



CHRISTIANS AT WAR:

What is our shield like? Is it always about or person? Or do we often leave it at home? Or is just a plastic toy that would quickly ignite into flames under an assault. Or are we protected by the true shield of faith? consider three ways that this shield should be handled for maximum protection.

A: By the application of Divine Promises, maybe we are really up against it, maybe we are in financial straits, and a wicked associate sees this, and knowing your faith in Christ, points the finger of ridicule at you, scornfully remarking 'Were is your God now?' The believer holding high the shield of faith will claim "*He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*"

B: Then may be the temptations are great, and the wicked seeing our plight are ever quick to say, 'there you see despite all your claims, your no better than us.' That is a painful dart if it lands, but lifting the *shield of Faith* we respond "*Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good in me, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,*" Philippians 1:6

C: the fiery dart of slander, a vicious dart is this, yet the Shield of Faith is this Psalm.76:10 "*He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him: the remainder of the wrath doth He contain.*"

CHRISTIANS AT WAR:

"put on the whole armour of god, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Ephesian 6: v.11

That Christians are in a spiritual war is something that we need to remind ourselves about in this day of spiritual pacifism t, it was a fact of life for Paul and the other Apostles and for the many thousands who over the years have given their lives for the cause of truth as they have gallantly Contended for the Faith. This is an introduction laying out some of the problems that the Church in Ephesus faced, and showing the reasons why it was essential that they Put on the whole armour of God, as we will be dealing with the problematic side, I hope it will not be viewed as negative, but we need to see and understand these things in order that we can see the need then and see the need we have today.

This letter was written about A.D. 62, 6-7 years after Paul's ministry in Ephesus. He lovingly remembers that Church, just a small company of Believers, a drop in the bucket when compared to the swarming population of the city. Paul's ministry in that city found a great deal of opposition, yet despite this the infant Church was established, now the main characteristic of this Church, was its love for the Lord. But by the year 95 A.D. some forty years later we read in the Revelation that "*thou hast left thy first love,*" why this had happened is another story. We do know however that this was a city of change, a city that was constantly on the move.

Paul incarcerated in prison, thinks back to that tender young church, and foresees all manner of danger, so he pens this letter, trying to encourage the people, advising and counselling them. He reminds them of the blessing as and wealth that they have in

Christ, he tells them how as Christians they should walk through life, and reminds them that they are engaged in warfare. A Christian is to be many things, he is a peacemaker, he is a counsellor, a helper, a lover, and a fighter, not with guns or bombs, but with spiritual weapons a spiritual fighter.

As we look about the Church today, I see very little of this taking place, we see the Church becoming the home for spiritual pacifists, a species of Christian that is unknown in the Bible. we see many who are capitulating to the enemy, rather than engaging the enemy of souls in combat.

The Christian Church of today, just like the Church in Ephesus is surrounded by false religion, a religion that was and is easily identified, and one that the Church had to separate from, this brought them into conflict, and Paul shows them the need to wear this spiritual armour.

THE MAJESTIC POWER OF FALSE RELIGION:

Ephesus was one of the leading centers of idolatry, it was a stronghold of satanic power, from this place paganism was promoted, the city boasted the huge Temple of the goddess Diana, and her idol, which the people believed came down straight out of heaven. Her Temple, was adorned by the vast wealth of Asia Minor, and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and this dominated the city, it was a major source of income apart from anything else. The city of Ephesus was the scene of a bitter conflict between light and darkness, between truth and error, between good and evil, between Christ and the Devil.

Diana or Artemis as she was otherwise known, as the Great Goddess, she was depicted a virgin, and was represented as the

or even lost in battle, he knew that his shield would compensate for their loss. Even if he lost his life in battle, yet managed to retain his shield, his colleagues would use it to take him home. So prized was the shield, that mothers would say to their sons as they went off to war "Come home upon shield, rather than come home without it." Likewise, Faith, is the most valued possession of the saint, for even if we suffer the most terrible injuries in the spiritual conflict, faith will see us home to glory and in glory.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SHIELD OF FAITH

"With which ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Now notice it does not say of the devil, but simply the wicked. The Psalmist was always having trouble from this quarter and the implication is that the wicked are the human agents of the Devil rather than just spiritual beings.

The arrows that Paul speaks about, may well be the special arrows used in ancient warfare called 'Falarica' these were arrows with lead head, surrounded by combustible material, which during their flight would ignite and cause great damage when it reached an unprotected target.

If we return to the little flock of the Lord's people in Ephesus, we would find that they were under attack from such weapons, they had left all to follow Christ, turned their backs on the pagan religions of the day, spurned the traditions and customs that once held them as slaves, they refused the allure and comfort of wealth. It is therefore not difficult to envisage the fiery darts that former associates would fire at them, there would be the fiery darts of malice, scorn, the reminders of past sin, the wicked are very adept at firing such darts and often with deadly accuracy, and the only protection they had was their new found faith in Christ and the Promises of His Word.

seen.' When a man is brought before a court of law, accused of some crime, evidence of proof of his guilt is presented to judge and jury, and on the basis of the evidence that he is found either guilty or not guilty.

Faith in the Divine declarations that God has given us in His Word, is in itself the sufficient argument as to the reality of the things spoken about and revealed but as yet unseen. The jury is a court do not actually see the events take place, but base their decision on the evidence presented, on things not seen. The Christians Faith is based on the infallible evidence of God Word.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS SHIELD:

The term "*above all*" means 'rrincipally or chief, the governing factor.' This sheild is a vital piece of armour, without it was might as well be naked.

The fact that it is the principal piece of equipment ought not surprise us, when we consider that the "*Just shall live by faith.*" Faith is the very principle that we live by, we are saved by Faith, and we are to live by Faith, it therefore stands to reason that the most effective shield against the fiery darts of the wicked will be faith.

