

The Great War

Essays on the Battle Between Saint and Satan

by David Morsey

PROLOGUE

We are at war! The enemy maintains a continual assault. For the Christian, peacetime conditions cannot prevail until the Lord comes. The conflict on earth is endless.

A lifetime of conflict! Is this our lot on earth? Where is peace? Where is joy? Does peace lie only beyond the grave? Is peace but a misty dream of tomorrow?

Conflict—yes! It is a life long battle. We are soldiers of the cross. We will carry the fight to the grave.

Peace—Yes and no! Peace in the Spirit is eternal, but peace in the flesh is not always possible because of the very conditions of battle. The soldier may have a deep peace within himself because of a sense of self-worth as a brave soldier or because of the worth of the cause for which he fights, yet in the midst of the battle he experiences many kinds of surface emotions—fear, anxiety, grief, anger. Bravery is not necessarily lack of fear. Fearlessness may be failure to understand the danger. Bravery is the will to fight in spite of fear. For the Christian, peace is a fruit of the Spirit, not a condition of the flesh. It is not a sin to worry, contrary to the popular (but not Biblical) maxim. For example, if you have a loved one that is seriously ill, and you are not worried, maybe you just do not care enough. The Biblical injunction “be careful for nothing”, has to do with destructive anxiety. The Greek word that is translated “careful,” is *Merimnao* which means “to be tom apart with anxiety.” It means to be distraught. If we pray for a loved one that is ill, we do not really know what God wants to do. We hope He will spare our beloved, but we know that in His all wise plan, He may not. We are willing to accept this, but we are worried because in the flesh we do not want to have to go through the sorrow. We may be even glad for the beloved one, whose struggle would end, but we will have heartache. Now, anyone who does not admit to some worry under these conditions may be masking or burying their true feelings or maybe they really do not care that much. There is thus a difference between feelings of the flesh and sensitivities in the Spirit. No matter how things turn out—no matter how fierce the battle—our spirit can be at peace in the midst of the conflict while our natural mind experiences the turbulence of the situation. We have paused to explain this matter of peace because the prospect of endless conflict seems on the surface to contradict the teachings of Jesus. But the one who said, “My peace I give unto you,” said also, “I came not to bring peace but a sword.” (See author’s pamphlet on peace.)

And what of joy? Again, in our spirit it is an eternal river—a fruit of the Holy Spirit; but in the flesh—that is another matter. If joy is defined as happiness, or pleasure, or good feelings, it is doubtful that anyone can sustain such bliss without being insensitive to the wretchedness of the world about them, if not to their own fleshly woes. But if joy be defined as a sense of well-being in the reality of the presence of Christ, or of exhilaration in the victories of the battle, then there can be joy in the midst of the conflict. (See the author’s pamphlet, Joy.) In the same sense, if peace be defined as harmony with the purposes of God, then peace will also prevail in the spirit throughout the battle.

Now, if all life is a battle, then what advantage does the Christian have? Well, for one thing, remember life is also a battle for the non-Christian. If a city is under siege, remember that both soldier and civilian face the battle, but the soldier has the equipment to survive.

But more importantly, we have Christ with us in the battle. We have the grand privilege of seeing His power at work. We shall never see His great power if we do not see Him in great conflict. But if we would truly know Him, we must know more than the power of His resurrection—we must also know Him in the fellowship of His sufferings.

And so we fight! But if we would fight successfully, we must be trained. In the next number of pages, we will learn of war. We must know our Captain; we must know the enemy; and we must know the arsenal of weapons. *“For the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds”* (II Corinthians 10:4).

THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION

“For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

We have Christ for our Captain! He is fighting shoulder to shoulder with us. Therein is our consolation. Joshua had an encounter with this Captain when he was about to face the battle of Jericho. Humanly speaking, the city walls were impregnable to this band of pilgrims. The encounter is described in Joshua 5:13-15 as follows: ***“And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him; Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.”***

There is no question but what we are dealing here with an appearance of Christ. In symbol, the conflicts of the children of Israel in the Promised Land were like the conflicts of Christians in their earthly pilgrimage. (Remember, the Promised Land cannot be a symbol of Heaven, because the enemy was still there.) The enemy must be vanquished. We are not to leave the least remnant or vestige of the enemy’s presence. We are told in (II Corinthians 6:17) ***“Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you.”*** Such total commitment at the spiritual level is as impossible for us in our own strength as the conquest of the Promised Land on the earthly level was impossible for Israel in their own strength. On the other hand, it is as impossible for us to grow spiritually without such separation, as it was for Israel to maintain their place with God without totally expelling the enemy. Unfortunately, they did not expel the enemy totally, and unfortunately, they lost out with God. The battle cannot be won without the Captain of our salvation.

Sometimes we focus so much on the glories of the future victories that we forget the glories of the battle itself. But how can the battle be glorious? It is the glorious in the experience of Christ which it affords. When this age is ended and the battle won, there will be no longer

the opportunity of walking with Christ in the camaraderie of the battle. For married couples, some of the most precious experiences of their lives have been the struggles they went through together. How often when success comes and life is easier, there is not the same closeness. So with Christ. To focus on the glories of Heaven, would be like the situation in which the bride would say to the groom, "You are too poor now: I do not want to struggle. Call me when you are successful and I will come back to live with you." But, the glory of the victory is measured by the heat of the battle. Paul says in (II Timothy 2:12) *"If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."* Also in (Romans 8:17), *"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."*

Let us enter now into the sufferings of Christ. We shall never see His great power, if we do not see Him in great conflicts. What a marvelous thing to see Christ in action sharing our conflicts with us. It is like the thrill of watching our favorite athlete overcome his adversary. Only the thrill is greater, when He does it for us. Remember the lesson of the storm at sea. As long as Christ is in the boat, it will not sink.

