?

All throughout the Bible we read heavenly promises. Claiming the promises of God is perhaps one of our most desirable aspects of our relationship with Jesus. In fact, I am sure that our Saviour is joyous when we find in His Word precious assurances for our life. Our God would always be joyful to share these blessings with us, but we must learn to claim them all. Jesus promises to give us a breastplate that will bring freedom from sin. He desires to see youth who will claim this breastplate as their own. Are you one of them? 

BY DANIELA BALAREZO



THE FOOTWEAR OF THE *Gospel of Peace*

INTRODUCTION

Shopping for the right shoes has always been a daunting feat for me. It just seems to take quite a long time for me to find shoes that fit just right. One thing I know for sure is that in the part of the world where I live, shoes are necessary for all areas of life and so I continue to brave the stores in search of good shoes. On these shopping excursions, I will sometimes remember that my grandparents were shoemakers and my grandmother had the ability to create shoes that fit “like a glove!” as my mum would say. The clients would provide their ideas for their shoe and my grandmother would skillfully measure their feet and produce

shoes that were beautifully crafted. A famous saying goes “Good shoes take you good places” (Seo Min Hyun). If you doubt that, try hiking up a difficult, rocky mountain to see a beautiful sunset in flip-flops. You will quickly realize that the shoe that is appropriate for the terrain will not only get you up the mountain to see the beautiful sunset, but help you to get back down, too—and in record time, in comfort, and free of injuries.

When the apostle Paul was writing to the Ephesians his letter of encouragement and fatherly admonition, he included some timely advice on how to combat the “rulers of the darkness of this world” and against “powers,

principalities and spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). Not only that, but he taught them, in a very practical way, how they should actually fight and live to tell the victory tale! As the apostle spoke of putting on all the armor, he mentioned that the feet should be “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15). What does it mean to have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace? How does this look in a practical way?

A ROMAN SOLDIER’S SHOE

The importance of a good shoe can be illustrated quite well by the marching boot worn by Roman soldiers beginning in the early 1st century. The boot was made from leather and was made to withstand long marches and harsh terrain. The bottom of the shoe had nails hammered into it, resembling a soccer boot—and these were effective for crossing rough terrain and even for trampling on enemies should

they fall in battle. As effective as the boots were, there were some problems that would quickly emerge in certain settings. For one, the boots were deadly on smooth surfaces, which is why the Romans paved their roads with gravel. The Jewish historian Josephus wrote an account that illustrates how dangerous it could be to wear footwear that was not appropriate for the place. During the Roman siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Josephus wrote of a Roman centurion named Julianus who had jumped in to help his soldiers strengthen their defense against the Jewish rebels. He managed to push the rebels to the inner court of the temple, “and as he ran across the pavement he slipped and fell flat on his back.” The other soldiers—too scared to run back to his aid—left the centurion to fight for his life until, surrounded by Jewish rebels, he was ultimately defeated. A good pair of shoes, appropriate for the time and place, could have made the difference between life and death for the poor centurion.



WHAT IS THE GOSPEL OF PEACE?

The battle that wages on requires soldiers who are prepared for any and every occasion. Considering that our shoes are to be made from the gospel of peace, let us look at what the gospel of peace is. Matthew 4:23, tells us that Jesus went about all Galilee teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom. He healed the sick and all sorts of diseases. When we read the first chapter and verse of Mark we find the definition of the gospel as being that “of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” As the apostle Paul reflected on his experiences, he spoke of the one thing that had fueled his passion and sole purpose in life: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). The gospel, or “good news” was none other than the victory story of how Jesus had overcome the power of the devil through His death on the cross, only to rise again and give us the victory through becoming joined to Him.

WHY IS IT CALLED THE GOSPEL OF PEACE?

Isaiah is an amazing book full of wonderful illustrations—especially about the way Jesus would come to this earth the first time. You can read of the rejected Redeemer

in Isaiah 53 and the birth of the Son of God in Isaiah 9:6, 7. Jesus would be Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace. Through Him, peace and a new kingdom would be established which would be founded on God’s love and never be removed. As many prophets preached, “the kingdom of God is at hand” before Him, Jesus brought it to live within every single one of us when we accept Him as our Lord and Saviour. He is the faithful Father waiting for His long-lost son or daughter to return.

THE SON GETS NEW SHOES!

