

HOLE IN YOUR ARMOR

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

To start out this little book let's talk about armor. You probably already know what armor is in the natural sense. Armor was probably invented and used before this, but it is first mentioned in the Bible in I Samuel 14:1, "Now it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armor, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side, But he told not his father." We won't go into what in particular is happening here, but this is the first time that the word armor is mentioned in the Bible, and we get the idea that armor existed before this. People had been using iron works much earlier than this, so it stands to reason that armor had been used much earlier. Workers of iron were first mentioned in Genesis 4:22, so it is more than likely that they had armor from that time on. I am not sure. Full armor has been historically documented as early as 1400 BC according to Wikipedia. This gives you a general idea of armor in Bible times.

You know that the purpose of armor was to protect those who were in a war. Each part of the armor protected a certain vital organ. The next time the word armor was mentioned in the Bible, we actually get a detailed description of the parts of the armor and we can tell from that how it worked. That is found in I Samuel 17. You know the story. It is the account of David and Goliath. Verse 4 starts the description of Goliath and his armor. Boy, what a dude. He was amazing, and his armor was amazing in itself. 4. And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 5. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of brass. 6. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. 7. And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam; and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him.

To get an idea of how huge this guy was and what his armor was like we have to do a little math. Here are the measurements mentioned and what they are in our measurements. There are different accounts of what each measurement stood for, but here is the most accepted. As far as Goliath's height, one account gives 4 ½ cubits, which comes out to 6 feet 8 inches. Another account in I Samuel 17:4 says 6 ½ cubits, which comes out to 9 feet 7 inches. I kind of go with the 9 feet 7 inches account for this reason. His armor mail was 5,000 shekels of brass, which is 126 pounds. His mail was a copper mesh that covered his vital areas. That isn't all of his armor. That is probably one of the lighter parts of it. It doesn't say about the weight of the brass on his legs and the part between his shoulders. His spearhead alone weighed 15 pounds. That is a lot of weight that this dude is carrying. In my opinion, he had to be taller than 6 feet 8 inches. I know someone who is 6 feet 3 inches and I haven't seen him carrying around 126 + pounds. When we look at the different parts of his armor, he had a helmet to protect his brain, his

coat of mail that protected his vital organs around his heart, brass to protect his shoulders, and another section protecting his legs. When you study out the armor of his day, I am pretty sure there were more parts to his armor that the writer didn't mention. For example, you know he had a shield and probably a breastplate, which would have been really heavy. The mail might have taken the place of the breastplate in some cases. Here we don't know for sure. That is a lot of weight for a 6 foot 8 inches guy to carry and be able to move around enough to fight at the same time he was carrying it all. Suffice it to say he was huge. He was an intimidating enemy. We know that. For 40 days he had stood on the hill outside of Israel's troops making fun of them and making fun of their God. The stakes were high. Whoever fought against him and won would win that battle. Still, the Israelites who were gathered there were afraid of him enough to shake in their boots (or you might say shake in their sandals) for 40 days. At least they did that until David got there. We've got an idea of the enemy; let's take a look at the good guy in the story and what his armor was like.

We don't know exactly how tall David was at the time that he faced Goliath, but God had told Samuel when he was viewing Jesse's sons in I Samuel 16:7 that he wasn't to look on one of the sons countenance, or on the height of his stature because He didn't look on the outward appearance, but the heart. So we can guess that at that time David wasn't very tall. He wasn't very old because he wasn't considered as important as the other sons, and he was left in the fields with the sheep when the others were being considered. From the beginning though, we can see that his heart was right with God.

This part of the story starts out in I Samuel 17. Please get out your Bible and read this account. Always do this. I encourage you to get out your Bible as you read this book. My book may help you, but only because it is filled with scripture. It is the Bible that will change your life and give you the victory to face the giants in your life. As you see scriptures that I have written, look them up. You get the added benefit of reading other scriptures around the one I mention. Let this book be like a study guide. It may take a lot longer to read it that way, but the benefits will be tremendous. This account in I Samuel 17 begins with Saul and Israel gathered together in the valley against the Philistines who stood on the mountain. There was a champion of the Philistines, Goliath, who would stand and cry out to the armies of Israel mocking them. He did this for 40 days. At least, he did until he met David. David visited his brothers who were in the army there. He was taking food to them from his father. David saw what was going on there this day and took it all to heart. He saw Goliath, and heard his challenge. He saw it as defying the armies of the living God. He saw it as mocking God whom he loved with all of his heart. The others were all afraid to stand, but David dared to stand. His first step was to go to Saul. Sometimes we let fear and the intimidation of the enemy talk us out of taking that first step. We don't even start. David's heart propelled him to take that first step. His love for God propelled him to take that first step. He didn't think about what might happen if he failed, he didn't really think about what might happen if he won. He just stood up for what was right because there was a cause.

When David presented his cause to Saul, Saul told him, “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with them; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.” He gave him all the reasons why he shouldn’t go. David gave him the reasons why he should go. In verse 34 we read, “And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.” David didn’t take time to think about his weaknesses, but instead he thought about God’s strengths. He didn’t take time to think about the times he had failed, but he thought about the times that the Lord had stood with him and he had overcome. His focus was not on himself, but on his God. He told Saul that he was going.

Saul didn’t argue with him. He recognized David’s determination and his faith. He did try to outfit him with his own armor. Here we see an account of the second description of armor that we have in the Bible. This was the armor that Saul offered David. He also had a helmet of brass on his head. He was also armed with a coat of mail. He had a sword girded on him. Again, this probably isn’t all that he had, just all that was mentioned. He was ready to go against the giant. He had the king’s own armor, which was probably the best there was. In the flesh, he had all that he needed. He was ready to go against the enemy. But David wouldn’t accept the armor that was given to him. He told Saul in verse 39, “And David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these; for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.” He stood there, this scrawny little guy in his shepherd outfit, and told the king he was ready to go. He was saying that this armor was what he needed.

I know that a lot of people that day laughed at that little dude standing there against that giant. Goliath mocked him, too. David answered his mocks by saying, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord to hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee ... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” David encouraged his faith in the Lord. When he went to meet the enemy, the Bible mentions several times in this account that he ran to meet him. He faced the enemy. He obeyed God, and he won. The giant Goliath lost. Goliath not only lost the battle there that day, but he also lost his head. Goliath also lost his armor. When David stood, it encouraged the faith of all the others in God’s army. That is how it works. When we dare stand, and others see our victory, it gives them the strength to stand and win.