Let us not rob ourselves of the privilege of knowing Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. The opportunity will never come again throughout eternity. Herein is our joy and herein is our peace.

THE CUNNING OF THE DEVIL

"Finally, be empowered in the Lord and in the grip of his strength Put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand against the cunning of the devil because our wrestling is not an encounter with blood and flesh, but with rulers, with authorities, with cosmic powers of this darkness, with spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm" (Ephesians 6:10-12).

We are at war! We must know the enemy! Who is he? Where did he come from? What is his nature? What is his purpose? What are his tactics and weapons?

WHO IS HE?

If we are going to fight the enemy, we must know him. His primary names tell us something of who he is. He is called **Satan**—"adversary;" the **Devil**—"accuser," the Prince of this World, and the Evil One. He is the arch enemy of God and of God's family. He is the accuser of man to God and of God to man. He is the ruler of the earthly realm and the personification of all that is evil.

WHERE DID HE COME FROM?

In Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 we have a description of an earthly ruler, but it is immediately obvious that we have in the earthly ruler a symbol of, or a direct description of Satan himself. This text tells us the following about Satan:

- 1) He was one of God's original creation;
- 2) He was a very special being—so magnificent as to be called Lucifer, "shining one;"
- 3) He had authority—perhaps second only to God;
- 4) He commanded heavenly hosts of angels;
- 5) He was lifted up with pride and sought to overthrow God;

- 6) He was cast out of heaven with his hosts;
- 7) He now rules over earth with great power and continues to seek the overthrow of God and all His family;
- 8) In the end he will be totally defeated, cast forever into outer darkness.

WHAT IS HIS NATURE?

He is, by Nature "spirit". Essentially Satan is a spirit being. He moves freely within the supernatural realm. Ephesians 2 tells us he is "*the spirit that now works within (energizes) the children of disobedience.*" He is not confined to space and time. This makes him a formidable foe of human beings, and makes it imperative that we rely upon God to combat him.

He is by Nature Evil He is the personification of all that is perverse. There is not in him one good thing. In fact, one of his names is Beelzebub — "Lord of filth." He corrupts everything he touches. That is why the Christian must separate himself from all things that have any connection with Satan and his children. No matter how harmless a thing may appear on the surface, if Satan has anything to do with it, it will corrupt the soul.

He is by Nature Light. He is called Lucifer—"the shining one." Paul says that it is a deceptive light. Satan comes sometimes as "*an angel of light*" (II Corinthians 11:14). Knowledge alone is inadequate to discern between the true and false. It takes the power of the Spirit. Satan cannot always entice Christians with gross immorality or error, but he comes subtly. Many times people are sidetracked from doing God's will by things that appear to be good, but they are not what God wants. Most religions are in this category. They have enough truth in them to attract the sincere seeker, but enough falsehood to destroy him.

He is by Nature Like a Serpent Undoubtedly this would be the poisonous kind, because many of the variety of reptiles are beneficial. Satan poisons the mind. He is apparently able to plant thoughts in the mind, even of believers. Many times Satan turns believers against each other by suspicion and jealousy that are totally unfounded. Whenever we tend to think ill of a brother or sister, we should immediately consider that Satan is poisoning our mind. The antidote is prayer. Remain in a prayerful mood toward others. If negative thoughts cross your mind, immediately send up a prayer. Also it is well to close the ear to gossip. Remember that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. If we cultivate our fellowship with Christ, it will tend to sanctify our thinking.

WHAT IS HIS PURPOSE?

Satan's major purpose is to destroy all that is good and all that is of God. In Revelation 9:11 he is called Apollyon—"destroyer." Peter says, "*be alert, be on guard, your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour*" (I Peter 5:8). It is not Satan's purpose merely to aggravate you or to make life difficult for you. He wants to destroy you! He wants to wrest you from God! He wanted Job to "curse God and die." I He will try anything he can to turn you against God. If God would let him, he would kill every Christian in the world (although that would not be a victory, since he cannot have the spirit, even if he destroyed the body). Remember whatever he does is to the end of destruction. If he spreads dissension among believers, or lies about God, or brings discouragement, or tempts with sin, his purpose is not to aggravate but to destroy! No matter what your struggles have been through the day, or what weakness you have met

with, if you can come to the end of the day and say to Christ, “I am still yours,” you have won the battle. You may be wounded and weary, and feel a failure, but if you still care about Christ, you have triumphed over Satan.

WHAT ARE HIS TACTICS?