Of all the armour worn by the Roman Soldier, the shield was the only piece that would give Him full protection, covering him from head to toe. Likewise, faith is seen to be the principal piece of armour for the Christian, it is the only piece that gives full immunity.

The one piece of equipment the Roman soldier prized more than any other was his shield, he would hang on to it at all costs, even though other pieces of armour may become loose

mother of the gods, and was worshipped as such. The worship of this pagan deity was long established, it was a city of longevity being in the Lord's Day being over 1100 years old, and from the earliest times this goddess had been the chief object of worship, so the system of worship was deeply engrained into the people's minds, hearts and culture. It should therefore come as no surprise to learn that in 431 A.D. the ecumenical Church Council held in that city, accepted officially into the Church the worship of Diana, the mother of God, in order to make this agreeable to the rank-and-file Christians the name was changed from Diana, to Mary.

The Christian Church of Paul's day had to combat the problems existing in a city with this pagan deity, think of the psychological pressure, the magnificent Temple of Diana dominating everything in the city, an entire commercial enterprise built us around her, the Temple itself was the meeting place for tens of thousands of pilgrims, all the festivities, the celebrations were all centered upon her.

And there were the Christians, few in number, meeting in private houses to worship, having very little in terms of tangible wealth, they had no political muscle, they were of little importance and totally insignificant. With the unstable characteristic of the people, there would be the temptation to give in after all said and done the pressure applied upon them to conform to the system, to comply with the ungodly ideas and practices of this, Mother of God cult was enormous. It would have been so very easy for the Church of Paul's day, to allow the ungodly teachings into the Church, just as it did three hundred or so years later. It would have been so easy for the Christians to buy and wear the charms, to follow the pagan customs and traditions, after these things were a lot older than the Christian faith!

Paul in his prison cell was aware of all this, as well as recalling the conflicts that he himself had engaged in whilst establishing the Church in the city, a struggle that we might well call the opening battles of Protestant Truth, because he took on the idolatry of his day, he did not give way to it, so he writes to that Church seeking to encourage and strengthen it. What the initial effect was, we cannot tell, but this we do know that just one generation later, the Lord Himself also writes to that Church, which although doctrinally sound and pure had left its First Love.

Can we learn anything from this? Yes, we can, the Pressure was on that Ephesian Church to conform to the status quo, to give in to the pressure and go along with the crowd.

THE PRESSURE OF CONFORMITY: #

They were under pressure not to be different, but to merge with the rest of the people, give a little here, take a little there, bend here, do not rock the boat, let things be, things are running smoothly, do not do anything that might upset things. There are many forms of religion today, many of them masquerading as Christian, on the surface appear to be very appealing, and many people are becoming ensnared by them, and not to go along with them is looked among by these folk as being negative.

This is the pressure, that is subtly being applied to the Christian of today in every increasing proportions. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit, is working in us and is "conforming us into the son, Jesus Christ." Now that very fact makes us different, now if we do not want to be different, then we have no right to claim we are Christians.

Pressure to conform, is an unseen enemy, it is so easy, and often so comforting to get lost in a crowd, millions have opted for this easy relatively easy lifestyle. Paul tells this Church and the Church of today, that this is not to be the case, we are to put on

means 'Confident expectation' an expectation so real that the man of faith acts upon it, it is so real that it is tangible.

Things hoped for, have no actual reality, we all have many hopes, many dreams, but they are not actual things, but they gain practical reality as faith takes hold of them. A promise is of very little value, unless we ask the person who made it, to execute it.

We can all the twenty pound notes it is possible to have, we can fill all the draws and cupboards in our houses with them, we can the walls papered with them, but at the same time be living up to our ears in debt, using these promissory notes in this way do us no good whatsoever.

Why because these are Promissory Notes, it is "legal tender for all debts public and private." It is only when we in faith act on the promise that is contained in them that we gain their benefits, When we hand these notes over to the shop keeper, we exercise faith, that the debt incurred will be paid, the actual paper is of no intrinsic value, but the promise is, and we act on faith based on the Promise.

Faith, gives us the things *hoped for*, in the real substance in the minds and souls of them that believe the Promises of God. If we go back into the Old Testament and to the great man of faith Abraham, we learn that he lived by Faith, faith in what? Jesus tells us "*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad, John,8:56*" Abraham had been dead hundreds of years yet it is said He saw Christ's Day, how could this be? By faith, this godly man, saw the day of Christ by faith, he had faith in the Promises of God, faith gave him the present enjoyment of Christ.

Faith is also termed here as being '*The evidence of things not*

picture of a man who underwent much suffering, for his Lord. He knew what it was like to be forsaken by his so-called friends, in human terms he suffered defeat and failure one after another, yet here was a man who wore the whole armour of God, and was protected by the shield of faith.

In human terms one could hardly say that the Shield of faith was very effective, but I simply point these things out in order to highlight what the shield of faith is not intended to protect us against, so that we do not get the wrong ideas as to its protective qualities.

What we have here is a piece of spiritual armour, not something under which we may hide in order to be protected from the storms and ravages of life. The *Shield of faith* is not something in which we can cocoon ourselves from the rigors and problems of daily existence, so what is it? In order to find the answer, we need to define Faith.

WHAT IS FAITH?

The Bible is very specific on the point, the Apostle tells us in Hebrews ch.11:1 what it is "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for the evidence of things not seen.*" Faith is that unshakable belief that a thing is true even though it is unseen, and cannot be understood by natural senses.

The word *substance* has the meaning of 'supporting' of 'undergirding' of 'assurance and confidence.' In other words, faith is the very foundation, the confidence and assurance of the Christian Life. It is confidence in all the things that the Bible tells us about Christ, for as John tells us, "These things were written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ."

Faith is the substance of things "*hope for,*" the word simply

the "*whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.*" Every truly born-again soul, every Bible Christian is in a battle, at least they should be, and should in no wise yield to the pressures that ungodly religions or ungodly influences impose upon them.

