

## ***Growing in Christ***

### ***“Arming” for Victory***

Lesson #7 for November 17, 2012

Scriptures: Ephesians 6:12-18; 2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 5:9; Romans 10:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:8; Mark 14:38.

1. This lesson discusses the “weapons” or tools that we need to become familiar with and use in the great controversy.
2. Read Ephesians 6:10-18. In this passage Paul, writing from prison and possibly even chained to a Roman soldier wearing armor, talked about a number of Christian virtues which he described as paralleling certain offensive and defensive weapons used by the Roman military in his day. He discussed the following list of military equipment: 1) A belt, which is the girdle of truth. 2) A breastplate, which is righteousness. 3) The helmet of salvation, a gift of God. 4) The shoes covering our feet which are the gospel of peace. 5) The shield of faith, our key defense. 6) The sword, our offensive weapon, which is the Word of God or the Bible.
3. How can spiritual qualities be described as weapons? What do these weapons really mean? What kind of battles are actually taking place in the great controversy? It is obvious that the military equipment that the Roman army used would have no effect whatsoever in the great controversy or even in modern warfare. So, what weapons do work in the great controversy? What pieces of military equipment do you think Paul would use as illustrations in our day?
4. Clearly, Paul was using this passage to describe some metaphors for Christian warfare. Paul was telling us that we need to be personally and individually prepared and armed if we are going to face the Devil.
5. As we have suggested on numerous occasions, Satan’s kingdom is based on selfishness. While God can only use truth and love as His weapons, Satan uses deceit, and lies—sometimes subtly mixed with truth—misrepresentation, and force.
6. If you have ever been responsible for caring for a newborn baby, what did you learn? A baby is totally focused on his own needs. He is “selfish.” And that baby has only a few ways of communicating with us about those needs. Whether we have been Christians all our lives or have recently become Christians, we were born as sinners fully on the Devil’s side in this war. If the Devil sees us making attempts to leave his side and to join God’s side, he renews and increases his efforts to discourage us, to deceive us, to prevent us from leaving. But, no matter what he is able to do, we know that he can never defeat Jesus. He may make our lives somewhat miserable, but he cannot destroy us.
7. The Christian’s armor is our only protection against him. No wonder it is so important that we understand the different pieces of armor—our weapons—and how to use them! As you read through Ephesians 6:12-18, is it immediately obvious why Paul chose those particular pieces of military equipment to represent the Christian virtues? Do we really need those weapons—truth, righteousness, salvation, peace, faith, and God’s Word?
8. What is implied by the idea that we must “fight”? Are people taking this battle seriously? The Greek word suggests hand-to-hand combat. Have you ever fought the Devil hand-to-hand? We have sometimes suggested that the Christian life consists of being set right or put right (justification) and then being kept right (sanctification) by God. How does that fit with this need to arm ourselves and fight personal battles? Read Matthew 25:1-13 (the need for personal preparation) and 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (doing the best one can to avoid evil). These two passages—although dealing with quite different subjects—suggest that each of us is largely responsible for our own fate. God makes all the provisions for our salvation; but, we must take advantage of them. Our part in salvation is trusting God (faith) and giving Him a chance to work

in our lives. James tells us that real faith works—it changes us.

