



A D E R E K P R I N C E

TEACHING LETTER

Because Of The Angels

The Weapons of Our Warfare

Dear Friend

In my previous letter, I pointed out that when we become Christians, we are automatically involved in a vast spiritual war that spans both heaven and earth. Furthermore, our most powerful and dangerous enemies are a kingdom of evil angels whose headquarters are in the heavenlies.

In His wisdom and mercy God has provided us with all the weapons that we need to achieve victory. Because our warfare is in the spiritual realm, our weapons are also spiritual. In 2 Corinthians 10:4 Paul says that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal [but by implication, spiritual] but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.”

The strongholds that we attack are also spiritual. Over the centuries Satan has built them up in the hearts and minds of humanity. They are strongholds of fear, covetousness, hatred, idolatry, racial prejudice, religious superstition and many others.

It is these strongholds that frustrate all the attempts of politicians to negotiate real peace. The logical and political arguments in favour of negotiated settlements are not strong enough to break down the spiritual strongholds that stand in the way of peace.

True peace will only come to earth when the kingdom of Christ is established here. This is the objective of our warfare as Christians and the purpose for which we use our spiritual weapons. It is to break down the spiritual strongholds in the hearts of men and women and to prepare the way for Christ to set up His kingdom – first in their hearts and finally in the whole earth.

Seven Spiritual Weapons

In Ephesians 6:13–18 Paul lists seven spiritual weapons – or items of spiritual equipment – that we need. He takes his examples from the equipment of a Roman legionary in his day. Here is the list:

1. **The girdle of truth** (verse 14). In Paul’s day both men and women normally wore long, loose garments that came down at least to their knees. Before undertaking any strenuous activity, the first thing they had to do was to gather up their loose garments and tuck them into their girdle. Only after this were they free to undertake any vigorous action. Hence the phrase that occurs several times: *Gird up your loins*.

Using the girdle of truth requires that we renounce every form of dishonesty or compromise. If we do not “tuck them up” out of our way, they will hamper our spiritual progress. We must be faithful to the truth of Scripture even when it is controversial or unpopular.

We must also be completely open and sincere in all our personal relationships. This is an essential condition of proper spiritual growth. Writing to new Christians Peter says: “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, *that you may grow thereby*.”¹

Above all, we must be absolutely open and honest in our dealings with God Himself. This is a condition for receiving spiritual revelation. In Psalm 51:6 David says:

*Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts,
And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.*

God reveals His hidden wisdom only to those who have truth in their inward parts.

2. **The breastplate of righteousness** (verse 14). This protects our *heart*. In Proverbs 4:23 we are warned:

*Keep [guard] your heart with all diligence,
For out of it spring the issues of life.*

Our success in the spiritual life depends on maintaining a right heart relationship with both God and man. We must follow the example of Paul and “always strive to have a conscience without offence toward God and men.”²

The kind of righteousness God looks for is not mere intellectual assent to doctrine. It is a condition of the heart, not the mind. “For with the *heart* one believes unto righteousness . . .”³

Neither is it the observance of religious rules. Paul had been occupied with those for many years, but when he met Christ, his ambition changed: “. . . that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”⁴

3. **The shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace** (verse 15). Roman legionaries were equipped with very strong sandals. These made them highly mobile. They could make long forced marches at short notice.

As Christians, we need to be *mobile* – available to God for His purposes wherever and whenever He calls upon us – even at short notice or in unexpected circumstances. This requires *preparation*. We must familiarise ourselves with the basic truths of the Gospel and how to present them to an unbeliever.

Also, it is a gospel of *peace*. We can only communicate it effectively if we have real peace in our own hearts – a peace that is not dependent on our external circumstances. To a troubled, perplexed sinner the tone of our voice may communicate our message more effectively than the actual words that we speak.

4. **The shield of faith** (verse 16). The word here translated *shield* is connected with the word for a *door*. Its length was greater than its width. A trained soldier could so crouch down and draw his body in that he was completely protected. But he had to be fit and athletic. An overweight man would not be fully protected.

Our shield of faith must likewise be complete in all its dimensions. It must cover our total personality – spirit, soul and body. We must also be so spiritually trained and exercised that we can draw ourselves together within an area that is completely covered by the promises of Scripture. Anything in our lives that is superfluous or self-indulgent will be outside the protection of our shield.

At times the arrows Satan uses against us are “fiery.” They have been set on fire. They are designed not merely to wound but also to set on fire whatever they are aimed at. They can start fires of gossip or slander or division in families or even in whole congregations. But the shield of faith – vigilantly and effectively used – will not merely stop the arrows, it will *quench* them. It will extinguish the flames.

5. **The helmet of salvation** (verse 17). Just as the breastplate protects our *heart*, so the helmet protects our *mind* – our thought life. The mind is the area in which Christians are most regularly attacked. Inside our minds there is often a continuing war. Satan seeks to insinuate thoughts that will disturb us or distract us or in some other way make us ineffective in our war against him.

God has taught me personally many lessons in this area. When I was first born again, I was continually assailed in my mind by depression or discouragement. I saw that I needed some effective protection in that area. When I read Paul’s list of armour in Ephesians 6:13–18, I realised that it was the *helmet of salvation* that I needed. But then I said to myself: “I know that I am saved. Does that mean that I already have the helmet of salvation or is it something that I need to get after salvation?”