I think that it is interesting to know that I Samuel 17:4 says that David kept Goliath’s armor. In a later battle against the Philistines, David used Goliath’s sword.

David won that time, too. We read about that in I Samuel 21:9. I am sure that this victory this day changed David's life. He had encouraged his faith by remembering the lion and the bear that God had delivered into his hands. Can you imagine how facing Goliath and winning boosted his faith? Sometimes we have no faith because we don't face the giants and see God win. We don't know what God can do, because we never step out in faith. Because of this, our faith is never encouraged by the victories we win.

I wanted to share this account of David for a couple of reasons. Here in this account, we see some of the earliest accounts mentioning armor. We see a couple of detailed descriptions of what armor was like in the earliest accounts given in the Bible. We also see here a couple of types of armor. We see the armor that Saul gave David. Then we see a glimpse of the armor that David wore. One was a physical armor, and the one that caused him to triumph was a spiritual armor. That is a glimpse of the armor that we are going to talk about in this book. We have an enemy. He isn't a physical giant like Goliath, but he is a spiritual giant. Because of that, we often forget about him. We put up with a lot of junk in our lives because we forget about him. He is a master at hiding and attacking. He is a master of disguises. He disguises himself as all kinds of things. He even looks good, but all the while he is destroying your life, and those you love. We'll talk a little more coming up about the enemy, and why we need armor to fight him. We'll talk about how the armor that we need isn't physical, like Saul's armor, but it is spiritual like David's armor. If David had put on Saul's armor, I think that the story would have ended a lot differently than it did. I believe David would have been killed, and I believe that his family and his country would have served the Philistines because that was the terms of the battle. Sometimes we fail to see the enemy. We fail to put on the right armor. Or we fail to keep our armor whole, and it gets filled with spiritual holes. Because of this, we are destroyed and our families and those we love serve the enemy because we have lost. The giant was really huge. We read about how huge he was. We read about how small David was. But we also read about how huge his victory was.

What are the battles that you are facing in your life? What about the lives of those you love? Are you winning, or are you losing? Are you seeing those around you keeping the victory? Is the enemy overcoming or are you? We have a right as the children of God to be victorious. Are you walking in that victory? Coming up we will talk about how important the armor of God is, and how it is spiritual, not physical. We'll talk about how both the enemy and the war is spiritual, not physical. We'll talk about how to fight and to win spiritual battles. We'll talk about each piece of the armor and how important it is to wear each part. We'll talk about how important it is to keep each piece of your armor in good condition. It is important that your armor is holy, not holey. It can get worn out if we aren't careful. We'll talk about how that can happen, and how we can repair it and renew it when it does. The victory is for you as much as it was for David. You have a right to say, I will put on the armor of God, and I will stand. I will see the victory of the Lord in my life. You can stand against the giants of the enemy and win. Let's read on.

Chapter 2. Facing the giants

I haven't faced any 9 feet guys lately who were trying to kill me. But I have faced more than a few spiritual giants. So have you. One of the latest battles that I have fought was one that I went through just a few weeks before starting this book. This battle was one for my life. I won't go into the whole thing, but it was a physical battle as well as a spiritual one. I am not explaining all this to give you all my aches and pains, but through it you can get an idea of a spiritual battle, and how to win by some of the things that I went through. It all started with a case of bronchitis that nearly turned into pneumonia. I started going through this thing where I would wake up not breathing at all. It would take a few minutes, but then I could start at least getting a little air in by wheezing. Then I could finally gasp for breath. I would be this way for about 15 minutes before I could start breathing. Still it would take a couple of hours for me to get where I could breathe freely. I remember on one of these occasions that I waited a couple of hours to go to the local urgent care. When I got there, they refused to see me because I was breathing so badly. They said that they weren't equipped to handle emergency situations that severe at their office. They made me go to the emergency room. All of this lasted for 2 months and I would stop breathing at least one time a week for those 2 months.

I never go to the doctor. I guess before this I had only gone once in 5 years. But I was freaked out over this. I went to the doctor three times in 2 weeks. They put me on all kinds of medicine, but I still got worse. Matter of fact, I had an allergic reaction to some of the medicine that they gave me, and it caused my throat to swell up where I couldn't swallow. That definitely didn't help with my breathing. During this whole time, I was breathing so bad that at night I would have to sleep sitting up in my recliner. Part of the time I had to sit up in a chair to be able to breath. I couldn't even recline in the recliner. That was even when I wasn't having those attacks. They were bad in themselves. I had a doctor and rescue people tell me that if I panicked with fear while I was having one of these attacks that I could die. If I passed out from not breathing when there wasn't anybody there with me, I could die. Not long after that, there was a young woman who had the same type of thing as I did, and she did die. She also had a weak heart, and the stress of not breathing plus the heart problem together had killed her. My husband is with the rescue squad and he was my bodyguard. He was my helper extreme. When I would get up at night, he would automatically wake up and check on me. He was a tremendous help to me, but he didn't know exactly what to do to help me. Evidently, neither did the three doctors I went to. One emergency room doctor must have thought that he knew a lot about everything. He charged me \$700.00 for a 10-minute visit. Ouch. I was fighting for my life, and no body could help me. What they were doing to me was only making everything worse.

After 2 months of this, I started getting some better. I wasn't used to taking medicine though, and because of all the steroids and antibiotics that they had given me (6 kinds of

medicine in 2 months), I broke out all over from head to feet with a terrible rash that itched really bad and burned. It lasted for nearly a month. It was so bad that the only relief that I could get was to sit with cold rags on me to take the heat out. I had to keep putting the rags under cold water because in just a few minutes they would be hot from the rash. I was in misery. And because of the allergic reaction I had to stop taking the medication that I had been taking to help me with all my breathing problems. This was starting to come back. I hadn't slept more than 3 hours a night in 3 months. I was physically, mentally, and spiritually at the end of my rope. I was still hanging on.