THE UNSCRUPULOUS PURVEYORS OF RELIGION IN THE NAME OF CHRIST

Turn to Acts.19:13 "*then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the lord Jesus, saying, we adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth.*" Now if there was ever a Scripture that Christians need to grasp today it is this. Let us not forget that we are in the year 58 A.D. or thereabouts, and with Paul in the city of Ephesus, in that same city there were some vagabond Jews, the word vagabond had a different meaning to today's application, which is the bad sense, and is applied to a vagrant, a man with no home, who is idle and lives by begging, probably constantly inebriated, dirty and in general most unpleasant.

The proper meaning refers to a man who moves from place to place, having no settled habitation, but who practise their skill or craft, a wandering minstrel, a tinker and the likes, the skill that this group of men professed to have been that of exorcism. The word exorcist means those who pretended to have power over evil spirits, and who were able to cure disease by charms and incantations. The word exorcism is derived from the Greek "orkizo" which means to bind with an oath, these men by their incantations and oaths would adjure or bind whatever it was they diagnosed the problem to be, and command it to leave the sufferer.

From as far back as the days of Solomon, many Jews had made a healthy living by extracting hard earned cash from the gullible by these very dubious arts. In addition to this they would tell fortunes, cast spells, make magic potions. They were nothing

more than charlatans, having observed that Paul had done some wonderful miracles in the name of Jesus, they saw this as powerful magic and sort to emulate Paul, and into their magical formula they added the name Jesus. Maybe the manner of their work ended in words such as this "In the name of Jesus I command you to come out of him." or may be "in the name of Jesus I command you to stand," or "in the name of Jesus I command you to see." These men had no personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, they had no faith in Him, they simply used His name for what they saw as making a fast buck.

All of this nearly two thousand years ago, and this have not changed very much over those centuries, in fact today we are plagued by similar charlatans, instead of being Jews, they claim to be Christians, and they are making a very handsome living out of the gullibility of people today. They come as angels of light and leave a in their wake a trail of devastation. Not least among those deceived is the Christian community. I do not want to be seen as being negative, but I am convinced, as I look around the Christian scene on both sides of the Atlantic, that we are faced with a similar problem that the Church in Ephesus faced. Men masquerading as Christians, yet teaching and practicing things in the name of Christ that are far from His Word. And because many Christians are untaught in the things of Christ, they become entrapped in half-truths and error.

We have here a warning that we must heed, a warning not only to the Church as a whole but to every individual Christians. Why? because many of the ungodly methods practiced by these men have been put into print and many of their books can be found in Christian Book Shops, masquerading as Christian Literature. Many a saint today has a very perverted view of who Jesus really is, many

enemy bombarded the troops with arrows or other projectiles, and even boiling oil. Furthermore, it was of sufficient size to double up as a stretcher, should the soldier be wounded or killed in battle.

The nearest thing that we have to this today, would be the strong plastic riot shields that are used by the police, when they are called to put down some disturbance. So, we need to forget the Gung-ho, romantic picture of a dashing young man, fearlessly fighting the enemy, but we should have in mind a heavily armored soldier, carrying a large shield, behind which he is able to hide for protection.

The Psalmist seems to have the same idea in mind when he says. *"For Thou wilt bless the Righteous; with favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield,"* Psalm 5:12. The shield that we are looking at is one that will give full protection, it will hide the whole man, and protect the whole body from the missiles that are aimed at him.

In 2Corinthians 5:7 we are told that the Christian is to *"Walk by faith, not by sight."* this is a fitting description and meets perfectly the analogy we have before us of the foot soldier, the Infantry man.

What Paul is telling us is that faith real faith is an all-sufficient shield, he was able to say this because of his own experiences. He knew what it was to suffer the fiery darts of the wicked, and he was able to say, *"Of the Jews five times received I forty strips save one; once stones, thrice I was beaten with rods, thrice I suffered shipwreck; a day and night have I been in the deep, in perils of waters, in the perils of robbers, in the perils of mine own country men, in perils by heathen 2Corinthians,11:24:26."* Add to this the physical problem that he had, his *"Thorn in the flesh,"* we have a

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

"Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked." Ephesus ch.6:16.

Apart from the sword we come to the only other piece of the soldiers equipment that is not actually attached the body namely the shield a piece of armour held on the arm. Now again we must needs rectify the picture that has been presented over the years, whenever one sees an artist's impression of this soldier, we see an armor-clad soldier invariable holding a small round or classic shaped shield. A shield that is light, and maneuverable, a shield that in reality affords little of no protection.

By and large this is a very ineffective form of protection because in order for the soldier to protect himself from the enemies' arrows, not only does he have to keep a sharp look out for them and then raise the shield to stop them hitting him, and at the same time exposing other parts of his body to those arrows he has not spotted.

The type of shield that most people have in mind when they read this passage is this very type, and it is based on the type of light shield used by the Calvary where lightness was essential, and where only a relatively small area of the body was exposed at any one time due to the riders seated position.

This however is not the type of shield that Paul has in view, he is using as him analogy the Roman foot soldier, the Infantry man, and his shield is very different from the romanized pictures we may have in mind. The shield that Paul wants us to get in mind is very substantial, it is about the size of the man himself, sufficiently to allow him to actually and completely hide behind it, it would also be used collectively with others to form an almost impregnable box, when the

believe that by using the name of Jesus, they will be able to prevail against anything that comes against them, hoping that by claiming victory in the name of Jesus all will be well, believing that there is something magical about the name, just as did these Jewish charlatans.

The name of Jesus is not a magical formula and to use it as such is at best a monstrous misuse of the wonderful name, and those who use the name in this manner I would suggest are placing themselves in a very precarious position. The command in the name of Jesus, when used by those such as Paul and the apostles was a powerful command, it was an appeal to Jesus to glorify His name, to exert His power.