Finally, the long-lost son had come home. How eagerly the father had waited, every day checking the roads because maybe, just maybe, the son had found his way back. As soon as the son came into sight, the father lost no time—and soon father and son were reunited in the biggest bear hug. What the son was now wearing looked very different from the way he had been dressed the day he left. The father immediately sent for proper clothing . . . and shoes. It is really interesting to see how the father supplied every single item of clothing. When we come to God, whether it be after a long stint away like the son or whether we have been the other son and have remained close, God will provide a completely new wardrobe. It is just His way of showing us His priceless gift


and making us new, loved, cared for, and accepted. The fact that in Luke we see the son putting on new shoes is significant for what those shoes represent. What was the purpose of the new shoes? Well, what was the purpose of Jesus coming to this earth? Luke 1:79 says that Jesus came, “To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” This makes sense, given that our feet must have on the “gospel of peace.”

Have you ever searched for peace? Do you have peace? When I was growing up, I didn't really understand what peace was. Honestly, it sounded boring, but I had misunderstood peace entirely. Where do we find true peace? After reading about the importance of footwear from the Roman armies' example, we can appreciate the protection that the best “spiritual” footwear can afford. Jesus gives us the answer to obtaining these amazing shoes in John 14:27, where He says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”

Finding Jesus and accepting Him brings us true peace—the kind of peace that the world offers but is unable to give. It is the kind of peace that pushes fear away and invites love and courage to enter. The kind of peace that brings assurance of Jesus' love and

acceptance in the heavenly family. It will not only change our lives, but the peace of God cannot help but spill over to our family, friends and neighbors alike.

This is why the verse in Isaiah talks about how beautiful feet can be when they are on the mission of the gospel of peace. Romans 10:14, 15 says, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Being the bearer of good news is a natural result of our connection with Jesus—because as we look to Him, we reflect Him to others. This is how we meet the devil in combat, in shoes that are so full of the “good news” of Jesus that we will be able “to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” and remain unscathed (Luke 10:19, 20). The story of the Christian's armor may sound like a children's story, but it is simple so that we may remember the power it contains and the practical tips to fight our daily battles. Let us make sure to wear the footwear of the gospel of peace on our feet every day, knowing that those shoes will carry us far. Even to the gates of God's kingdom! 

A dramatic, low-angle shot of a soldier in a blue, metallic helmet and armor, holding a large, dark, circular shield. The scene is set in the rain, with vertical streaks of water falling across the frame. The lighting is moody and blue-toned, highlighting the texture of the armor and the texture of the shield.

THE SHIELD OF *Faith*

BY STEPHEN ANDREW JACOBS

Did you know that the Bible contains 44 verses (43 verses in the Old Testament and 1 verse in the New Testament) which have the word “shield” in them? Most of these verses are found in stories of great battles fought by the Israelites.

In these stories, each soldier had to wear an armor consisting of a belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, helmet, and sword to ensure their protection during each battle. Taking a closer look at the shield, it

FAITH IN GOD'S WORD, PRAYERFULLY STUDIED AND PRACTICALLY APPLIED, WILL BE OUR SHIELD.

is the largest item of the armor as it is used to protect virtually the entire body against attacks with darts, arrows, spears and swords. Therefore it is one of the most important parts of the armor that each soldier should have, despite it being the last item a soldier would put on.

One of my favorite stories is the battle between David and Goliath, 1 Samuel 17. The story begins with the Israelite and Philistine armies on the battlefield with Goliath as the leader of the Philistine army mocking the Israelites and their God. David, a young shepherd boy, decides to defend his God by facing Goliath. In 1 Samuel 17:38, 39 David attempts to wear King Saul's armor, but takes it off because he had not proved it. He proceeds to face the giant with a staff, sling, 5 stones and "in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied" (1 Samuel 17:45).

We all do know very well how the story ends but I would like to look more closely at David and see how he as a soldier protected himself from the giant at that moment. In verses 45-47, David gives a declaration of faith that God will give him the victory over Goliath. We do not find him praising his staff, shoes, sling or the 5 stones, neither his ability to

use the sling, he simply declares his faith in God.

WHAT IS FAITH?

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Through faith, David believed that he would be victorious over Goliath because he had rid himself of the "human" protection—the armor of King Saul—and acquired all the protection he needed which was God Himself. God to him was a shield.