9. Think of all the things that you have to do for yourself if you want to be benefitted. No one else can breathe for you (although they might assist your breathing), no one can eat for you (although they might assist you in eating or might feed you through a tube), no one can sleep for you, no one can see or hear or think or make choices for you, although some may try to make decisions for you. You may do some of these things relatively passively; but, by so doing you are, in effect, choosing to let someone else help you with them.
10. What is the girdle of truth? The expression “gird up your loins” is a Greek idiom sometimes used to mean “get yourself ready.” Paul may have been thinking about a leather apron worn below the breastplate that provided some protection for the lower abdomen. It also allowed for relatively easy movement. Paul compared this basic piece of equipment to truth. Since the truth is not on Satan’s side, it is a very important weapon in dealing with him. Satan may use bits of truth to seem to support his arguments, twisting those bits to meet his needs. (Matthew 4:5,6) But, if we take the larger view and insist on the full truth, Satan will always lose.
11. At a debating society, one man claimed that if he was given as fact any one false statement, then using the rules of logic, he could prove any other false statement. His friend said, “Given that four equals five (a false statement), prove that I am the pope (another false statement).” The man responded, “Subtract three from each side according to the rules of math, and you get one equals two. Everyone knows that you and the pope are two [people]; so, you and the pope are one [person].” This demonstrates how important it is to insist that we deal only with truth.
12. In addition to the leather apron, Roman soldiers wore a breastplate. The breastplate consisted of two thin sheets of metal shaped to fit the body, one covering the front of the chest and the other covering the back of the chest. (Compare Isaiah 59:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:8)
13. Those breastplates covered many of the important internal organs of the body. Thus, the breastplates and the leather apron covered the essential internal organs of the Roman soldier. When we as Christians practice truth and righteousness, we are protected from most of the fiery darts of the Devil. Truth and righteousness go together as suggested by many passages in Scripture. (1 Kings 3:6; Psalms 15:2; 96:13; Proverbs 12:17; Isaiah 40:1; 2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 5:9) People who are determined to tell the truth most often also do what is right. Justice and fairness go with truth. Injustice goes with lies. Practicing the truth will lead to righteousness.
14. In the writings of Paul, there is considerable discussion about righteousness. All our righteousness is as filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6) So, the righteousness which we need to put on is the righteousness of Christ. We can only put on this kind of righteousness by daily practicing the truth and honesty as we study our Bibles, pray, and—when given an opportunity—witness for Christ. These are the ways in which we can become more like Him.
15. Read Ephesians 6:15. Roman soldiers wore shoes studded with sharp nails. Often, they had to move in difficult terrain in muddy and slippery areas; those nail-studded shoes provided as firm a foundation as possible under the circumstances. When the Roman soldier had put on the rest of his armor and had put on his shoes, he was prepared for battle. It is difficult for a soldier to fight effectively when his feet are not solidly planted on the ground. Without a thorough knowledge of the gospel, the Christian soldier is not ready to go. Christians in Europe invented or further developed stirrups to use on their horses. That gave the rider a firmer position from which to fight and beat back the attacking Muslims.
16. Read Ephesians 6:16. A Roman soldier carried a shield which measured approximately 4 feet high and 2.5 feet wide and was made of two layers of wood glued together. Covering those layers of wood was thick leather. In ancient times, often the first attack the soldiers faced was from arrows covered with burning pitch, and those arrows were often shot from a distance. The

leather covering the shield was difficult to burn; so, it helped protect the soldier.

17. Faith is a description of our relationship with God as with a friend. It is an absolutely essential part—perhaps the most essential part—of the protection the soldier used. Satan attacks us with fiery arrows such as lust, doubt, greed, vanity, covetousness, and selfishness. It is only through a meaningful and personal relationship with God that we can deal with these things.
18. Read Ephesians 6:17. Paul was probably taking an illustration from the Old Testament—Isaiah 59:17. But, in the Old Testament it was God Who was wearing a helmet. In Ephesians 6 and also in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Paul said God gives us the helmet to wear. While other pieces of equipment are to be taken up and put on, the helmet is a gift. We must always remember that salvation is a gift. We must take it and put it on.
19. Remember that the word for salvation in Greek, *sozo*, also means healing. We cannot heal ourselves from the ravages of sin. Healing is a gift from God. In order to fight his best, the Roman soldier needed to be completely well so he could put up a good fight.
20. Paul then turned to offensive weapons. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Compare Hebrews 4:12 and Matthew 4:1-10. The Word of God is an essential part of the Christian's weaponry. We may be covered with all the appropriate armor; but if we have no offensive weapons, we are in trouble. And then, we are useless to God's army! Notice how Jesus used Scripture to deal with Satan's attacks. The better we are in our study of the Bible and our understanding of the issues in the great controversy, the better we will be at detecting and dealing with Satan's attacks. Who has told the truth? Who do we trust? Do we really believe that sin is deadly? (Genesis 2:17)
21. Read Ephesians 6:18. Paul finished his list by telling us to "pray always." This suggests that we must keep alert, we must never give up, we must never allow Satan to catch us sleeping, (Matthew 25:1-13) and we must be thankful for the fact that God is always ready to hear our prayers. We are urged to be persistent in our prayers.
22. In connection with our praying, we are urged to be watchful. (Mark 14:38; 13:33-37)
23. It is through Bible study and prayer that we hold conversation with God.