Paul new all about the dangers, all about the hostile forces that the Christian in his beloved Ephesian Church faced, and the Lord knew the problems that His Church would face from these unscrupulous purveyors of spiritual filthiness throughout the ages, and He inspires Paul to write the words of our Text *"put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil."*

We have mentioned only a few of the hostiles that surround the Church of Christ, there are many more, which we will probably be mentioning as we progress through the armour we are to put on.

Ephesians 6:14 *"stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."* In our first consideration of this passage, we considered the Need for such armour, seeing that we are engaged in a war, and that we are surrounded by foes, many of them, and that rather than yield to them we are expected to engage them in conflict. We now move into the discussion of the armour itself, what we might call the *girdle of truth*. Before looking at the piece of equipment itself notice first of all the Christians Stance:

OUR STANCE: "STAND THEREFORE."

This implies watchfulness, a readiness a preparedness for combat, there is to be no slackness in our attitude, no sloppiness. Watchfulness is an important part of the Christian life, of his or her attitude. Paul tells us in 1Corinthians 16:13 to *"watch ye stand fast in the faith."* Had the Church been so Standing at the turn of the century, it would not have been devasted as it was by the error of Modernism.

We do however have to thank God, that there were some men, who were on Watch duty, who were standing fast in the faith and were prepared to fight for that faith. Men like Gresham Machen of the Presbyterian Church, Charles Haddon Spurgeon of the Baptists. Men who saw the danger that the faith was in and were prepared to engage the enemies of truth at all costs.

If the Christians had been on watch duty during the nineteen sixties and seventies, rather than asleep, then the damaging doctrines that proliferated them, would not have taken such a grip as they did. It was because the church of the sixties and seventies was not standing, was not watchful in the faith that terrible errors of Ecumenism, Charismaticism, Neo Evangelicalism not only almost unopposed invaded the Church, but had and are still having such a wicked effect.

This verse in 1Corinthians. 16:13 goes on, for having exhorted us to watch and stand, Paul then tells us *"Quit ye like men, be strong."* I cannot but feel that many who read this verse suffer from a form of word blindness, they get to the word *quit*, and then stop, and act solely on that word and *quit*, that is the stop, they do nothing more, apart that is from turn from the fight, they use the modern application of abandoning the cause, of ceasing to do that which one is called upon and expected to do, the depart from the conflict and just *Quit* the war. This word does not mean this, it means to faithfully discharge the duties

Firmly shod in the Gospel of Peace we have no need to be concerned about the next day, because we know that "All things work together for good to them that love God and are called according to purpose."

Another deadly snare of Satan is fear, crippling fear. Fear is not a nice thing; in fact, it is very debilitating wound that Satan loves to inflict. Fear comes in many forms of trap, the fear of losing a friend, of losing popularity, of persecution, fear of what people might think, say or do, if we live according to God desires.

Listen to what the Lord of the Gospel of Peace says, *"Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell."* In other words, we are to fear God, to have a deep and lasting respect and reverence for Him, and if our feet are "Shod with the Gospel of Peace," we have no need to fear, as we know all is well with the soul, all is at Peace in Christ, and we are by grace united with God our Father.

These are but a few of the traps that Satan sets to trip us up and to maim us, so along with the Breast Plate of Righteousness, and the Girdle of Truth, let us *make doubly sure that our Feet are Shod with the Gospel of Peace* so that we are protected from these Satanic Traps and that we may walk firmly and securely throughout our earthly pilgrimage.

Do not try walking through this life in the flimsy open toed sandals of subjectivism, that is of feelings and experience, but have your spiritual feet securely protected by the Greaves of the Gospel of Peace.

the Gospel, then these traps will not only fail to harm us, but they will never destroy the Peace that we have in Christ.

THE PRACTICALITY OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.

One of Satan's most disabling devices is doubt. A man back in our first Church, was racked with doubt as to his salvation, Time and time again I took him to the Scriptures and showed him Gods Promises, but all to no avail, sadly he is *not Rooted and Grounded in the Gospel of Peace*, he knew it, and he knew his feet are not Shod with The Gospel of Peace, yet a better Christian man you would be hard pressed to find.

We may all encounter time of doubt, something happens that seems to shake our faith, but our Peace need not and will not be shattered if our Feet are firmly shod in the Greaves of Gods Peace.

Another of Satan's demonic devices is that of Anxiety, anxiety about what might be, and how we might cope is certain situation arise. The wonder Gospel of Peace tells us this "*Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.*" The idea behind the word *thought* is 'anxiety' Jesus is not telling us we should not think ahead or even plan ahead, what He is telling us is not to become worried about what may or may not be, we are not to get distressed over things that have not yet happened.

Why? Well, say the Lord just take a look about you, God cares for the Lilies of the field, He cares for the birds of the air, and He cares even more for you, if these creatures are so well looked after, if they have no reason to be worried about the next day, how much more will your Heavenly Father look after your needs. Anxiety is a trap of Satan, because it takes our thoughts, trust away from God, to self and what might be.

that we are called upon the discharge, to carry out the obligation placed upon us.

Now as Christian called upon to Stand, in the Faith we have an obligation and one that we must faithfully discharge, and we are to do so *LIKE MEN*. Not as whimpering cowards, we are not to be turn coats, but to face the enemy square on face to face, eyeball to eyeball. We are to keep our places in the battle line, when the battle gets hot, and the arrows of Satan fall thick and fast we are not to leave the trenches like cowards but *stand fast in the faith*.

In Galatian ch.5:1 Paul again exhorts us to "*standfast*" this time "*in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangle with the yoke of bondage.*" There were those who entered the Church in Galatia who wanted to bring the Christians into bondage, into obedience to the Jewish laws and customs, they were adding things to the salvation that Christ had purchased for them. This was wrong, very wrong, Christ has set us free from these things, therefore we are to stand against them and all who would seek to once again enslave us.