I want to put a little note in here about doctors. I started out this battle listening to the doctors and doing what they said because I was afraid not to. At first, I was running scared. I was panicked, and listening to anybody who had anything to say, and I was taking all kinds of advice and doing all kinds of things. I was too panicked to hear the Lord's voice. I finally got wiser, but it took me a while. That rash was the final turning point of this. That rash was caused because I had taken all kinds of medicine that the doctors had given me. I had also taken some over the counter stuff that other people had told me I should take when the doctor prescribed medicine didn't help. I hadn't listened to the Lord and taken what he told me to take. Matter of fact, what the doctors told me was wrong with me was only one little part of what had happened to me. Coughing for two months had caused some other things to get wrong with me, and that was the main problem. The doctors didn't even mention that. The medicines they were giving me weren't helping my main problem. That medicine was only making it all worse. My fear had caused me to silence God's voice. When I stopped listening to everyone else, and started listening to him, it was the turning point of my seeing a glimpse of getting well. That is how it is with spiritual battles. Until we listen to the Lord we will never be set free, or victorious in the battle.

Now I know about spiritual warfare. I have had times before when I knew that the enemy was fighting me physically to get to me spiritually. I started out fighting, determined that this wouldn't get me down. I took authority. I could tell that the enemy was behind this attack. I could feel him coming against me. I had physical problems, but spiritually I could feel him. I could discern him at work. When I would stop breathing, I could literally feel his old evil presence there. At first it shook me up. As this thing went on for a couple of months though, I realized something that changed my life. He couldn't kill me. I knew that he wanted to. I knew that he was literally trying to destroy me in any way he could. He was even trying to choke the life right out of me. But I started realizing that he couldn't. I could feel a hedge of protection around me. It was like the devil could only go so far, and then he hit a barrier that stopped him. God had a hedge of protection around me. I realized this. That took the fear away. Like I said earlier, even the doctors told me that if I got anxious when I was having that attack, it would cause me to stop breathing altogether. Fear would literally steal my breath. So, a key to overcoming this all was when I realized that I didn't have to be afraid.

How did I know this was the devil? I discerned him. Also, I knew what was going on in the natural. Our ministry had just started a new church. We were all needed. All of us were under attack. When new people started coming to the church, the enemy would start attacking them. I knew why the devil was fighting me so. He was fighting all of us. That was the greatest thing that he could do for us. That sounds strange, but it is true. When the enemy fights, you know that you are doing exactly what God wants you to do. He confirms God's will when he starts fighting it. Also, he puts the fight into you. One of the things that encouraged me to keep fighting was that I knew what I was doing was important, or he wouldn't be there fighting against it. That just encouraged me to fight all the harder. I have heard Bishop Goad say many times, "I would have given up a long time ago if it hadn't been for the devil fighting me." Bishop Goad is the founder and head of our ministry, New Life Church and Ministry. He has been through a lot of battles. Every time we start something new, here comes the devil. Bishop Goad knows what he is talking about. I have also heard him say, "I am scared to death of someone that the devil isn't fighting. That means he already has them." There is a lot of truth in both those statements that he makes. If the devil isn't fighting you, then you need to check into your life. Are you really serving God, and obeying Him? If he is fighting you, then know that is the best compliment that you can get. You have made him mad at you. Through knowing this, you can be encouraged when you face a battle. You aren't facing a battle because you are doing something wrong. You may be facing a battle because you are doing something right. When the enemy comes against you, you can let the enemy take the fight out of you, or can let him put the fight in.

One of the things I do when the enemy starts against me is that I start against him. I work with New Life Bible College and Seminary and I am a teacher and director at New Life Christian Academy. There was a student at our school who was having the same physical problems as I was. I started claiming that young man's soul for the Lord. I knew that he had served the Lord when he was younger, but he had gotten away from the Lord and into drinking and partying. He had this same sickness that I had. He was so afraid that he was going to die that he couldn't sleep at all. I could have been the same way. I had started being afraid to sleep, but I realized that fear was of the enemy, and that was another way he was trying to destroy me. Because of this I couldn't sleep because I couldn't breathe, but it wasn't because I was afraid to sleep. I had won that battle. I could surely understand how it was for this young man. I started interceding for him with a bold earnestness that came from the Lord. I told the devil that when he kept me up all night, I would spend that time interceding for this young man, and for others at the school. I wasn't going to give up without a fight, and my way of fighting was to get back at the devil by doing something that he hated. One night while I was interceding for this young man, the Lord showed me that he was going to come into my office. He showed me what to say, and he showed me what would happen. He told me that if I obeyed, this young man would be saved. He did, I did, and God did, and he gave his life to the Lord. At the time of my writing this, he has won the battle with this sickness and the devil that tried to destroy him with fear. He put his hand in the hand of the One who gave him peace instead of that fear. Not only was he saved, but also three other people gave their

hearts to the Lord as well during these three months. One was a young man who had gone to our church when he was just a baby. He had enrolled in the school as a senior. He had been afraid of facing his future after graduation. Now he has peace in knowing Someone Who will face it with him.

After this, you'd think the devil would have left me alone, but he still kept keeping me up at night. So I started working on some of my books. I worked on some that needed polishing up, and they are powerful books. I guess because I wrote them in the battle. One is titled *Redeemed*, which talks about what that means and what we are redeemed from. One is titled, *I AM*, which talks about who God is and who we are in Him. Another is titled, *My People Which Are Called By My Name*, which discusses our rights as the children of God, and how God sees us. I still kept fighting by doing something to get back at the devil. Then I just got too tired to do anything in the natural. I was able to work because the Lord gave me the strength to do that, but then I would come home and just go to bed. I would get a little sleep in, and then be up all night. I started relying on God's strength to go on because mine was gone. As this went on, though, I almost gave up trying. I started doing things halfway, because I didn't have the strength to do things all the way. I started letting down my spiritual guard because I was just too tired and sick to keep it up. I let holes get in my armor. I really paid for it. After three months of this, I just didn't have strength to fight any more.

Now as you read this book, you may be thinking, "Wow, this person isn't someone whose advice I want to take. She doesn't seem really super-spiritual to me. She just seems like a plain person like me." Well, you are right about that. We don't need armor because we are super-spiritual people. We need armor because we are just plain old ordinary people who serve a God who is extra-ordinary in the middle of a supernatural battle. If I wrote a book to prove that I was any different than just a plain ordinary person, then that book wouldn't help you at all. A lot of people who write Christian books try to do just that. Ministers are guilty of doing the same. They try to prove how special they are. I just want to prove how special God is, and how that can change your life. I guess I am a little like David when he stood there skinny and knob-kneed before Goliath. Like him, I am definitely nothing out of the ordinary. That is what made this victory so huge. Everybody knew that the Lord had done a work that day. When you face the giants in your life and you face them in your weakness and win, people won't be talking about how great you are, but they will be talking about how great God is. That is what this thing is all about anyway.