In order to accomplish Ws purpose of destruction, Satan has his tactics. Some of them are noted here:

- 1) *Discouragement.* He seeks to, bring about a sense of failure and futility, for the purpose of causing the person to appear unworthy and ineffectual.
- 2) *Doubt.* By constantly questioning the effectiveness of one’s life and faith, Satan causes us to doubt God or our place with Him.
- 3) *Pride and self-righteousness.* The opposite of discouragement is over-confidence. By encouraging self-works and self-effort to the faith, he gets many to acquire a cloak of piety that chokes off the vitality of the Spirit, and obscures the real weaknesses.
- 4) *Division.* By promoting dissension between believers, Satan hopes to cut them off from one another and leave them weak. He stirs up strife on an individual level and a group level. The moment that there is a division anywhere, no matter how right it seems, know immediately that Satan is around and get to the Prayer Tower!
- 5) *Corruption.* Here the tactic is to get the church to be tolerant of the standards of society until its power is eroded. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

WHAT ARE HIS WEAPONS?

Paul never under-estimates the power of the enemy. He says that Satan is cunning and powerful. He warns us that we cannot use human weapons. Were not God on our side, we would never have a chance. Satan has three main weapons:

- 1) *Accusation.* Satan accuses us before God day and night. His purpose is to discourage us, or to bring dissension. If he can get us down on ourselves, we feel unworthy and pun away from God. Sometimes preachers aid the enemy by constantly criticizing the people. They are trying to get people to shape up their lives, but instead they send them away empty and discouraged. We all may play into Satan’s hand by criticizing our brothers and sisters. It is the task of the Holy Spirit to shape us. He will do it effectively. Our task is not to judge ourselves or others, but to focus on fellowship with Christ. The Lord Himself will “*work within us to all and do His pleasure*” (Philippians 2:13).
- 2) *Deception.* This is Satan’s favorite tactic. He can make bad things look good and good things look bad. He makes the trinkets and baubles of the world look like priceless jewels and the things of God like clods of dirt. He is a liar and the father of liars. He lies to us about God, about ourselves, about each other. He twists the truth of the Word and brings confusion among the people of God. We cannot trust our minds. They are too easily deceived. Never go by reason, or by feeling, or by appearances. We cannot trust the flesh. We must appeal to the Spirit within us. We must learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. This sensitivity comes by fellowship with Christ in prayer and attendance to the Word. We also gain sensitivity by fellowship with believers.

Coming together to pray and study the Word brings us in touch with the Holy Spirit, who is always in the midst. If you have a question about some teaching that may be false, or an idea you have, or attitudes, ask Christ to make it clear to you and then be open to Him and submissive to the matter. It is also well not to expose yourself to Satan's tempting offers. Stay away from Satan's playground and don't go window-shopping in his arcades! You are better off with the simpler things of life. Learn to enjoy the things God has given you. They will give you more lasting satisfaction. In terms of Truth, stay as close to the Bible as possible. Stay with the teacher that stays with the Word. There is so much teaching today that springs from human thinking—theology, philosophy, psychology, methods and manuals. In the human mind there is much mischief. Be simple about your faith. You and Christ and the Word—a wholesome combination.

- 3) *Affliction*. In affliction Satan is attempting to get at our spirits by external pressure. In fact, the word affliction in the Greek means pressure. Jesus assumes that we win have pressures in this world. *"These things have I spoken unto you that in me ye shall have peace. In the world ye shall have affliction (pressure) but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33). These pressures, of which Christ speaks are, for the most part, external circumstances which He allows in our lives for the purpose of shaping our inner spirits. God is not Himself the author of these afflictions. Apparently He lets the natural problems and distresses of this world affect us, when it is God's purpose to do so. God does not cause sickness or death or disaster. Satan causes these things in the world over which he rules. A primary example of this is Job. Satan challenged Job's devotion, on the basis of Job's prosperity. God then gave Satan the authority to take away Job's prosperity and health, for the purpose of proving that he would be faithful even in adversity. Jesus clearly points out that no earthly circumstances can really affect us when our spirits belong to Him. Even if they kill the body, they cannot touch the spirit. It is a clever device of Satan to cause Christians to equate affliction with punishment or disfavor. The soul, thus discouraged, lets affliction separate him from God. Jesus very clearly points out that suffering, as in the case of the blind man, has the purpose of glorifying God. Never use adversity or prosperity as a thermometer of spirituality.

The foregoing discussion has only lightly scratched the surface of what might be said of our enemy. There is much more. It is only necessary to know enough to make it clear that the enemy is much too cunning and too powerful for the human person. It is imperative that we let God fight for us. Some rather bold approaches to Satan encouraged by certain sectors of Christianity are very risky. God said to Jehoshaphat of old, ***"Ye shall not need to fight in this battle. Set yourself Stand ye still and see the salvation of the Lord"*** (II Chronicles 20:17).

THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE

"Are not fleshly, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (II Corinthians 10:4).