There are those today who would have you accept without question anything and everything that they teach, there are those who would have you place yourselves into absolute obedience to them, who would have you choked with rules and regulations, in respect of your salvation. Teaching that you must do this, that you must do that, forget it, withstand these things, we are freemen and women in Christ. As far as our salvation is concerned, we are answerable to man, pastor, priest of king, Christ and Christ alone has set us free from the bondage and curse of sin an no amount of law keeping, religious observances can do anymore.

One final thing that we need to consider under this opening

heading and that is to be found in 2 Thessalonians. ch.2:15
"Therefore brethren, standfast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught whether by word or our epistle." Now let it be clearly stated that this verse does not support the idea held by some that the traditions of the Church are of equal authority to the Scriptures, or that they are too followed and obeyed. This verse refers only to those things that were those taught by the apostles, in other words those things that we know have encapsulated here in the Word of God. We have in God's Word all that is needful for salvation, we have here all that is needful for our understanding of the things that are yet to come to pass. It is our duty as Christians to stand, for and in defense of the traditions that is the teachings, the doctrines of Scripture.

Nowhere are we told to stand and defend the teachings, doctrines or traditions of men, and I fear that it is this that has been one of the major causes of division in the Church of Christ. It was the case in the Corinthian Church, did they say "we have Paul, other we have Apollos, others we have Cephas, and other we have Christ." Today things are little or no different, we have Kenneth Hagin, we have Billy Graham, we have Carl McIntire, we have Oral Roberts, we have Methodism, Presbyterianism, Episcopalianism, Baptism, Pentecostalism, and so we can go on.

The traditions of men, no matter how good we may see them to be, not matter how valid they are at the time, we are not told to Episcopilians stand for them. I would never dream of giving my life for any of these traditions, or for the teachings of any of these men or denominations even or no matter how much I agreed with them. On the other hand, I am prepared to fight tooth and nail, as the saying goes for the teachings, the doctrines and the traditions of God's Word.

Let me put it another way, I would not be prepared to suffer

the verse before us does not mean that, neither the context or the analogy suggests that this is the way to understand it.

What we have here is a picture of a Christian Soldier clad in defensive rather than offensive mode. It is a picture of a Christian protecting what he has, a picture of personal spiritual warfare. Now the one thing that Satan would like to destroy more than anything else is the peace that we have in Christ, that peace with God *that passeth all understanding*.

Now the Bible speaks about two kinds of peace, Peace with God, this is the judicial peace, that peace which is ours by His Grace when we are made right with Him, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, this is the peace of knowing that we are Sons of God rather than enemies of God.

Then there is what we might call 'Experimental Peace,' that peace which is of God Himself, this is a peace that nothing can upset, wars may rage, death and destruction may litter the globe, sin may run rampant, but nothing can shatter the Peace of God. Now it is this Peace that is the Believers portion when their feet are firmly placed in the Gospel. Did not the Lord Jesus Christ say *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you, let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid."* John14:27. It is this Peace that Paul has in mind when he says *"And your Feet shod in the Gospel of Peace,"* that peace which keeps the heart from being troubled, it the *"peace of God that passeth all understanding."*

Now you may be thinking why is it that Paul exhorts us to have our feet shod in this? Feet are important, without them we would find it difficult to walk. Feet are symbolic of our daily spiritual walk. It is in this daily walk that most of the traps are set, often in those familiar places, if we are not sure footed in the Gospel, when these traps are sprung, we are liable to get hurt, however if we are securely established in

of uncertainty? The net of self-sufficiency? The hidden pit of anxiety? The deadly sword wielding chariots that cut away our legs from under us, because of complacency. It is possible to cope with and parry the things that are expected but sometimes these things come upon us like traps when they are least expected, and trip us up. We need good solid foot wear, and God has given it to us in the form of the "Preparation of the Gospel of Peace."

THE PREPARATION:

If we are to survive the traps of Satan, then our feet are to be "Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace." The Greek word translated here 'Preparation' is 'Heto-ima-sia' and has the meanings "readiness and firm footing." The simple meaning of this verse is this, that the Christian is to have his *"Feet firmly set in the Gospel so as to be prepared for anything."* Ready to counter those nasty hidden objects which seek to cripple our spiritual lives, those things that would ruin our witness and cause us to become spiritual disabled.

If Satan cannot get to grips with our soul and take to hell, he will surely try all within his demonic power to disable us, and if we are not firmly set in the Gospel of Peace the soles of our feet are exposed to these satanic traps.

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE:

The way that this passage is popularly interpreted, is again incorrect, most expositors will tell you that as believers we are always to be ready to share and to Preach the Gospel and Romans Ch.10:15 is used to support this interpretation *"How beautiful are the feet of them that Preach the Gospel of Peace and bring Glad Tidings of Good Things."* Now whilst it is true, we should always be ready to tell others the Good News,

because of a specific mode of Baptism, i.e., Immersion, sprinkling or affusion, I would however be prepared to suffer for the right to be Baptized, because baptism in a very important part of the Christian Faith. I would not be prepared to suffer because of a certain doctrinal position held in respect of the Second Coming, I would however be prepared to suffer for the sake of the doctrine of the Lord Return, that I would and could never deny, but the man-made traditions and theories surrounding this glorious event, sorry no way.

We are to Stand clearly and defiantly against such as would destroy the Faith, we are to put it in the words of Jude, *"to contend for the faith once defiantly delivered unto the saints."* Not for the traditions and idea on men, and there is a big difference. When I look back to English Church history, and to the times of Mary Tudor otherwise known as Bloody Mary, and the hundreds that she imprisoned, tortured, and had burnt on at the Stake, not one was burnt because they followed the traditions of men, they all suffered because they stood firm for the traditions, the teaching and doctrines of God's Word. This then is the stance of the Christian, the question we are to ask ourselves, are we Standing as we ought?