I knew about that spiritual armor, and I had on the same armor that David had on that day. I knew that the God that stood for him as he faced that giant was the same one that stood for me during this time. I knew that I would win, just the same as David did. I knew that it wouldn't be because I was strong, but because I was weak enough to listen to Him, and obey. I knew that it was because my strength wasn't enough, but because His is.

Paul said a wonderful thing in II Corinthians 12:9-10. It is one of my favorite verses. It is easy to find because it is one of the few red-letter passages past the time of Jesus' death. Paul was having a hard time with a battle, a messenger of satan that was sent to buffet him. God didn't take the battle away, but He was using it to do a work in Paul. Paul said that three times he begged the Lord to take it from him. In verse 9 we read, "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." He was saying that the best thing that he had going for him was his weakness.

We can't face the battle with the enemy. The enemy is too huge. The only way that we can face the enemy and win is when we say my greatest strength is my weakness. If I hadn't become as weak as I was, I might not have survived this battle. If I had fought it in the flesh, I would have lost. I would have lost my life.

If I wouldn't have submitted to God and obeyed him, if I would have kept on doing what I thought in my own mind was the right thing to do, I would not have come through this. At that time what I thought was right was to do what the doctors told me to do, and they were all wrong. Their advice was slowly killing me by making the whole thing worse. Things were bad enough without getting any worse. Worse would have been deadly. If I had relied on the advise of the people around me, that was also deadly. We don't have what it takes to fight this thing in the natural. We can't rely on those around us who are functioning in the natural and not the spiritual. This isn't a natural battle, and it can't be fought in the natural in our own strength. We have to have armor to protect us from the enemy, and that armor is spiritual, not natural. Jesus talks about spiritual armor in Luke 11:21-22, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." (Remember, get out your Bible when you have scriptures and read the rest of the passage besides the part I give. That is important no matter whose books you are reading.) We read in the passages around these verses that the Lord is talking about spiritual warfare, casting out devils, and unclean spirits. So we see that this scripture is dealing with spiritual armor. That is what will keep us in the battle. We have to be sure that we are trusting in the armor that will keep us protected. If we trust in other armor than spiritual armor, then the enemy will come in and take our stuff.

What about this enemy that we face, the giants in our lives? What about the Goliaths that we face every day? What are the enemies that want to come in and divide our spoils? My battle was a spiritual battle that was destroying me physically. I have fought spirits that would come and try to destroy my finances. I have fought spirits who would try to come and take my peace of mind by causing worry and fear to consume my life. I have seen the enemy come against family members to destroy them, and because they didn't have the knowledge of spiritual warfare and the armor of God to fight, they lost. I have seen

churches that lost because they failed to do the same. The enemy hates us because God loves us. He is a loser and hates for us to win. Part of this next chapter comes from a book that I wrote titled, *Your Authority as a Child of God*. It talks more about this enemy we have, and our rights as children of God. If we don't understand that we have the right as children of God to face this enemy and win, then we won't see how important the armor of God is. We won't bother to put on our armor because we think that we will lose any way. We can win because we are the children of God. We face an unseen enemy. Through God we can overcome. Read how.

CHAPTER 3. FIGHTING THE UNSEEN

I have been the director of a Christian school for over 20 years, and have taught close to 30 years. I thank God for these years because they taught me a lot about spiritual warfare and how spirits operate. One of the programs where I worked helped at-risk teenagers. In that particular program, I had 30 teens in class at one time. Many of them had been dismissed from public school as too much to handle. They often came from backgrounds that weren't Christian. They packed with them oppressions and possessions of all kinds of spirits. When I say possession, I don't mean demonic possession like the movies portray. You can't look at Hollywood's portrayal of anything demonic to find information about what it means to be controlled by spirits of the devil. You can't look to Hollywood for any information about how to fight demonic warfare. Matter of fact, most of these movies and shows dealing with the devil were written by the devil. That is why there is an old demonic spirit, or feeling, about those shows. Matter of fact it isn't strange that the increase in movies, programs, and music that deals with satan worship and witchcraft is directly in proportion through the years with the increase of satan worship and witchcraft in our schools. The devil knows what he is doing and he knows the medias that he can use to "preach his message".

Sad to say, most Christians don't know enough about him and his tactics. They often watch their homes and churches being destroyed by him and they don't know how to protect themselves. They should know enough to be able to get on the offensive and take over his territory. Demonic influences against homes and families are very real and very destructive. Because of the ignorance of many Christians, they even allow this music and movies, and other media that the devil uses to come into their homes. I have known many well-meaning Christian parents who allowed their children to participate in the occult because they didn't know what it was that they were doing. I wish that I could give to every parent the knowledge that I have gained through the years especially concerning the power of the devil in music, and in so many other things that young people obsess over.

One extreme example concerning the devil's power in music was a boy about thirteen years old who was really wrapped up in this kind of music. He played constantly, and played it in his sleep at night. If your child becomes addicted to a type of music, and threatens all kinds of rebellion if you try to stop him from listening to it, you might as well know that whatever he is listening to is demonic. This is true even if they tell you that they don't listen to the words. The message behind the song is clear, and the demonic influence there, even if they don't listen to the words. If they put up a fight to keep listening to "their music" you can bet that what they are listening to isn't as harmless as the Beach Boys. This young man became obsessed and it took its toll. One

day he slashed his wrist. He survived to be sent to a hospital that deals with troubled youth. He told me later that he had done this because the music told him to. I checked it out. The particular group that he had been listening to put out a song that repeated over and over the words, "Cut yourself. Do it again. Slash yourself to the bone." What were the findings of the particular hospital that he was sent to? They actually concluded that his problem was created by the music that he listened to. Talk about a parent that regretted having let her son be caught up in this. Talk about a parent that regretted not monitoring what was going on. This may be an extreme example, but it makes a point. I have seen this for years. Parents would shield their children from worldly influences, and but allow them to listen to music that lifted up the world, that was filled with lyrics that were not Christian in their influence. They were surprised when their children took on the look, attitudes, and actions of the world. I wasn't. I knew what they had been pumping into their spirit every day.

Like I said before, sometimes the most well meaning parents do things out of ignorance of what might happen. I hope that you take this chapter to heart. Part of standing up to the enemy in spiritual warfare is to know when you have spiritual warfare going on. It isn't a battle you can see. Only by listening to God can you find out what is going on. If God tells you to watch something, or that there is something that you need to change, or that there is an area in your life, or your child's life that needs to be adjusted, then don't brush it off. Don't shrug it away. God is showing you that for a reason. You will pay the price if you don't obey. Part of spiritual warfare and putting on your armor is obedience.