First of all let it be noted that the weapons are of the Spirit and not of the flesh. It is one of the most off-repeated thoughts in the literature of Christendom, yet the church still persists in relying on human methodology. When win we learn? *It does not follow that methods used by the world are right for the church!* The disciples gave themselves to prayer and the Word,

not to contests and promotions and methods and religious technique. The church has ceased to be a refuge for the spirit; instead it has become a religious service club, appealing constantly to the flesh. Pastors are armed with promotional techniques and polished homilies. *But they do not know the word of God.*

THE WEAPON OF THE WORD

It is unmistakably clear that the chief weapon is the Word. *“Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”* (Ephesians 6:17). *“The Word of God is living and energizing, and sharper than any two-edged sword”* (Hebrews 4:12). Many of God’s greatest messengers would not have passed the seminary homiletics course. The pulpits are filled with men skilled in church building and polished pulpitering, but ignorant of the Word of God. Seminary courses are so crowded with the peripheral areas of philosophy, psychology, public speaking, church building techniques, that there is little room for the master of the Word. Consequently the Lord’s people are starving to death. Like the eating habits of America, they are overfed and undernourished. Instead of being nourished by the Word of God and letting the Spirit build them up, they are constantly being pressed to improve self-help techniques. They are fed the chaff of religious manuals which offer fleshly rules, flimsily supported by questionable texts. When they have followed all the rules, they have only succeeded in putting on a pious veneer at best. The veneer is only as stable as their capacity to maintain their self-image. Paul met this problem in Philippians 3 where he showed that the rules produced a fleshly self-righteousness which was only refuse. Christ said, *“Without Me you can do nothing”* (John 15:5). The people of God have lived in perpetual guilt trying to do that which the Scripture says is impossible. Christ says, *“it is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words which I have spoken to you are Spirit and life”* (John 6:63).

Christ also said, *“If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me”* (John 12:32). People are not drawn by religious ideas, but by the glorifying of Jesus Christ. They are not nourished by religious rules, but by the Word of God. No matter how they may be challenged by religious addresses, only the Holy Spirit can bring forth the fruit of righteousness within them. ***“As newborn babes earnestly desire the unmixed milk of the Word that you may grow thereby”*** (I Peter 2:2). Paul said, ***“And now brethren I commend you to God and the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up”*** (Acts 20:32). If pastors would make it their business to feed the people on the Word of God, the Spirit, working through the Word, would accomplish in the hearts of the people far more than any human challenges or self-will could ever accomplish. But in order to do this, the pastors must themselves master the Word and give it forth not as lectures or Bible knowledge, but as instruments of the Spirit giving forth the Word of life.

THE WEAPON OF PRAYER

The disciples said, *“It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables, but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word”* (Acts 6:2-4). Many of God’s servants are so loaded down with administrative duties that they do not have time to pray and master the Word of God. But this is their major task. Furthermore, the church is so busy with feverish activity that concentrated prayer is all but lost. There is probably no theme in all the Scriptures more constantly urged than prayer. Jesus said that men of God could not go forth in power without prayer. Paul urged the church to pray without ceasing. He constantly called upon his brethren to pray him through the doors

which God had opened. Let the people of God have done with promotions and religious activities and give themselves to prayer.

I speak the following in the name of Christ, as His authorized servant: let the church beware; judgment must begin at the house of God. Let the pastors beware, who like the shepherds of Ezekiel, have failed to feed the flock; who have specialized in promotions instead of prayer and self-help manuals instead of the Word of God; who have measured their success in numbers, while the needy of the flock have quietly slipped away into oblivion. Let the members of the Body beware who have given themselves to personal happiness while the world about them languishes in darkness and misery; who have paid scant attention to Christ while cultivating the affections of the world; who have failed to set before their children the example of devotion and godliness, but busied themselves in the pursuit of early satisfaction; who have made the giving of themselves to others, secondary to the attending of their own interests. May God have mercy on us all!

What is the answer to this? Not more rules, nor the exercise of willpower. There is only one answer—focus on fellowship with Christ. Attend to Christ; He will attend to your spirit. Feed on the Word; it will build you up. Fellowship with the Lord's people; it will strengthen you. It is not promises, but prayer. It is not trying to be a super-Christian, but enjoying the fellowship of Christ.

THE ARMOR OF GOD

“For this reason take up the full armor of God in order that you may be able to resist in the evil day and having worked out the whole thing, to stand. Stand therefore having girdled your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having put on your feet the readiness of the gospel of peace; in all things having taken up the shield of faith by which you shall be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:14-17) (Author's translation).

It is folly to go into battle with our formidable foe without the full armor of God! Let not a single part be missing! Else I cannot vouch for your safety! The record of Scripture does not hold back the numerous instances in which servants of God suffered great loss when the enemy caught them unprotected. Remember the tragic interludes of such ones as Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Moses, Samson, Saul, David, Jonah and many others who lost honor and loved ones and even kingdoms because of disobedience in an unguarded moment. I say this not to alarm you, but to warn you, so that Satan may not get the advantage of you. He need not, if you follow Paul's instruction on the armor.

THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH

You are not ready to engage in the contest until you have The Truth. The figure of the girdle refers to the picture in the Middle East of gathering ones flowing robes about the waist and binding them with a girdle in preparation for bodily activity. Paul is saying here, of course, that you are not ready to move in battle until you have come to grips with the truth. Satan will easily defeat you because you will get tangled up in your confusion and doubts. This is not truth in general, it is **The Truth**. “What is truth?” asks Pilate. Jesus says, “I am The Truth.” Truth is personal. It is in the person of Christ. There is a difference