"But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head" (Psalm 3:3).

"The weak should therefore look to Jesus, and believe in Him; they then exercise faith." —*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 127.

WHAT IS THE SHIELD OF FAITH?

Looking at the only verse in the New Testament that speaks about a shield, Ephesians 6:16 declares: "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." By saying, "above all," this verse places an emphasis on our need of the shield of faith.

Earlier we understood that the shield was the largest item of the armor, as it protected most of the body and is the first defense a

soldier has against any attack. But before we go any further, let us get a better understanding of what or whom we are fighting against.

WHY DO WE NEED TO PUT ON THE ARMOR?

“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. 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 6:12, 13).

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

“Our loins must be girt about with truth. Our breastplate must be righteousness. The shield of faith must be in our hand, the helmet of salvation on our brow; and with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, we are to cut our way through the obstructions and entanglements of sin.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 502.

The verses and quotation above give us a clear picture of our enemy—the wickedness and darkness in this world, Satan the roaring lion, and the entanglements of sin.

WHAT IS SATAN’S OBJECTIVE?

“If the enemy can lead the desponding to take their eyes

off from Jesus, and look to themselves, and dwell upon their own unworthiness, instead of dwelling upon the worthiness of Jesus, His love, His merits, and His great mercy, he will get away their shield of faith, and gain his object; they will be exposed to his fiery temptations.”—*Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 127.

WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF SIN?

“For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23).

WHAT IS OUR SHIELD MADE OF?

In every battle, the enemy always aims to kill. We therefore need to have a special shield for protection. Let us discover what our shield is made of.

“Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, and charity are the elements of the Christian character. These precious graces are the fruits of the Spirit. They are the Christian’s crown and shield.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 173.

“Youth are ignorant and inexperienced, and the love of the Bible and its sacred truths will not come naturally. Unless great pains are taken to build up around them barriers to shield them from Satan’s devices, they are subject to his temptations and are led captive by him at his will.”—*Ibid.*, p. 508.

“Faith in God’s word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from

Satan's power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ."—*Counsels to the Church*, p. 331.

HOW POWERFUL IS OUR SHIELD?

"There is by our side a witness, a heavenly messenger, who will lift up for us a standard against the enemy. He will shut us in with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Beyond this Satan cannot penetrate. He cannot pass this shield of holy light."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 171.

HOW DO WE WEAKEN OUR SHIELD OF FAITH?

"Association with the ungodly and unbelieving will have the same influence [faith becomes confused and corrupted] upon those who believe the present truth unless they keep the Lord ever before them so that His Spirit shall be their shield."—*Christ Triumphant*, p. 109.

USING OUR SHIELD OF FAITH

In the book of Genesis, we find the experience of Joseph in Egypt. A young man, away from home, is rejected by his own brothers and is now a slave to an Egyptian. To us, he is a wonderful example of how we are to use our shield of faith daily to protect ourselves. "As a shield from temptation and an inspiration to purity and truth, no other influence can equal the sense of God's presence. 'All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to

do.' He is 'of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.' Hebrews 4:13; Habakkuk 1:13. This thought was Joseph's shield amidst the corruptions of Egypt. To the allurements of temptation his answer was steadfast: 'How . . . can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Genesis 39:9. Such a shield, faith, if cherished, will bring to every soul."—*Education*, p. 255.

ARE WE TO ONLY SHIELD OURSELVES?

Turning to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, we see how He protected the disciples from temptation. "Again the question was asked by the Redeemer, 'Whom seek ye?' . . . [and] again they answered, 'Jesus of Nazareth.' The Saviour then said, 'I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way'—pointing to the disciples. He knew how weak was their faith, and He sought to shield them from temptation and trial. For them He was ready to sacrifice Himself."—*A Call to Stand Apart*, p. 34.

"They [God's people] would shield the defenseless, and give an example of virtue and compassion."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 107.

IS THERE A REWARD FOR WINNING THE BATTLE?

Jesus gives the assurance: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Revelation 22:12).

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown” (Revelation 3:11).

“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10).