I don't listen to any kind of music besides Gospel. I have been delivered from the world, and don't care to listen to the world's music. I get no thrill about listening to the drinking songs and songs about cheating on their women that comes in the Country music. I get no thrill about listening to anything that the devil or the world has to say in the demonic rock music. I want to hear music that lifts up my spirit and renews that inner man within me, giving me peace and hope and joy. As far as I'm concerned, there is only one type of music worth listening to, and that is Gospel about my Lord and Savior that I love with all my heart. If I had children, it would be easy to make a rule that they would only listen to that as well. I would teach them why, and I would live it before them. There is so much that they have to fight against as young people in today's world. I wouldn't allow them to do anything that made that battle any harder. I would protect and shield them with a covering from the devil's influences, I certainly wouldn't allow them to do anything that threw them right into harms way. Yet we do this when we allow them to listen to music that is not Gospel. To back up all this I'll give you another illustration. As an ex-rock and roller who struggled to be delivered when I was first saved, the Lord established this as precedence in my life early. He told me as a young Christian to lay down everything but Gospel music. I finally did so. That was the hardest thing that I had to give up, but when I did, I was delivered from my past. Guard your children's spirits and their souls. Sure it takes a lot of effort. Sure you will have a battle. Sure you will have to work

overtime to do this. Aren't their souls worth it? There are other ways that the enemy comes against us besides just coming through music. We'll talk about more coming up.

Another thing that the enemy uses to destroy our children (and us if we aren't careful) is social media. Kids and grown ups are so obsessed with texting that they can't stop doing it long enough to drive down the road. Face book is the connection of the ages, and it is so used by the enemy. All this sort of thing is damaging. If you are so obsessed by this kind of thing that you are angered when you hear me say it is damaging. If it makes you determined to do it more when you hear that the devil can use it to destroy you, then the devil has you whether or not you want to hear about it. That is the number one thing we have to do to be set free. We have to realize that we are bound, and the enemy is destroying us. Until we do, we can't get set free. Again, why let you children go there.

Let's go back to the first paragraph in this chapter. We said there the Word of God bears out that Christians cannot be possessed by the devil. They cannot completely be under the devil's control, because if they have been saved, the Spirit of God comes into their heart. The devil and the Spirit of God cannot both inhabit the same vessel. The devil can't move in and totally control you, because the Spirit of God dwells in you. However, many Christians allow themselves to be oppressed by satan. This means that, even though the devil can't move in and take over, he can cause spirits to come against you. If you allow these things to control your life, you become oppressed. One example, I have known Christians who became bound by a spirit of fear to the point that they didn't leave their homes. They didn't step outside of their house for many years. They allowed this spirit to control their life to that point. Many spirits can bind us. It may be a spirit of depression, a spirit of bitterness, a spirit of anxiety or worry, a spirit of rebellion, a spirit of anger, or many other things. The devil is a master at moving these in against us so that we can't find total victory in Jesus. He does this because we allow him to. He sneaks them in so that we can't see what is happening. If we aren't walking in the spirit, and allowing God to control our life through our submission to Him, we may not see what is happening. The devil is careful to keep us ignorant of how to walk in the spirit, and how to do spiritual warfare. This isn't something that is taught in most churches. Because we ourselves are bound, we can't do the spiritual warfare that is needed to help others walk in deliverance. The devil keeps us ignorant of our spiritual authority and fights us from being able to walk in it. Because of all this, he steals our joy, our victory, our peace, and the victory, joy and peace of those we love. If he isn't stopped, he can eventually steal our souls, which is his ultimate goal.

One of the major spirits that the enemy uses against us is the spirit of fear. People call it by many names (stress, anxiety, panic attacks, and other names), but it is fear. Young people are dying with heart problems. When I think of this, I think of the scripture Luke 21:26 which talks about fear in the end times. It talks about "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." Verse 27 says what will happen next, "And then shall they

see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” Fear is destroying people physically, mentally, and emotionally. Stress kills.

We don’t have to allow fear to control us. The Bible says in II Timothy 1:7, “for God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind.” These things are what we are promised in God instead of fear. Fear comes from the devil. It can kill. You read in my account about my physical battle in chapter 2 that the doctors told me if I panicked when I was going through one of those spells when I wasn’t breathing that it could cause me to die. When I started calming myself down I could get my breath. When I went through these times, I didn’t have mind enough to know where I was let alone to know what to do about things. I was able to do one thing. I would think about the last time that I had this. I would remember that God had seen me through that time. I would remember that the time before that, He had kept me. I guess I was a little like David when he remembered the time when he had stood before the lion, and the bear. That had encouraged his faith and when he looked at Goliath, he wasn’t so big. This thing stopped looking so big to me each time it happened. It happened for 8 weeks at least one time a week, so I had my faith encouraged a lot. The battle became my lifter. Each time I realized more that the enemy didn’t have anything to kill me with, because if he would have, I would have been dead. That took care of my fear. Faith replaced fear. When you realize this, the enemy can’t stop you.

Fear can cost you your life. I know a lot of people who have died because they let a spirit of fear control their life. Fear can cause physical ailments to be 10 times worse than they would be. That is why doctors say that stress kills. Fear can stop your ears from being able to hear the voice of the Lord when it is crucial to obey. Fear can cause you to jump right into a trap that the enemy has set for you. Fear is one of the devil’s priced tools. You have a shield of faith. We have the armor of the Lord. When we know who we are, we know our authority, we know our place in God and we know that the devil’s place is under our feet, then we have nothing to fear. When we walk in a walking, talking, and obedient relationship with God, God will reveal what the devil is up to, give us spiritual authority to bind him, and then how can the devil win? When we take spiritual authority over our own lives, then we can also take authority over the lives and the atmosphere around us. Just like I had to do as principal of our school. Just like we have to do in our homes.

As a director of the school I am in charge, I am in authority. I have to control not only what is going on physically, but spiritually as well. As parents, we are to be in physical and spiritual control of our households. This isn’t easy. It is all too easy to give up and let the kids and the devil control. Or even worse, it is easy to let our flesh instead of God’s Spirit control. When that happens, we will pay a price that is far harder to pay than that effort of control.

Like I said earlier, these kids would come to school packing with them all kinds of spirits. For example, one young man was in a household where the family fought continuously.