between fact and truth. You can have accurate facts and still not have truth unless those facts come together in reality. The misapplication of facts and figures is one of the commonplaces of society. The old adage is pretty sound: “Figures don’t lie, but liars figure.” The Bible warns us against those who take the very Word of God and twist it to their own purposes. But how can we be sure of truth? By taking on Christ. Christ will be truth in you. The Greek word for truth is *Aletheia*, which means, “reality.” Truth is the expression of reality. Christ is the only reality from which all else springs. When you have Christ within, you have truth in your spirit. Even if the mind is subject to misunderstandings (and thus must be regarded with reservations) yet the inner spirit has the Truth or reality of Christ. It is well to appeal to the Spirit to guide us in the truth and not to trust our own reason and judgment. If you are confused, ask the Holy Spirit to bring you to the truth. If your search is for Christ, you will only be satisfied with the sources of teachings which exalt Christ. If you merely seek religious experience, you may easily be led astray. Let your objective always be the glorifying of Christ and you will keep your focus clear.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The breastplate protects the heart. The heart is the spirit in Biblical symbolism. There are only two classes of people on the earth—the righteous and the unrighteous. Satan’s kingdom is the kingdom of the unrighteous. *“For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish”* (Psalm 1:6). What does righteousness mean? The Greek word is from the root, **DIKAIOS**, which means “just” or “right.” “To make righteous or to justify” means to line up. It is like the printer’s term “to make the margins even.” Our English word “righteous” comes from the old English word, **RIHTWIS**, which means “right way.” To be righteous is to be in the Right Way. There are only two ways: God’s way and Satan’s way. Righteousness is not so much a matter of good deeds, as being in the right way. How can we be righteous? By taking Christ, *“He is our righteousness.”* He is not only The Truth, He is The Way. To have Christ within is to satisfy the “righteous requirement of God.” Paul says, *“Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ. The righteousness which is of God on the basis of faith”* (Philippians 3:9) (Author’s translation).

Many people back away from the idea of righteousness because they think it means to always be good and they know they are not good and are not likely to be. This is a misunderstanding of the Word. Paul himself admitted to failure at his own righteousness, according to Philippians 3, as well as Romans 7. Remember, to be righteousness in the Biblical sense, does not mean to be good. Jesus said, *“There is none good, but God”* (Luke 18:19). Rather, it means to be in the right way or the way of Christ. In the eyes of God, to be identified in faith with Jesus Christ is to be righteous. To put on the breastplate of righteousness then, means to put on Christ. To trust in the righteousness of Christ will keep the enemy from discouraging you by attacking your own righteousness. When Satan attacks your righteousness, say to him, “You are absolutely right, my righteousness is filthy rags, but I am trusting in Christ’s righteousness, and not my own.”

FEET SHOD WITH THE READINESS OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

This is apparently a reference to Isaiah 52:7 and later quoted in Romans 10:15. Translated directly from the Hebrew text Isaiah 52:7 reads, *“How timely (or exalted) upon the mountains are the feet of Him who announces tidings of peace, tidings of good, tidings of salvation; who says to Zion, ‘thy God has exercised his reign.’”* The Messenger here is none other than Christ, The Logos, The Revelation of God. (See “The living Word” by the

author.) The announcement He makes is to His people, oppressed by the Assyrian. This is a prophetic picture of God's people who, as the result of disobedience, have gone into captivity. Not only have they been oppressed but the Assyrians have arrogantly blasphemed the name of God. Now comes the time of deliverance. God "*will be exalted among the heathen*" (Psalm 46:10). The Hebrew word translated "beautiful," is from the verb which means "to grow tall" (as of a plant), hence, "to be exalted, or to reach full maturity." Paul quoted this verse in Romans 10:15 using the Greek word which means "timely" or "seasonable." Thus, "*in the fullness of time God sent forth his son*" (Galatians 4:4). The idea of "beautiful" (as in A.V.) is weak, although sometimes allowable. In Isaiah the obvious message is that the time for deliverance has come and the King Himself announces the glad tidings. Paul picks up the message and, using the plural, includes the Body of Christ as participating with the messenger in announcing the good news, not only to Israel, but to the world. In the same spirit, Jesus tells His disciples to go into all the world and preach the good news. In Ephesians 1:23 the Church is said to be the Body of Christ, and thus also His fullness. The Head needs a Body. We are agents through whom Christ, the Head, exercises His will upon earth, as the human body is the agent through which the brain is able to carry out its will. Thus, to have the feet shod with the readiness of the Gospel, means to participate in the great task of announcing the message to the world.

Now, let it be clearly understood, that this does not mean that everybody must be evangelist. There is more to a body than a mouth (although some people seem to act as though this were the case)! Everyone is to be a representative of Christ by life and witness and everyone is to carry out his function in the Body, as God has ordained. If you are not comfortable in so called "personal work," do not let that trouble you. Perhaps that is not your gift, but everyone can be a witness to what Christ has done in their life; everyone can be a "***living epistle known and read of all men***" (II Corinthians 3:2). This readiness to participate with the Body of Christ in the corporate task of making known to the world the Gospel of Peace, becomes a defense against the enemy. When our focus is on the needy world around us, we are not so likely to be undone by the personal afflictions with which Satan attacks us.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

Our enemy, Satan, is not involved in cosmic dart games; he is using flaming arrows. He is not trying to badger us with pin pricks; he is out to destroy us. The arrows are anything that Satan can use to penetrate us. It may be pride, or possessions, or pleasure, or even piety. The weapons are lethal. We cannot survive without the shield of faith. The shield, as the Greek word implies, is body length, no part is left exposed. It is able to quench the arrows. In the nature of the case, it is something stronger than the human flesh, which could never withstand the arrows. Here is an extremely important lesson. Faith, in order to be effective, must be something other than and stronger than our human nature. To rely on our own faith, or faith that is conjured up in the mind, would be like using the body for its own shield. True faith is a fruit of the Spirit and has nothing to do with human thoughts or feelings. Paul speaks of "*Living by the faith of the Son of God*" (Galatians 2:20). This is God's faith and not ours. Many of the Lord's people work up feelings of faith, and when the feelings fail, they assume that faith has failed. Remember the faith we have is God's and not our own.