THE GIRDLE: "HAVING YOUR LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH."

Now there is no way that we can Stand as Paul exhorts us, and the Bible demands if we are not Standing on the Truth. Paul here equates it as being corseted in the Truth, this word comes from a Greek word meaning to BIND ABOUT, one of the jobs of the old-fashioned corset, and indeed those of today, is to keep the body in shape. I like history, and one of the most romantic periods in English history, was the last century, when one would see the elegant officers on horseback, in order to obtain that elegance those men went through agony, because they would wear a corset, to keep their stomachs in.

I was reading in one of those magazines that come with the junk mail of a new light weight type for the men of today, they are designed to bind into place those areas that tend to get out of control. Now I mention these as male attire as I do not want to be thought of as sexist.

Now what has this got to do with the statement in our text? Simply this, the article of clothing that is referred to here, although only by inference, was designed to do just that, to hold in place all those things that tend to get out of place. Now Paul is clearly speaking in this passage about the Roman armour, the fighting Tunics that he was familiar with. Now the thing that he is thinking about as he writes this verse.

Some commentators equate the girdle indirectly referred to here as being the sash that held the loose flowing garments of eastern dress together, it matters very little, if they do because the principle is the same. Paul however thinking of the Roamn armour would have had in mind, the strong leather belt, that went around the waist and hips, that was designed not only for protective purposes but also to hold the other piece of armour in place.

The Girdle was very important to the soldier's attire, particularly when he was in the field of battle. Without this he would find himself in some very embarrassing situations, and such that would easily cost him his life. In battle a piece of armour not securely fixed, made the soldier vulnerable to the arrows, spear and swords of the enemy.

Furthermore, such looseness would make him less efficient in battle, he would constantly be adjusting it, taking his eyes off the battle and onto himself, a loose piece of armour would make him feel ill at ease as if he were coming apart, not in full control of the situation. The Belt held all the body armour, securely in place, creating for the soldier a healthy sense of

they have set a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me."

Then in Psalm 141:9 we have a pray of David, who was himself aware of the devices of the enemy "*Keep me from the snare they have laid for me and the gins of the workers of iniquity.*" Again in Psalm 142:3 "*In the way wherein I walked, they have privily laid a snare for me.*"

Solomon also knew of these dangers in the Proverbs he says "*Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward; he that keepeth his soul shall be far from them.*" And finally in Jeremiah we read "*They have digged a pit for me and hid snares for my feet,*" The saints of old were well aware of the danger set for the unwary and unprotected foot.

There are then plenty of allusions to the hidden dangers that exist at ground level, dangers that can trip and maim the unprotected. The thing that shatters my peace, is when something unexpected trips me up. Things are going along nice and rosy, salvation is fitted well, the Breast Plate of Righteousness is secured by the Girdle of Truth, and the Sword of the Spirit is working well, and the shield is deflecting the fiery darts of the devil.

Then suddenly and without warning you are on your face and the enemy is swarming around you like bees around the honey pot, it is then when you face in the mud, that you thank God that the Breast Plate of Righteousness is Fully Body armour.

Why are you face down on the ground? Because we have tripped on one of Satan's snares, the foot has been pierced by an one of Satan's devices, we have not been paying sufficient attention to our spiritual foot wear. What sort of deadly devices are employed that can cause us to trip over and cut away our foothold? What about those small painful sharp points of doubt? Those razor-like edges of Fear? Those dagger-like stabs

imagination to see the damage that such traps would do to an army marching in Sandals as foot wear. Another very nasty weapon was the habit of placing sharp blades in the hubs of chariot wheels, these were at about knee high, again you can imagine the terrible wounds that such weapons would inflict on unprotected legs.

So, the Roman soldier need to be well shod, he needed good comfortable and stout foot wear for marching, as well as protection from the hidden dangers set by the enemy. His foot wear was designed to make him as efficient as possible in battle. Now although these men were protected by their Greaves from against fatal injury, it did not mean that they did not come into contact with the traps and dangers, what it did mean however was that when they did encounter such things, they were able to do so, without incurring debilitating wounds. It was therefore in the soldier's own interest to ensure that his foot wear was always in good shape.

WHY IS IT NECESSARY FOR THE CHRISTIAN TO BE WELL SHOD?

The refined cruelty of ancient warfare was and is not limited to just physical armed combat. The one who has masterminded the diabolical weapons of destruction, is the same one who seeks to destroy the souls of men and women. Satan's physical weaponry often has its spiritual counterparts, and was Christians not only need to be aware of these but fully protected against them, because there is no way that we can avoid coming into contact with them. Satan has set his traps in some of the unlikeliest places and unless well shod, we will acquire serious injury when we fall foul of them.

With the 'Gall Trap' in mind let us look at some Scriptures, Psalm 119:110 *"The wicked have laid a snare for me."* then Psalm 140:5 *"The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords,*

security and firmness, so he was able to spend all of his energy, concentration and strength in the battle, never doubting that he was fully protected. There is here a principle that is very relevant for us today, and that is the: -

DANGER OF CASUALNESS:

Over the past 30 years the world has been through a major fashion revolution. When I left school, there was a fairly strict code as to what one should wear, at any given event or occasion. When we spoke about casual clothes for men, we meant an opened neck colored shirt with cravat, sports Jacket and slacks, formal wear was always a suit, with a vest, and white shirt, then for special events it was a Tuxedo.

In the sixties this all changed, with the flower power movement, came tee shirts, sweat shirts Jeans, trainers of every thinkable shape and color. Now I am not commenting on the rights or wrongs if there be any of this moiré casual approach to what we wear. But it seems that with it came a casualness about moral and spiritual things, the more casual approach to clothing, was accompanied by a more casual even caviler attitude to the inward things of God.