That was their way of life. A spirit that brought this about in their lives controlled them. He would come in from a night of parents fighting with an attitude, and he would pack on his back this contentious, fighting spirit. I would begin to feel this contention when he walked in. I would discern through the Holy Ghost what was going on. God gives discernment to us to be able to tell what is going on in the spirit. (Hebrews 5:14, "But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.") I would take authority over this devil. Then I would get this boy to the side and talk to him. He would talk things out and it would be OK. What about those days when I was too busy to take authority? That was a different story. This young man wouldn't have to say anything or do a thing. The spirit on his shoulder would hop off on half a dozen other teens. We would have an all out argument or some kind of battle going on between them before the day was over.

Spirits often try to control us by causing us to have feelings that are detrimental to us. That is why we often call them spirits of contention, bitterness, fear, etc. If we allow our emotions, our natural feelings, to control us, instead of submitting to the Spirit of God in us, we will never be able to take spiritual authority. If we walk in the flesh, we cannot take authority over the spiritual. We won't even see it coming. If I had been walking in the flesh instead of taking authority, I would have been the one leading the wrestling match, fighting with everyone else. Also, if I had not taken spiritual authority before I took authority in the natural, things would have been different. I might have in the natural tried to talk to him, but before that spirit was bound that was harassing him; he would have been in no mood to talk. We would have argued, but nothing would have been accomplished. I had tried that before.

How can you apply all this to your life? First, you have to recognize the places where the devil is trying to control your life, just like I had to recognize where he was trying to get into the school. That is called discernment. It may be that he is trying to bring fear, bitterness, rebellion, depression, physical infirmities, financial difficulties, doubt and unbelief, or many other things in oppression against you. This will influence your everyday decisions, and your overall victory in God. How can you identify these spirits? Ask God to reveal them to you. Then listen when He tells you what to do. I have watched God show people where the devil was coming against them. They didn't obey and do what He told them to do. They weren't willing to walk in the Spirit, but they gave into their spoiled flesh. They weren't willing to take authority, and the devil controlled their lives, and often controlled the lives of those around them, whether they meant for this to happen or not. Also, the devil would control, because instead of taking spiritual authority, as they should, the devil would control them. Then they would bring into the midst of those around them these spirits that dominated their lives.

Here is one example. We had been through a struggle in our ministry, a time of testing. We'd had so many battles that there were a lot fewer victories. Miraculously, we were not only winning but also growing, and this type of battle often goes on sometimes in times of growth. In the middle of that time, I would start to pray. An overwhelming

confusion would come against my mind, and I couldn't concentrate enough to talk, let alone pray. I would also get an overwhelming feeling that there was no use to pray. I gave into this a few times more than I would like to admit. God showed me that it was a spirit coming against me to stop me from praying, because at this time, my prayers were very important, as were all of ours. I started talking to others in the ministry and found out that the devil was trying the same thing on them. Together we bound this devil and our prayers were loosed.

Another example, I have known many people who were called to do something for the Lord. The devil would bring a spirit of fear against them. They would become so afraid that they would not be able to do it. He would also bring a spirit of pride against them. They would start to be afraid that they would mess up in front of everyone. This really happened when we started getting into the TV ministry. We were all of us in our gospel group a little over-weight. The devil started putting a fear on us about being on TV. That nearly stopped us. The devil is smart. He will do everything that he can to stop anything that you have to do for the Lord. He will especially use your weaknesses against you, rubbing those in your face. Just remember that your weaknesses, when given to Jesus, can become your greatest strengths, in spite of the devil.

Another example, I was saved as a young person, but didn't learn enough to keep me. I grew up in a church where there was little teaching of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and how to walk in the Spirit. There was little teaching of how to take authority over the devil. When I went to college, I got into everything that there was to get into. I rebelled against everything at a time when rebellion was "the thing to do." A spirit of rebellion controlled my life. When I came back to the Lord, I had to overcome this. I had to learn quick how to walk in the Spirit to overcome. This spirit of rebellion meant to drag me back where I had come from. It had such a strong hold on me that if someone would tell me to do something, I would do the opposite and not mean to. At that time, over 20 some years ago, I started traveling with our ministry. Our pastor, Bishop Goad, gained my respect, which was a key to breaking this bondage in my life. He and his wife would spend hours talking with me. Then one day he did something that might seem a little strange. I had a favorite shirt. I loved to wear that shirt. The Lord showed the pastor to burn that shirt right in front of me. I didn't realize at the time what that shirt represented to me. It was my "hippy shirt". It represented this rebellious part of my life and my past. I was angry with him for burning my shirt, but at the same time, I respected him. I submitted to knowing that this needed to be done, especially after the Lord showed me that this was right. Whether I liked it or not, I submitted to this. Whether it was because I had allowed something from that part of my life to be destroyed, or because I had submitted to this, I'll never know. I do know that the bondage of rebellion that had controlled me for most of my life was broken. This was through a simple act of obedience that didn't in the natural make any sense at all.

Spirits can bind our lives and we may not recognize it. We have to walk close enough to God for Him to show us these. We have to walk in the spirit to be able to feel them when

they come around. Then we have to take authority. Sometimes we have to obey God to be able to break this bondage in our life. Do we have to fear what the devil can do? As an obedient, believing child of God—absolutely, positively not. Remember, God has not given us the spirit of fear but of love and power and a sound mind. Say it again. God has not given us the spirit of fear but love and power and a sound mind. Say it over and over until you have that in your spirit. You don't have to be afraid of the enemy. God has given you armor to wear to be able to overcome him.

Often is it our lack of knowledge that destroys us and makes us easy prey for the enemy. The Bible is the source of our knowledge. We as Christians often face the same problem in spiritual warfare. We look at ourselves in the natural. We see our weaknesses and failures. We fail to see ourselves in the way that God's Word tells us that we are. We fail to see our position in God according to His Word, and we fail to walk in the authority that is given to us because of that position. We also fail to recognize the devil's position. We fail to realize that according to God's Word, the devil's position is planted squarely underneath our heel. (Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.") Often we lose in our spiritual warfare because of our ignorance of God's Word. This may come because we have not been taught these things.

God's Word is filled with scriptures that tell us both our position in God and the devil's position as well. Here are some things that God tells us about who we are in Him.