It is most important to understand the nature of faith if we are to understand what Paul means by the shield. Faith is a gift of God. It comes as a natural effect of the presence of

Christ in our spirit. When we accept Christ, His faith becomes our faith. He has not left such a vital element to human weakness. Faith is not just a nice thing to have, like a credit card, so that we can get things from God. It is essential to all of our interaction with God.

“Without faith, it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Therefore, it cannot be limited by human consciousness. Unfortunately many people judge their faith on the basis of how they feel. Don’t worry about how you feel. The evidence of faith is in the act. A good analogy can be found in the experience of flying. If you did not have some sense that the plane out on the landing strip was at least in theory able to fly, you wouldn’t buy the ticket. The Captain does not determine whether or not to take off by coming back into the cabin to find out how everybody feels about it. Christ does not pay much attention to our feelings, so why should we?

The problem with faith often lies in the lack of confidence that this is something God really is ready to do for us now. It is not easy for anyone to determine just what God is going to do. We must assume that if there is something God wants to do, He will do it. If He does not do what we want, we should not assume that something is wrong. Jesus’ statement that if we ask anything in His name, He will do it, does not mean that all we have to do is say the magic name, like signing a check. I fear there are many forgeries in Christendom. It really means we are truly acting in the Name of Christ. An Ambassador of the United States cannot do what he personally thinks is right and commit the United States to it. He must do what he honestly thinks the United States would do in the matter, whether he personally agrees with it or not. We represent Christ on earth. When we pray in His Name, we are praying as we believe He would pray. But doesn’t He always want to heal us or deliver us? Some would have us think so, but the Bible is full of instance where God thought better to wait or deny the request. We dare not put any weight whatsoever on our puny feelings of faith, or our capacity to determine what God wants to do. Put your trust in God, not in your faith. Give your problems to Him and then accept whatever He decides to do about it Failure to do this will result in one of two things—blaming God, or blaming self. If things do not work out as we want, we will think God failed us, or we failed God. Either way we lose. Many a Christian has lived in defeat for years because of this. Here, for example, is someone who is ill. God has not chosen to heal them. They have listened to the nonsense of those who presume to know what God is going to do and conclude that they must not be good enough or strong enough to get through to God, so their already wretched condition is further burdened by guilt. God have mercy on those false shepherds who have so wounded their flock. I say, by permission of the Holy Spirit and on the solid ground of the Scripture—**NOWHERE IS IT STATED OR IMPLIED THAT GOD WILL DO WHATEVER A CHRISTIAN WANTS IF HE HAS ENOUGH FAITH.** If you are so defeated, take heart! Rest in God, not in your human feelings. Accept right now your condition and let the peace of Christ fill your heart. It will make heaven out of hell for you and turn guilt into glory when you are willing to let go of your own will in the matter and accept God’s will. The peace in your heart will lighten the burden you carry. *“Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28).

He does not take away the yoke. He makes it fit, so that you can carry it. You may have some relief this minute, whatsoever your suffering is, if you will simply accept your present condition in the Name of Christ and move in the confidence that when He is ready to deliver, He will. If anything God does is based on our own capacity, whether of faith or righteousness, then it is all of works and not of grace. *“By grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—not of works, lest any man should boast”*

(Ephesians 2:8,9). If you have committed the matter to Christ, whatever is, is God's answer.

When we take this approach of letting the faith of Christ be our faith, the enemy is powerless against us. But, if our defense is based on our own ability to engineer faith, then, Satan has only to cast a doubt on our faith and we are immediately defeated. We have left ourselves exposed because our shield is our own flesh. Remember, to accept your condition as in the hand of God, in spite of your weakness, and to trust His grace, is to assume that His faith is at work in you. Then nothing that Satan can say or do will defeat you. If Satan accuses you of weak faith, say to him, "Yes, my faith is weak, but I am not trusting in my faith." If he shall say, "You are not worthy," you may say, "Yes, I know that better than anyone, but I am trusting in Christ and not my righteousness." If he shall say, "You see, nothing has changed, in spite of your prayers," you can say, "I am not trusting in appearances, but in God." **THE SHIELD OF FAITH IS CHRIST.**

THE HELMET OF SALVATION

The helmet, of course, protects the head. The reference here is to a Messianic prophecy in Isaiah 59. The cup of iniquity in Israel had come to the full. The enemy had literally swept through God's people like a flood. Now comes the Messiah as a warrior into battle. He has engaged the very foe who has so decimated His people. He protects Himself with the helmet of salvation. Our warfare with the enemy is not with flesh and blood. It is a war in the spirit realm. The helmet protects the entire center of our being. From the brain go out all impulses that make up the essence of our life.