This casualness not only effected clothes but inner attitudes, the well proven codes or girdles of decency were taken off and discarded. The Christian became very casual about very Truth. The Christians spiritual clothing began to hang loose, there was nothing to hold it together. The truth about salvation began flapping in the breeze, the works of righteousness became haphazard, and may an enemy arrow found its mark.

THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

Ephesians 3:10-18 Text v14 "*having on the breast plate of righteousness.*" Let us return to the little Church in Ephesus, and let us remember that these saints were surrounded, even besieged by all manner of ungodliness, by the temptations of luxury, by the glamour and physical attractions of the pagan religion of Diana, along with the multiplicity of conventions, traditions and superstitions of the city, all of which ran in the face of their new found freedom in Christ.

Because of their new found faith in Christ, many of their former associations, friendships of past years would have been broken, and in many ways, they would have become aliens in their own city. To the vast majority of citizens this band of Christians, were viewed as being Infidels, they no longer worshipped Diana, but another God called Jesus, they were seen as being Atheists, unbelievers, outcasts from their own people.

These saints needed help and encouragement, they needed strengthening, and protecting from the enemies of truth, and Paul does so by using the analogy of a Roman soldier's armour, an article of clothing that was very familiar to all in those days, just as familiar to them as the soldier's uniform is to us today, even more so. Having looked in some detail at the Girdle of Truth, and noting that we all need to be Corseted about by Truth, we must now turn our attention to the "Breast Plate of Righteousness."

As we take a closer look at this piece of equipment, we will do as we did in last study and rectify some of the false ideas, that are taught today, by well-meaning men. This, little group of Christians, having turned their backs on their former lifestyle, would have become victims of many false accusations, many of their former activities would have been brought up and levelled against them, as they tried now to

We have seen that this picture Paul is giving of the Whole Armour of God, is based on the armour worn by a Roman Soldier of His day, a man fully equipped for battle and fully protected. Now the way we are to understand this is very different from the way that some well-intentioned people present it,

THE FOOT WEAR. "THE FEET SHOD."

"and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Ephesians 6:15

There are many who interpret this verse by using the term sandal, a somewhat flimsy form of foot wear, worn by the ordinary citizen in hot climates. Such foot wear was not part of the soldier's equipment, it was not part of the fighting man's attire, and to present such a picture is grossly inaccurate. Sandals, were of no use to the soldier, they had no part to play in the battle field, and for a soldier to wear such things would be to place him at risk.

What Paul sees as he looks at the feet and legs of the Roman Soldier, is a piece of foot wear called 'greaves or leg armour. Very different from open toed sandals, this was a military shoe or boot and it was very substantial, and as far removed from the sandal as one can get. It was a heavy boot having a sole of Hobnails. It was a boot that gave the soldier a sure and firm foothold, as well as protection in combat. It was essential that soldiers wear such foot wear, for not only did they have to march everywhere, but in those days the art of war, like that of today, produced many diabolical weapons.

One such weapon was called the "gall trap," a nasty device consisting of vast numbers of small sharply pointed pieces of wood, inserted into the ground at various angles, and then covered with dust. Now it does not take a great deal of

THE ARMOUR PRACTICALLY WORN:

Paul sums it all up in Romans 8:33 when he says "*who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect, it is God that justifieth.*" One of the things that cause Christian most problems is the pointed finger and accusation, "You call yourself a Christian, but look at you!" and then goes on to show our failings. We just hate that, because we fear that there is some sin that might well cause us problems if ever it was made public.

The Truth is however, that as God has Justified us and clothed us in His righteousness, none of the accusation will hold up, at least not as far as God is concerned, why? Because all the evidence has been washed away as God Himself declares "*I even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine sake and will not remember thy sins.*"

Think of this little Church in Ephesus, almost every one of those converts would have been touched by the sins of the city, but know they were seeking to live godly in Christ, they would have been the laughing stock of their friends, religious leaders, and business partners.

These people were able to level all sorts of accusation against them about their past lives. but what a wonderful protection they had, for over all their past guilt, indiscretions they wore this perfect, flawless Robe or armour of Gods Righteousness, and nothing that their enemies could do would penetrate it, it afforded 100% protection both Front and back, God Righteousness protects from all things, it keeps us safe from the assaults of the wicked one, because clothed in it we are hidden in Christ.

live godly in Christ Jesus. These would have been painful reminders of their past transgressions, no longer would the men be getting drunk, and living immoral lives, but their former friends, still living in that debauched manner, would laugh at the new manner of life, and seek often to undermine their faith by bringing up their past indiscretion.

Then of course there were the many temptations of the flesh that were placed in the way, not just by Satan by their former colleges and even family, "Come on Joe, don't be so narrow, the local chapter of the Astarte Club is throwing a wild party tonight, come along there are will be plenty of drink, and some very pretty girls. You were always the life and soul of these events." The temptations of the flesh were great, and those saints needed all the protection they could get, and here the "Breast plate of righteousness" became and still is a vital part of that protection.

THE BREAST PLATE:

What had Paul got in mind when he used this analogy, well firstly it was NOT the Breast Plate that was worn by the Jewish High Priest, yet this is the impression we get when we read some of the more popular expositors of the Bible. If you want to study the Breast Plate of the High Priest, you can read all about it in Exodus 28:15-30.

This piece religious attire, was simply a square of material, on each corner there was placed a golden ring. The article of clothing was then fitted over the front portion of the body, and was held in position by golden chains. Now because Paul was Jew a and because the article, he speaks about is called a Breast Plate, to many people these become synonymous, and we are presented with an article of armour that is very similar to this.

Such thinking is wrong, very wrong and give a very false

impression of what the Lord would have us understand. For a start nowhere in this chapter is there any reference to a High Priest yet alone his Breast Plate. Secondly, the High Priests breast plate was not an article worn for protection, it was purely a ceremonial garment, and thirdly, the Christian in Ephesus, many of them Gentiles would never have seen this article of clothing, it would have not been understood by them.