1. I am a living Son of a living Savior. (I John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God....")
2. I am His inheritance destined to be one with Him as He is one with the Father. (John 17:21, "That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.")
3. My inheritance is to be able to do all the things He did on earth and more. We can not only receive our healing, but we can seek God that we be given the gift of healing which comes through His Spirit that dwells in us. (I Corinthians 12:4-11, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, which worketh all in all. But the manifestations of the Spirit are given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom: to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues;

to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.”)

4. I have the keys of death, hell, and the grave that were given to me by my elder brother. (Matthew 16:19, “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”)
5. I have a God given right to be victorious in my life. (I Corinthians 15:57, “But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”)
6. I have a right to be in health and prosper even as my soul prospers. (III John 2, “Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prosper.”)
7. We have victory over death. (I Corinthians 15:54, “...Death is swallowed up in victory.”)
8. I will **eternally** inherit the blessings of God. (John 5:24, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my Word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”)

We have to learn to see ourselves according to God’s Word. If we are committed, submitted, and obedient children of God, then these things are true. Read these things over again in a personal way putting your name in the verses. **I** (your name) am a Son of God. Read them all this way and believe them, because they are the Word of God and the Word of God cannot lie. Read them everyday. Read them when the devil brings doubt, confusion, and self doubt. Read them to him. God’s Word has a way of doing away with the devil’s lies.

We can spend all day looking at our weaknesses, our failures, our past, our sicknesses, our problems, and our flesh. It would be much better if we spend our time with our mind submitted in the Word of God remembering the verses that declare our victory and our rights as the children of God. We can spend all day looking at our weaknesses, or we can remember to submit these to Him so that He becomes our strength. (We have said this verse over and over, but here it is again. It is important enough to drill it into our spirits. II Corinthians 12:9-10 “And He (Jesus) said unto me, “My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.... for when I am weak, then am I strong.”) If we concentrate on our flesh and our weaknesses, we deny the power of the Word of God to work in us. We deny the Holy Ghost Who is inside us. We deny Jesus Christ, Who is our only hope of glory. (Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”) We need to stop

seeing our flesh, and start seeing Jesus in us. We need to stop concentrating on our weaknesses and begin to see the promises of God's Word. We need to know who we are in Him and stand up and claim our God given authority.

These things listed in the previous paragraph are not things that we can see in the natural. To accept the work of God's Word, and the things that it promises, we have to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. These are not things that are based on who and what we are in the natural, but who we are in the Spirit of God. They have little to do with who we are in the natural. We are required to be committed and submitted. We may be very imperfect. We may be just rising up from being the biggest failure in the world. That doesn't matter. If we are God's children, then we have a position in His great love. We have a position in His kingdom. This position comes with authority. Read this section of scripture found in Ephesians 1:17-23. Verses 22-23 summarize the section. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Condemnation and discouragement are two tools the devil often uses to come against us to cause us to lose authority. When we walk in the Spirit and we realize that our position and authority is based on who God is, not on who we are, then we move to a place where the devil can't control us with these. For more on how to walk in the Spirit, read my book titled *Walking in the Spirit*. All my books can be found online and downloaded and printed free on the website www.freechristianonlinebooks.com. Also, they can be ordered in hard copy on www.amazon.com.

Let's go back to my school situation. There were many days in my early teaching experience when I went home feeling like a complete failure, and to put it plainly, I had failed. Taking authority was hard for me to learn. I was kind of a timid person, and that doesn't match with taking authority in a classroom. But I didn't stop there. I kept trying. I learned and I overcame. I learned that I had authority and I learned to take it. No matter whether or not I had failed miserably, I learned that my authority didn't change. You have a position in God. Even when you are weak, discouraged, buffeted by the devil, and down and out, you still have a position in God and the authority that comes from that position. This authority comes from God's Word and it isn't based on how you feel about that situation, just as my authority didn't change as a teacher, whether I felt victorious as one, or not. Ask God to give you strength to rise against those things that are coming against you. Ask Him to help you to take the authority that is yours. Ask God to make your forehead to be like a flint rock and your backbone like a crowbar. (Ezekiel 3:8-9, "Behold, I have made thy face strong against their faces, and thy forehead strong against their foreheads. As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead...") Then rise up and take your authority as a child of God. God's Word tells you who you are and what authority you have in that position. That is not conditional to how you may feel about yourself. God's Word gives you the victory if you will take it. God's Word gives you authority, if you'll take authority and walk in it. It gives you armor to wear, if you will put it on and trust in its strength.

It is also through God's Word that we find satan's limitations. We have to learn how much he is allowed to get away with. If we don't, we will fear him and that in itself will give him power to destroy us. When I first started teaching, I was an elementary school teacher, but I taught in a school that actually had students in grades K-12. The older students intimidated me. Part of that was because I didn't know their rules. I didn't know what they were allowed to do and what they weren't allowed to do. Because of my ignorance of their rules and requirements, they would often get by. Sometimes we let the enemy do this. He gets by with things because we are ignorant of his devices, and because we don't know the rules. We don't know what he is allowed to get by with, and what he isn't. We don't know the boundaries that God has set for him.

The story of Job illustrates some of the boundaries satan has. Read this part of his story in the book of Job. In this story we know that the devil went before God. God told him, have you considered the faithfulness of my servant Job. The devil said, I have, but I can't do anything to shake him. You have put a hedge up and I can't reach him. God took down the hedge and allowed satan to try Job for a season. This part of the story is found in Job 1:6-12. When the season was over and Job had remained faithful, God restored and blessed and multiplied everything that he had lost. God limits what satan can do to us. In Job 1:10, satan himself said to God, "hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side..." The devil can only do so much to hinder us. God gives us power to overcome him. The only way he can destroy us is if we let him. In I John 2:14 we read, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning, I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you and ye have overcome the wicked one." Like Caleb said to the children of Israel in Numbers 13:30, "...Let us go up at once, and possess it (what God had given them) for we are well able to overcome it."

We have a hedge built around us. There is something here to consider, however. If we are not submitted and committed and walking in the Spirit, we may cross over that hedge and put ourselves in harms way and not even know we have done so. For example, there have been so many times in my life when regretfully, God nudged me to go here or not to go there, or to do this, or not to do that, and I failed to heed God's voice. When I disobeyed, I walked over that hedge that God had built around me. I walked over it and right into harms way.