If we keep the Lord ever before us, allowing our hearts to go out in thanksgiving and praise to Him, we shall have a continual freshness in our religious life. **Our prayers will take the form of a conversation with God as we would talk with a friend.** He will speak His mysteries to us personally. Often there will come to us a sweet joyful sense of the presence of Jesus. Often our hearts will burn within us as He draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. When this [130] is in truth the experience of the Christian, there is seen in his life a simplicity, a humility, meekness, and lowliness of heart, that show to all with whom he associates that he has been with Jesus and learned of Him. (COL 129.3; CC 30.4; FLB 225.7; LHM 113.7)

24. While it is good to pray for others, it is essential that we pray for ourselves. All day long we need to talk in prayer about everything that affects. God should be recognized as our constant companion.
25. In every soul two powers are struggling earnestly for the victory. Unbelief marshals its forces, led by Satan, to cut us off from the source of our strength. [Isaiah 59:2] Faith marshals its forces, led by Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. **Hour by hour, in the sight of the heavenly universe the conflict goes forward. This is a hand-to-hand fight, and the great question is, Which shall obtain the mastery?** This question each must decide for himself. In this warfare all must take a part, fighting on one side or the other. From the conflict there is no release.—Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, January 10,

1901, par. 4; SD 328.4.

26. If we are using these weapons of Christianity correctly, we can help our fellow Christians in the Christian way as well. We must never forget that we are in the middle of a deadly war. Soldiers do not forget that they are in the middle of a war and that they have been trained for that war.
27. God has given us a great honor by asking us to be His foot soldiers. He has provided the means for us to be successful in this battle. It is a battle for minds. Do we clearly understand the use of each of these items in the battle we call the great controversy?
28. Review what you know about Satan's attacks against the human race down through the ages. How did he deceive Eve in the Garden of Eden? How did he tempt Jesus in the wilderness? (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) What methods did he mainly focus on in the past? What methods does he seem to be focusing on in our day? Will he be using different methods in the near future as we approach the end of this earth's history?
29. We do not often suffer physical persecution at this point in history. But, we know the day is coming when Satan will not hesitate to use every means he can to destroy us.
30. Try to imagine Paul, probably chained either to some piece of furniture or possibly even to a Roman soldier himself, while he was under house arrest in Rome. Did he admire the armor that the Roman soldiers wore? Did he discuss it with them?
31. The armor the soldiers wore was not intended to be slept in. It would not have been comfortable at all. But, that meant that each morning as a soldier arose from sleep, he had to put on his armor once again. Are we daily putting on the armor of God?
32. Review the various pieces of military equipment that we have discussed. Are you making the best possible use of each item? Down through the centuries, Satan has proved that he is very effective with his lies, deceit, treachery, and force. God can only use truth and love. Is this a lopsided battle? Satan does not hesitate to use any method he thinks might be effective. He is often effective by suggesting some diversion which gets our attention while he attacks from another side. He does everything possible to misrepresent God. He attacks with arrows of fear, doubt, impurity, wrath, impatience, greed, covetousness, and selfishness.
33. When Jesus was here on this earth, He faced attacks from every side. As you can imagine, the Devil was in full-time attack mode. Even Jesus' family thought He was crazy. (Mark 3:21) They did not believe Him, and they thought it was their job to tell Him what to do. (John 7:3-5)
34. The Jewish nation—His very own people and the ones that He had been working with for hundreds of years—rejected Him. (John 1:11) Even His closest disciples doubted Him. (John 20:19-31) Judas thought he knew what was best—better than Jesus did—and tried to force His hand into declaring Himself to be the Messiah for which they were looking. (Luke 21:37-22:6) And when it came down to the final hours, the disciples denied and betrayed Him. (Mark 14:66-72)
35. What is the hardest battle in the great controversy? How do we prepare ourselves for facing the final attacks Satan will mount against us? Unfortunately, selfishness and our natural tendencies are some of our worst enemies. How can we use the armor that God has suggested to defeat even our own bad habits?
36. Now do you better understand the weapons that Paul described in Ephesians 6? Do we know how to use each of them to best advantage?

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