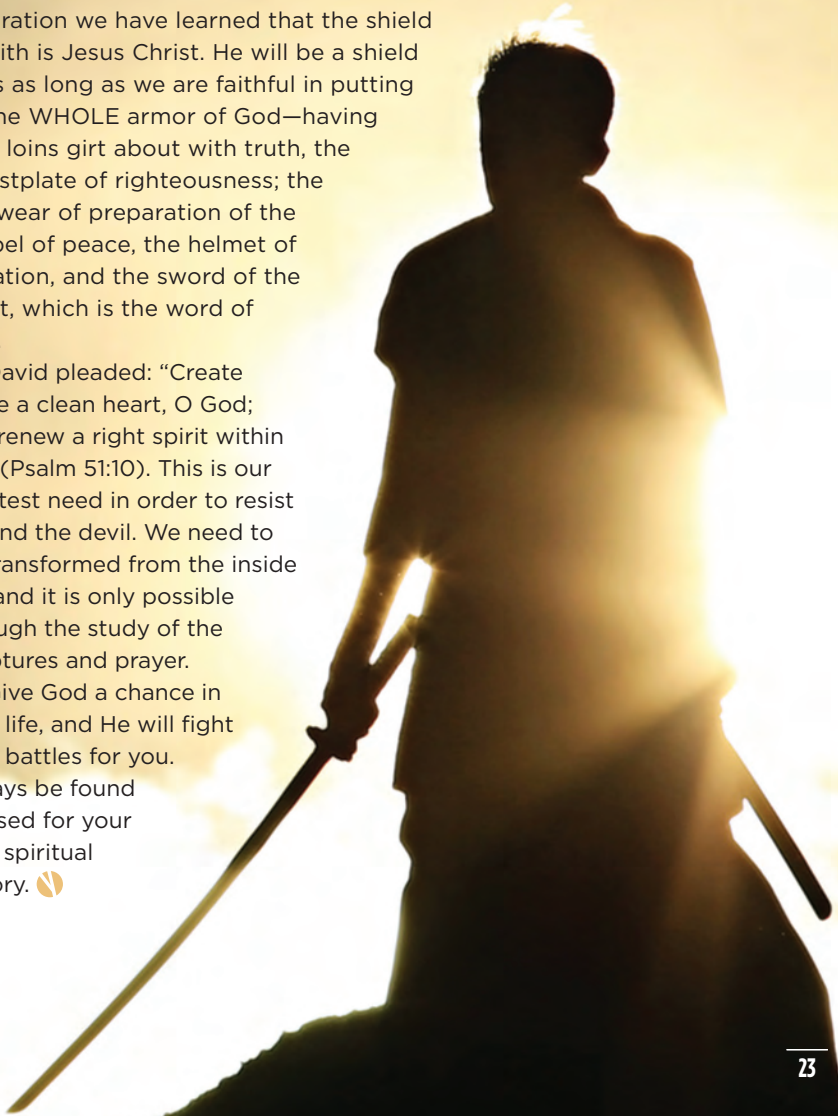
“Through a correct faith, divine knowledge will become human knowledge. No one can search the Scriptures in the spirit of Christ without being rewarded.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 113, 114.

“When the trumpet sounds and all that are in the graves hear Christ’s voice and come forth, they will receive their reward; for their faith in God was not a mere theory, but a reality.”—*Ibid.*, p. 262.

Dear reader, through the words of inspiration we have learned that the shield of faith is Jesus Christ. He will be a shield to us as long as we are faithful in putting on the WHOLE armor of God—having your loins girt about with truth, the breastplate of righteousness; the footwear of preparation of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

David pleaded: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). This is our greatest need in order to resist sin and the devil. We need to be transformed from the inside out and it is only possible through the study of the scriptures and prayer.

Give God a chance in your life, and He will fight your battles for you. Always be found dressed for your next spiritual victory. 🍷





THE HELMET OF *Salvation*

BY JACOB HANUSKA

Hurry up, we're gonna miss the sunrise!" Kyle said as he rushed out the door.

"Right behind 'ya!" Tom exclaimed.

"Where's your helmet?"

"I don't really need it—we've done the trail hundreds of times! I could basically do it with my eyes closed."

Tom put his hands out in front of him and started to walk around, pretending to be blind.

Kyle chuckled and shook his head.

"Well alright then, looks like you won't be seeing the sunrise anyway. Let's go."

The two boys raced down the trail, with pedals pumping and wheels spinning faster and faster. The cool morning air surrounded and excited them as they sped around every twist and turn.

"Look, no hands!" Tom chanted.