But what is salvation and how does it protect? What does it really mean to be saved? Saved from what? It is easy to throw out catch-phrases, such as "Jesus saves," without really understanding what it means. To some, it includes health, happiness and good feelings. To some, it includes evangelical zeal, or instant perfection. We must clarify this concept. To ask in what way we are saved, we must ask in what way are we lost. The obvious answer to this lies in the statement God made concerning the fall of man. "*In the day you eat of it you shall surely die*" (Genesis 2:17). Something died. But, the body did not die! And the mind continued to function. Obviously that died which involved communion with God. The spirit no longer possessed in it the divine life. Thus, when Christ talks of salvation, he talks of restoring life—eternal life. "*He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into judgment but is passed from death unto life*" (John 5:24). "*For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord*" (Romans 6:23).

There is no salvation apart from the giving of new life through the Spirit. "*He that hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son of God hath no life*" (I John 5:12). It was this message that Jesus gave to Nicodemus when He said, "*Ye must be born again*" (John 3:7). To be born again of the Spirit means to bring new life into the human spirit by the Spirit of God. When this happens—when the Spirit of Christ possesses our spirit—we are given a new direction and meaning to life. We suddenly can see things of the Kingdom of God, whereas before we were blind. As human beings we do not always follow the new direction of the Spirit within, but we want to, and the general tendency of our life is toward God. Paul said that he did not always do what he should, but stiff in his heart he desired to please Christ and there was no condemnation. Salvation then is taking the life of Christ into our life, which means being filled with His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with Christ

Salvation does not guarantee a total change of personality. It does not mean perfection. The Greek word translated perfection, *teleos*, means fulfillment, not flawlessness. Christians are stiff subject to failure in the flesh, but the desire to please Christ is there. Apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit one would not care to follow Christ. If one cares about Christ, he can assume that he is saved, even if he fails to perform as he would like. (One is urged to read the author's pamphlet, "The Struggle.")

Salvation, then, acts as a safeguard against the warped thinking caused by Satan. There is no way to have truth apart from Christ. Christ is the Truth. No one can have a proper view of life without Christ. Therefore, salvation is a helmet protecting the mind against Satan. To take the helmet of salvation is to take the attitude of Christ about things. We will think straight if we will pay attention to the Holy Spirit within us. If all of life is viewed in the light of our salvation, we will keep things in the proper perspective. **CHRIST IS OUR HELMET.**

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

A sword!! But is not Christ the Prince of Peace? Ah, yes. He is the Prince of Peace, but He is not the servant of peace. If He is Prince of Peace, He is also King of Righteousness. For Him, it cannot be peace at any price. The peace must be on His own terms. He demands righteousness, and He satisfied that demand with His own life. His kind of peace was bought with blood, and tempered in the crucible of affliction.

Jesus said, "I came not to bring peace, but a sword." There is no real peace without conflict. Israel had to fight in the Promised Land. The Promised Land is really more symbolic of our earthly sojourn as children of God than of Heaven itself. It could not be symbolic of Heaven (as many teach) because the enemy was still in the land. Unfortunately Israel did not fight enough. The enemy remained in the land. By analogy, we are in constant conflict with the enemy of our souls. In our spirit there is perpetual peace, but in our flesh there is conflict. (See author's book, *The Struggle*.) When we accept Christ, his Spirit enters our spirit. Our spirit is thus reborn. At that point, Satan is dethroned—banished—and Christ takes over. Satan and Christ cannot occupy the spirit at the same time. The spirit thus becomes a citadel—a fortress of faith. Then, how does Satan effect us? He affects us in the flesh—the natural man. The flesh constitutes all the natural processes, such as intellect and emotion. This becomes the battleground. The spirit is at peace because Christ is there, but the mind is continually in conflict. All of our human relationships and circumstances are involved. Satan tries to defeat us in these areas. He causes dissension in our relationships and adversity in our circumstances. Our very thought processes are involved. For, while Satan cannot read our minds, he seems to know us pretty well. He is a keen observer. He tempts us in the areas of our weakness. He whispers lies and deceptions in our ears. He dangles trinkets in front of us that he thinks will draw us away from Christ. Peter speaks of fleshly desires *"that war against the soul"* (I Peter 2:11). The soul is the psyche, or natural mind as compared to the spirit, where Christ dwells. Thus, we are at war! But remember, no matter how fierce the battle which rages in the flesh, Christ has charge of the citadel of the spirit.

Satan can cause us much trouble in the flesh. He can rob us of our peace of mind and confuse us. He can infect us with bitterness and envy; error and evil. We do not lose our salvation, but our growth is hindered, and our ministry to the Body of believers is affected. We suffer needless distress, and have difficulty keeping our sights adjusted and our priorities straight. So we must fight. James says, **“Resist the Devil and he will flee from you.”** Peter said, **“Be sober, be vigilant. Your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing the same sufferings are consummated in your brethren which are in the world”** (I Peter 5:8,9). Paul saw his life as a continual conflict. *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness...”* (II Timothy 4:7,8). The crown he talked about was not the bejeweled diadem of royalty, but the laurel wreath of the victor. The victory jubilee comes later, now it is time for the sword. I fear sometimes the church begins to reign too soon. Paul was disturbed with the Corinthian church for this. In I Corinthians 4:8-10 he says, *“Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you. For I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last as it were appointed to death for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ’s sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak; but ye are strong; ye are honorable, but we are despised.”* For Paul, life was not a happy thing; it was a continual struggle. He told the Romans that he had continual sorrow in his heart for his people Israel. Jesus was a *“Man of Sorrows.”*