Paul clearly has in mind the Armour worn by the Roman soldier, and it is certainly more, much more than a square piece of ceremonial clothing or even armour. The Greek word that us used here translated breast is thorax, and it describes the body from and including the Neck to the hips, in other words a very substantial part of the body, almost all of the trunk. In fact, that part which contains all the vital organs, Heart, Lungs, Liver, Kidneys, Stomach etc. This is much larger than the area covered by the High Priests small square of cloth. So, wait is this thing Paul is talking about and which he spiritualisms?

If we go to the Bible we will find out, there are two Hebrew words that equate to what Paul has in mind, and they describe something that is very different from the item of Armour that most think about. The first of these is found in Isaiah 59:17, a passage of Scripture that Paul clearly had in mind when he wrote this letter, listen "*for he put on righteousness as a breast plate, and a helmet of salvation upon his head.*" Here we have the Breast Plate of Righteousness.

The Hebrew word here is "shiryown" and it means a 'Corselet or Harness' it also has the meaning of 'twisted' and refers to a Corselet of twisted material. The second word used to describe the same thing is 'Siryon' and is translated in 1Kings 22:34 as a harness, in Jeremiah 46:4 and 51:3 as a 'brigandine' and again in Nehemiah 4:16 as a 'habergeon'.

or hole in His holiness, no fraying at the edges, not a single imperfect strand, not a single stain, *in him there was no sin.* In every way possible the Lord Jesus was *the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish.*"

Now let us take a poor wretched penitent sinner, the very worse you can find, he is a moral leper, given over to all kinds of known vices and sins, he has tasted of the very worse the world can offer, he is laden with guilt, he knows that his life is as bad as one can get, there is no way that he can even begin to forgive himself, or excuse himself. Yet by the Grace of God the Holy Spirit has convicted him, and has been graciously brought to the place of repentance.

What does the Bible teach happened next? Turn to Luke 15:22 for here is the answer "*the father said bring forth the best robe and put it on him.*" Now all the filth, the degradation of his former life is covered, and he is made acceptable to the Father. What is this, Robe? it is the Righteousness of God, the perfect, glorious Righteousness of Christ covers the sinner, all the merits of the Lord are now ascribed to Him, there is now no longer any record of his sin, this man who knew but spiritual defeat in now encompassed with the spiritual victories of the Lord Jesus.

This great sinner now stands before the devil, before the angels in heaven and in the presence of God clothed in Righteousness and is able to say with the Prophet of old, "*he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness,* Isaiah 61:10." This robe is the same as that of the armour, it is just a different metaphor, and this is the strong defense against the enemy. Why? Because it is proven to be invincible, Satan was unable to defeat Christ, Christ and will not defeat Christ, but Satan has been thoroughly defeated by Christ, because Christ is perfectly Righteous, this armour, this robe is Christ.

partial protection from the front only is seriously flawed and wrong.

WHAT IS THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS?

The Bible speaks of three kinds of righteousness, there is firstly, that which is ascribed to all men, its self-righteousness, and offers no protection whatsoever because it is no more than a bundle of filthy rags, that is how God describes it, and filthy rags protect no one.

Secondly, there is the righteousness of the Law, this is obtained by one's perfect obedience to it, but as '*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.*' there is no way that man can attain to that Righteousness. So, what is this Righteousness that we are to wear as a Coat of Mail, a garment into which we are to be absorbed and fully protected? Turn to Philippians. ch.3:8-9 here Paul from his own experience tells us "*I have suffered the loss of all things and do count them dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, 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 by faith.*"

What is this Righteousness, that Paul wears like a coat of mail, that protects his front and his back? It is the Righteousness of God. The same Righteousness that protected Noah, that was accredited to Abraham, that was imputed to David, and which is given by grace to all who Trust Christ for their salvation.

Turn to 2Corinthians. ch.5:21 "*that we may be made the righteousness of god in him.*" in who? In Christ. Let us pause for a moment and look at the first part of this verse, it begins "*for he* (that is the first person and refers back to v.20 and the title God *hath made him*, that is the second person in v.20 Christ *to be sin; who knew no sin.*" That Christ was without sin there is no doubt, He kept the Law, He was and is Absolutely Righteous, His obedience to the law was perfect, there was rend

What is this? It is a sleeveless Coat of Mail, a coat of Chain Mail, it was a piece of protective wear very clever designed like a fish's scale, a flexible coat of armour. originally, they were made of small pieces of bronze and later in Paul's day of steel. Now here is the crunch, the armour that Paul had in mind was called by the Roman army a "Lorica," and it came in various designs, but no matter what the design, they all had one thing in common, and that is they were designed to protect the entire body from the neck to the hips, both back and front. Notice front and back, the idea that the armour Paul has in mind only covering the front is incorrect, indeed it is false, dangerously false, it is a romantic concept taught by well-meaning people, and it opens us all sorts of interesting ideas, but it is false. The Breast Plate Paul has in mind is far more comprehensive than a small plate of metal covering just the chest area.

THE BREAST PLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS:

The righteousness that we are exhorted to *put on*, is a righteousness that affords full and complete protection, not just a skimpy piece that cover just the Chest area. Now the word '*having*' is an interesting word, "*having on the breast plate of righteousness.*" and it fully supports what we have just said. This word gives the sense of 'sinking into a garment of clothing,' the modern equivalent would probably be of being poured into clothing. My daughter, would wear very tight-fitting jeans, and we would often say to her, '*Did you pour yourself into them,*'

Another analogy of the same thing is that of being lowered into water until we are submerged in it. The picture Paul is presenting to us is that of being completely covered, or immersed in the Armour of Righteousness, so that sinful self is lost to view. This Righteousness is to encapsulate us, so as to fully not partially protect us, the popular idea of only