As he looked back to see his brother's reaction, Tom's front wheel snagged a crooked root. He flipped over the handlebars and collided, head first, with the daunting tree in front of him. Kyle rushed over to see if his brother was okay. He turned Tom on his back and tried to get a response. After a few minutes of poking and clapping, Tom opened his eyes and groaned. He looked up at his brother who seemed relieved, but also slightly annoyed. As he tried to sit up, Tom felt a throbbing pain surging through his entire head as he realized his careless mistake.

We can clearly see from Tom's unfortunate decision how important it is to use a helmet.

Now, there's another helmet we learn about in the Bible, which is even more important for our safety and wellbeing than the bike helmet Tom was missing. This is the helmet of salvation.

To learn about the helmet of salvation, first we need to know what salvation is. Salvation is defined as deliverance from sin and its consequences; to be saved.

WHY DO WE NEED TO BE SAVED?

Romans 3:23 and 6:23 tell us, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," "for the wages of sin is death." We are all sinners, and we need to be saved because the punishment for sinning is death.

FROM WHERE CAN WE GET SALVATION?

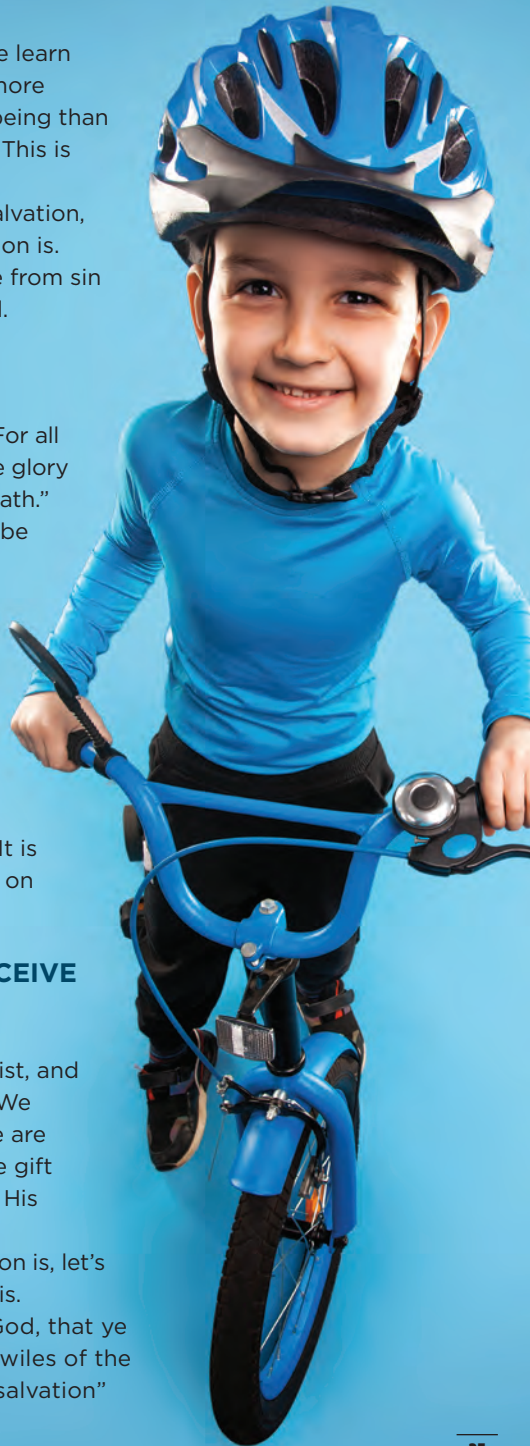
"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). Salvation is a free gift given to us by Jesus. It is not something that we can obtain on our own by being good.

SO THEN HOW CAN WE RECEIVE SALVATION AND BE SAVED?

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). We cannot save ourselves because we are sinners, but Jesus gave us this free gift of salvation. Our part is to receive His gift in faith, and obey Him.

Now that we know what salvation is, let's learn what the helmet of salvation is.

"Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. . . . And take the helmet of salvation" (Ephesians 6:11, 17).



THE HELMET PROTECTS US FROM DOUBTS AND TEMPTATIONS.

Is Paul talking about a physical helmet that we need to put on and wear? Ephesians 6:12 explains, “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.” This means that the battles that we fight are not physical battles, but rather mental and spiritual battles. So the helmet of salvation that Paul talks about is a metaphorical helmet.