As I pondered on this, I saw that the Christians in Ephesus to whom Paul was writing were already saved. Yet

Paul still instructed them to *take* the helmet of salvation. Clearly, therefore, I needed to do the same. But what was this *helmet of salvation* that should be the protection for my mind?

Fortunately, I was using a Bible with cross references in the margin. The cross reference to Ephesians 6:17 was 1 Thessalonians 5:8: “. . . and as a helmet the *hope* of salvation.” That Scripture revolutionised my thought life. If *pessimism* was my problem, then *optimism* was the logical solution.

I set myself to seek out – and in many cases to memorise – passages of Scripture that provided me with a basis for strong, continuing optimism. Today my mind is effectively protected!

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Up to this point all the items of equipment that we have considered have been solely – or primarily – for purposes of *protection* or *defence*. Only at this point does Paul turn to weapons of *attack*. For this there is a logical and practical reason: if we attempt to attack before we have secured our defence, we are unprepared for the enemy’s counterattack and we are likely to become casualties. This is one main reason why some Christians are wounded and become casualties.

We will turn now to the two remaining weapons.

6. **The sword of the Spirit** (verse 17), which is the Word of God.

This sword can be used for both attack and defence, but it is primarily a weapon of attack. Someone has said, “The best defence is attack” – and this is often true in the spiritual realm.

The word here translated *word* is *rhema*, which usually denotes a word that is *spoken*. It is not the Bible in our bookshelf or even on our nightstand that is effective. But when we take Scripture in our mouth and proclaim it boldly through our lips, then it becomes a sharp, two-edged sword.

Note, too, that it is “the sword of the [Holy] Spirit.” We can take God’s Word in our mouth, but it only achieves its full effect when it is the Holy Spirit within us who actually wields it.

The perfect pattern of how to use the sword of the Spirit is provided by the encounter of Jesus with Satan at the time of His temptation in the wilderness. Three times Satan approached Jesus with a temptation and each time Jesus drove him back with the same phrase: “It is written.”⁵ Jesus used no other weapon but the *rhema* – the spoken word of the Lord. God has made the same weapon available to each Christian.

It is important, however, to bear two things in mind. First, Jesus had already been “filled with the Holy Spirit.”⁶ It was the Holy Spirit in Jesus that directed Him in the use of the sword.

Second, Jesus – like every Jewish boy of His day – had memorised long passages of Scripture. When Satan confronted Him, He did not need to consult a concordance or go to a library. He had already stored up the Scriptures in His memory. Surely we today need to do that just as much as Jesus did!

7. **All prayer** (verse 18). This seventh weapon is not listed in exactly the same way as the previous six, but it is definitely needed to make the equipment of the Christian soldier complete. Of the previous six items, only the last one – *the sword of the Spirit* – is a weapon of attack, and even the sword is effective only as far as a soldier’s arm can reach.

But this seventh weapon of *all prayer* is subject to no such limitations. We may fairly call it our ICBM – our *intercontinental ballistic missile*. Focused prayer, directed by the Holy Spirit, can reach across continents and oceans and strike with unerring accuracy at any target assigned to it. Undoubtedly it is the most powerful and the most effective of all the weapons in the Christian arsenal.

Like the sword previously mentioned, this weapon of *all prayer* depends on the Holy Spirit for its effectiveness. It must be prayed “in the Spirit.”⁷ God does not commit such a weapon to Christians who are guided only by their carnal desires and emotions.

All prayer includes many different kinds of prayer – such as those listed in 1 Timothy 2:1: supplications,

prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks. It is not a solo instrument to be played by one Christian on his own. Rather it is produced by an orchestra of many instruments blended together in harmony by the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes it takes apparently insurmountable obstacles to provoke this kind of prayer. In Acts 4:15–18 the apostles were confronted with a satanic strategy that could have put a stop to all further evangelistic activity. The Jewish council, which was the supreme religious authority of the Jewish people, officially commanded the apostles “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”

The opponents of the gospel were perceptive enough to recognise the unique importance of the name of Jesus. The entire effectiveness of the gospel was dependent on it. As Peter himself had declared to the council: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”⁸ By this decree of the council, Satan had built a “stronghold” that would have prevented all further progress of the gospel or growth of the infant church.

Confronted with this satanic scheme, all the believers came together to seek God’s help. Blended together into an orchestra, they cried out to the Lord for His intervention. God responded with such a demonstration of His power that “the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”⁹ The weapon of *all prayer* had demolished Satan’s stronghold.

In many parts of the world today Satan has built up obstacles and opposition to the progress of the gospel which resist all normal evangelistic methods. It is time for the church to deploy its most powerful weapon: the weapon of *all prayer*.

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The topic of my next – and final – letter on this theme will be “The Climax of the Conflict.”

Yours in the Master’s service



Derek Prince

¹ 1 Peter 2:1–2

² Acts 24:16

³ Romans 10:10

⁴ Philippians 3:8–9

⁵ Matthew 4:4; 4:7; 4:10

⁶ Luke 4:1

⁷ Ephesians 6:18

⁸ Acts 4:12

⁹ Acts 4:31

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