However, while Jesus and Paul both lived in continual conflict, they both spoke of joyfulness. Their joyfulness was something different than jubilation. Jubilation speaks of celebration. Joyfulness in the Greek terminology was more exhilaration in the contest than celebration of victory. The idea of this captured in Psalm 19 where the psalmist, speaking of the sun going forth said that it *“rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.”* When one is properly equipped for the contest, he enters into it with exhilaration. For both Christian and non-Christian life is a battle, but the Christian is prepared. When a town is besieged, both soldier and civilian face the battle, but the soldier has the equipment. A soldier can hardly be expected to be jubilant in the midst of the battle but he can appreciate his readiness. The old Greek warrior felt exhilarated. That which is felt by the champion who is ready for the contest is what Christian joy is like. I fear that there is a good deal of hypocrisy in the church. Christian people seem to focus on ecstatic experiences and jubilant meetings. The mood seems to be *“do something for me, Lord. I want the blessing; I want a grand experience; I want the gifts; I want healing; I want Christ to hurry and come back.”* Remember, when he does come back, it will seal the fate of millions of people, perhaps one’s own loved ones. God’s mood in this matter is longsuffering. He carries, *“not willing that any should perish”* (II Peter 3:9). Paul never sought his own happiness in fact, his attitude toward the second coming was that while he would rather be with Christ, for the sake of the work he stayed on earth. Brethren, it is time for the battle, not the banquet. Our personal happiness is unimportant; let us engage the enemy. Strap on the scabbard, it is time for the sword!

And what is the Sword? It is the Word of God. Is it the Scripture? In part, yes. But it is broader than that. The Greek word is ***hrema***. The word which applies to Scripture is *logos*, and it means the content of the message. ***Hrema*** is the individual utterance. It may be directly from Scripture or it may be a special word from God for the occasion. A word as *hrema* would be used without a capital. Hereafter it will be so used to indicate the individual utterance as compared with Logos which is applied to Scripture as such. God uses us as instruments of communication. He speaks through us. Our spirit is the source of

the weapon of offense against the enemy. The word of God through us strikes the enemy like a sword. Jesus, confronting Satan in the hour of temptation, used the word (*Hrema*) as the weapon. In this case it was a direct quote from Scripture. When he sent forth his disciples, He told them that when they were brought before magistrates they should not take thought how or what they should answer “*for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say*” (Luke 12:12). We must be careful that we do not misapply this passage. Some people think they can be teachers of the Scripture without preparation or experience. This would be a misconception. Teaching is a special gift and requires much preparation. Today, nearly 2000 years after the Bible was written, it is very important that one knows thoroughly the original languages (Hebrew and Greek) if he is to be an authority. He must also know the historical setting and be thoroughly saturated with the entire Bible in order to be able to compare Scripture with Scripture. But this is a different thing from the “word in season” which the Spirit gives for particular occasions in our battle with the enemy.

The Sword is a special word given to us by God. It may come from the Scripture, or from another believer, or be whispered to us privately by the Spirit. It may be a thought flashed across the mind or it may be something appearing in some writing which has been brought to our attention in a special way. Much care must be exercised in taking words that are not directly from Scripture. When such a word is given us by the Spirit, it will be clear to us that it is truly from Him. It will penetrate to the point of need, and will be God’s weapon against the enemy. The proof that such a word is from God is that it will minister blessing to our spirit. If words come to us that leave us confused or distressed, they are not of the Spirit and will not be effective against the enemy. It is not necessary for the Lord to speak to us audibly. In fact, he does not seem to do this very often. Most saints of God have never heard audible words, or had visions or dreams, and yet have been just as much the recipients of His word to them in quiet ways. Jesus said to Thomas, “*Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed*” (John 20:29).

In our keen desire to hear from God, we sometimes seek special revelations in meetings through the gifts. Be very careful about so called “prophecies” in the assemblies. There is often confusion about them, and much opportunity for the flesh. God does not deal in the spectacular. There is often too much of a carnival atmosphere in public meetings where people attempt to exercise the gifts without proper guidelines and the restraint born of deep involvement with the Spirit. Those who are truly gifted of God are slow to speak. I Corinthians 14 gives many limiting conditions to the exercise of the gifts. Don’t accept an utterance just because someone says it is for you. If you are confused it is not the Lord. “*God is not the author of confusion but of peace.*”

To take the sword of the Spirit then, means to look to the Spirit of Christ within you to bring to your consciousness a word from Himself with which to confront the enemy. This word to you may be from Scripture directly, or some special revelation for a particular occasion. When such a word is for you, your spirit will respond to it and you will find blessing and help. If the word leaves you confused, or distressed, it is more likely to be a counterfeit by the enemy. Prophetic utterances are to be taken with great caution since there is much opportunity for the flesh to be prominent and for Satan to counterfeit the true revelation, because of carelessness in regulating the gifts.

The battle is raging. The enemy is a formidable foe. Take up the sword of the Spirit. A word from God is an invincible weapon. If you use it properly Satan will never get the advantage.