FROM WHAT IS THE HELMET PROTECTING US?

The helmet protects the most important part of your body, the brain. The brain is the thinking center. The helmet protects us from doubts and temptations. It protects us from the fiery darts of the spiritual war going on around us.

HOW DO YOU TAKE UP THE HELMET OF SALVATION?

As mentioned previously, salvation is not something we can obtain on our own. God gives us the free gift of salvation, but we need to believe it, and have hope in Christ and assurance that we will be saved by His grace. This is taking the helmet of salvation.

TWO EXTREMES

Some believers have little or no assurance of their salvation. They often have doubts and look to

themselves, thinking they will never be good enough to be saved. On the other hand, some people are overconfident about their salvation and just go around doing whatever they please because they figure that God will forgive them and they will be saved regardless of how they behave.

WHERE IS THE BALANCE?

Having a true balance of assurance means that we have full confidence in the Lord, and complete distrust in ourselves. Proverbs 3:5, 6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

CONCLUSION

The helmet of salvation—the assurance of God’s saving grace—is a powerful piece of armor that is freely provided to all who choose to put it on. It gives us confidence in Christ’s promise that even though we have all sinned and deserve to die, He paid the price for our sins. We can live with the wonderful assurance this promise brings, by personally accepting His priceless gift. We just need to make sure that we do not abuse the gift that God has given us. Just like Tom’s helmet couldn’t protect him if he left it in the closet, God’s helmet of salvation can’t protect us unless we choose to put it on and believe in His saving grace. 🏈



THE
SWORD
OF THE

Spirit

BY JARED CHAPMAN

It cuts deep. Nothing quite leaves our inner selves as exposed as this does. Whatever lies beneath the surface is brought to the forefront of our senses when we come in contact with the Word of God. The apostle Paul described this experientially when he wrote under inspiration, “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).

And yet this is one of weapons we are instructed to take in the warfare against the devil. So, who or what are we really fighting against since we are instructed to use a weapon that ultimately ends up cutting ourselves? Ellen White gives us the answer:

“The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 106.

The origin of the whole great controversy was found in putting self in the place of God. It’s this tendency we battle against in the day-to-day trenches of life. A.T. Jones brilliantly describes what was going on the mind of Lucifer, an experience to which we can all relate:

“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness.’ [Ezekiel 28:17.] Being ‘perfect in beauty’ he looked at himself instead of to Him

who gave him this perfect beauty; and began to contemplate himself, and to admire himself. Then, as the consequence, he grew proud of himself, and began to think that the place which he occupied was too narrow for the proper, profitable, and full display of the ability which he now gave himself the credit of possessing. He concluded that the place which he occupied was not fully worthy of the dignity which now in his own estimation merged in him.

“True, he did have the perfection of beauty, fullness of wisdom, and height of dignity. But he had received it all from God through Jesus Christ who had created him. He had nothing, to his very existence itself, which he had not received. And when he would boast of it as if he had not received it; **when he grew proud of his beauty, and gave himself credit for it as if it were inherently of himself; this, in itself, was but to ignore his Creator, and put himself in His place.** Yea more, when he boasted of that which he had received as if he had not received it; when he exalted himself because of that which he was, as if it were inherently of himself; this was only to argue for himself, *self-existence*. And this was, in itself, only to make himself, in his own estimation EQUAL WITH GOD.”—*Ecclesiastical Empire*, pp. 572, 573. [Emphasis added.]

All day long this battle goes on. Naturally, we end up living our lives in this selfish state. The fight/

WE NEED NOW THE SWORD OF THE LORD TO CUT THE VERY SOUL AND MARROW OF FLESHLY LUSTS, APPETITES, AND PASSIONS.

flight response mode becomes our internal home. We try to control every situation we end up in, we're afraid of letting go and trusting anyone other than ourselves. Lies are told to self-protect, to cover the many flaws that continue to exist despite our best attempts to better ourselves. Life is lived on the run as we constantly try escape facing the person we really are. Criticism reigns in our daily conversation, as we attempt to minimize our mistakes to appear better than we actually are.

And then we encounter Him.

The apostle Paul describes what He sees:

"Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but **all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him** with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:13).

[Emphasis added.]

The question is: how will we respond to exposure? Will we run and hide like Adam and Eve in the garden or will we stand exposed and allow our nakedness be covered by the only One able to cover all our evil and shame. Sadly, 2,000 years ago this was the response to the exposure the Word incarnate caused.

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and **men loved darkness rather**

than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that

doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:19, 20). [Emphasis added.]

The sword that we so desperately need in order to fight the war against self, we often leave behind. It's this sword that cuts away at the parts of us that need healing. Without it, we walk around not even knowing what is going on deep down inside. Ellen White comments:

"We need not say, 'The perils of the last days are soon to come upon us.' Already they have come. We need now the sword of the Lord to cut the very soul and marrow of fleshly lusts, appetites, and passions. May it pierce and divide in a far greater degree than it has ever yet done. May all the proud be cast down. May the carnally secure be drawn from the refuge of lies with which they have sought to deceive the people of God. May it cut away their self-righteousness and open the eyes of the blind, that they may see that they are not whole in the sight of God."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 414.

"The Word is to be diligently searched, for the ministry of the Word discovers the imperfections in our characters and teaches us



the choicest of heaven's blessings.

“What was the result?—Thousands were converted in a day. The sword of the Spirit flashed right and left. Newly edged with power, it pierced even to the dividing

that the sanctification of the Spirit is a work of heavenly devising, presenting in Christ Jesus the true perfection that if maintained will become a perfect whole in behalf of every soul. We are educated in Bible lines to become complete in Christlikeness and to see His Father's face in Him who gave His own life for the saving of the soul.”—*Our Father Cares*, p. 129.

She goes on to describe the incredible experience of the disciples before the Holy Spirit was outpoured. The sword was finally allowed to have full effect.

“After Christ's ascension, the disciples were gathered together in one place to make humble supplication to God. And after ten days of heart searching and self-examination, the way was prepared for the Holy Spirit to enter the cleansed, consecrated soul temples. Every heart was filled with the Spirit, as though God desired to show His people that it was His prerogative to bless them with

asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. The idolatry that had been mingled with the worship of the people was overthrown. New territory was added to the kingdom of God. Places that had been barren and desolate sounded forth His praises. Believers, reconverted, born again, were a living power for God. A new song was put in their mouths, even praise to the Most High.

“Controlled by the Spirit, they saw Christ in their brethren. One interest prevailed. One subject of emulation swallowed up all others—to be like Christ, to do the works of Christ. The earnest zeal felt was expressed by loving helpfulness, by kindly words and unselfish deeds. All strove to see who could do the most for the enlargement of Christ's kingdom. ‘The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul’ (Acts 4:32).”—*Ye Shall Receive Power*, pp. 286, 287.

It's when we've realized who we really are that He can cover us. When we finally stop running, He catches up and passes by. . . .


"Later I passed by, and when I looked at you and saw that you were old enough for love, I spread the corner of my garment over you and covered your naked body. I gave you my solemn oath and entered into a covenant with you, declares the Sovereign Lord, and you became mine" (Ezekiel 16:8, NIV).

The resting place is thus found when we reach the point when we realized we are nothing and He is everything. This is exactly where Elijah arrived before the rain came.

"He 'said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times.' The servant watched while Elijah prayed. Six times he returned from the watch, saying, There is nothing, no cloud, no sign of rain. But the prophet did not give up in discouragement. He kept reviewing his life, to see where he had failed to honor God, he confessed his sins, and thus

continued to afflict his soul before God, while watching for a token that his prayer was answered. As he searched his heart, he seemed to be less and less, both in his own estimation and in the sight of God. **It seemed to him that he was nothing, and that God was everything; and when he reached the point of renouncing self, while he clung to the Saviour as his only strength and righteousness, the answer came.**"—*The Review and Herald*, May 26, 1891. [Emphasis added.]

And as we go throughout the years, may we daily let the sword do its work to cut away at our tendencies to protect and rely on ourselves and direct us instead to rely totally on Him!

"We must gather about the cross. Christ and Him crucified should be the theme of contemplation, of conversation, and of our most joyful emotion. We should keep in our thoughts every blessing we receive from God and when we realize His great love we should be willing to trust everything to the hand that was nailed to the cross for us."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 103. 

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PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR
OF GOD, THAT YE MAY BE
ABLE TO STAND
AGAINST THE WILES
OF THE DEVIL.

Ephesians 6:11