If we are not in the habit of walking in the Spirit and obeying God, then we automatically walk right into the devil's territory. That is what comes when we walk in the flesh. Romans chapter 8 is a great chapter to read about walking in the flesh and the dangers that it brings. We can see clearly through this chapter that we cannot bind the devil if we are walking in the flesh. Our flesh will actually take the devil's side. Human nature would like to think that because God loves us, we could do whatever we want. We are protected by His love; that is true. His Word, however, tells us that disobedience will earn certain things. Study out those people in the Bible who walked in disobedience and contrast them to those who walked in obedience. Through this you can see that we must

walk in obedience to have a victorious and peaceful life. Those who obeyed God's voice and His Word walked in victory. Those who refused to do so suffered, and their life was filled with turmoil. For an example let's say that I as a teacher told my class to stay out of the four-lane highway because if they didn't, they would surely suffer bad consequences. Let's say that they refused to and went ahead and played there. What would probably be the result? Would they suffer because of their disobedience? Would it be my fault that they suffered? I had warned them.

God warns us. When we disobey, it isn't His fault that we suffer. Disobedience even nullifies, or does away with the promises that God gives us in His Word. It also takes away the authority that we have. For example let's go back to my early teaching days. If I had been a disobedient teacher, one that was breaking all the rules myself, would the students have listened when I tried to take authority over them? The devil recognizes whether or not we are obedient or disobedient. To walk in authority, we have to have a sound relationship with God, so that we are absolutely sure of our authority, and we have to have an obedient relationship with God so that the devil is absolutely sure of our authority. We have to know our position and our authority according to God's Word. We have to know the limitation that God has put on our enemy. We have to be sure that we don't fear our enemy. We have to put on our armor. And when all that is done, when we say devil you have to flee, then he has to flee.

We can triumph in this battle against the enemy. One of the things that help us to do this is our spiritual armor. Coming up. What about this armor? How can we put it on?

CHAPTER 4. PUTTING ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

We read about the whole armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-18. Get out your Bible and read this whole chapter to get a full understanding of this scripture. I have written out these verses in 10-18 here. “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” I guess that surely covers everything.

Paul knew about spiritual warfare. In II Corinthians 10:3-5 we read, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” He knew that this warfare was not after the flesh. Talk about warfare, he sure had that. Remember, he had persecuted the Christians for the Jews before his conversion delivering them up to be killed. When he crossed over, he had the Jews, the Romans (because he became such a church leader and Rome persecuted the church), and even the Christians at one time against him. He had a battle no matter where he turned. And talk about warfare with the devil. How many times have you read Paul’s words in the Word of God, and they strengthened you and instructed you. People for thousands of years have read those words. Think of the sermons that have been preached using his words found in the Bible. You think that the enemy persecutes you, can you imagine how he fought against Paul.

We get an idea of this when we read in II Corinthians 11:23-27. “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the

city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” Wow, we think that we go through battles. Compare it with this list. You may find out that you haven’t been through as much as you thought you had.

Yes, Paul knew about battles, but he also knew about spiritual warfare. He knew how to win. He knew about the victory. He wrote about it in Romans 8:35-39, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Yes, he definitely knew about the victory.

So when we read what Paul has written in Ephesians 6 about spiritual armor, we can know for certain that he knew what he was talking about. When we are being taught something, we need to know for certain that the teacher has experience in the area that he is teaching. When we are taking in information that can change our life, we need to be sure that the person who is giving us the information has had their life changed by this same information. I think that we can certainly say here that Paul is a true source of information for this. He knew about spiritual armor, and he taught about it.

We have established that this is something that we need to do, put on the whole armor of God. How do we put it on? We know that this isn’t a physical thing that we do. I have on the armor of God, but when you look at me, you don’t see it. Thank God it isn’t as heavy as the armor was in those days long ago. I didn’t have to wake up this morning and put on my top, skirt, shoes, and armor. Or did I? When I wake up in the morning, I long ago got in the habit of tuning in to God’s voice before I tune into anything else. I can’t say that we have an actual conversation always. Sometimes we do, but more often than not I just tune in my “spiritual antennae” to his channel. I ask Him for help for my day. I ask Him if there are any details that I need to take care of. I ask Him what particular task I need to do. For example, do you remember when I mentioned earlier about the young man that I led to the Lord through my sickness, and through his? When I tuned in to the Lord that morning, He reminded me about the conversation we had during the night when He told me that this young man was going to come into the office, and what I was to say. He did, I did, and God did. He was saved that day.

I work with young people. They come in with all kinds of problems. This is a hard world on young people. They need someone who has the right thing to say to talk to. They need someone who listens, and responds with the right answers. I don’t have all the right answers. I have counseled young people for over 25 years, and I still don’t have all

the answers. I do know Someone who does and if I tune in first thing in the morning, then I am tuned in all day, and I can give them the right answers as the Lord leads me. I have so many details with my job. I have to take care of the day's details as they come up, or I can pay for it for months. I can also mess up lives if I don't. God has to lead me in what details are important for now, and which I can leave for tomorrow. He does this. If I fail to tune in to Him, then things can get in a mess in a hurry. I have a job that is humanly impossible to do. I am thankful for that, because through this I have learned the importance of tuning into the Lord and obeying His voice. This is something that a lot of people never learn. That is why their life is in such a turmoil, and jumble. Everything that they touch is a mess. If we don't stop and tune in to the Lord and obey Him, then the devil will be right there to lead us, and we won't even know what is going on. He will lead us in the opposite direction than the one we need to go in, and it won't take long before we are headed for destruction. We have to walk in the Spirit instead of the flesh. That is the how we start putting on our armor.

To sum up what I am saying here, we have to consciously put on our armor. We have to start by tuning in to the Lord. We have to start by consciously deciding that today we are going to walk in the spirit and not in the flesh. Our armor is spiritual, so we have to walk in the spirit to be mindful of this armor. A good place in the scripture to read to be able to study what it means to walk in the Spirit is Romans chapter 8. We won't concentrate on this so much, but please go there and read this section. We have talked about how we need to walk in the Spirit in order to stand against the enemy. We have talked about how the armor of God has to be spiritual, not physical. In order to find victory over satan, we have to walk in the Spirit. To put on your armor, you must walk in the Spirit. To keep your armor intact, you have to walk in the Spirit. Tune into the Lord, and then put on your armor. You might want every day to go through the list of each part of the armor. Picture yourself putting each on. We are going to take each part and describe it and that will help you to put it on. Just for the sake of remembering each, here is the scripture again that lists them all. Let's talk about them each one in the chapters ahead.

Ephesians 6:10-18, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

CHAPTER 5. THE HELMET OF SALVATION

In our discussion of the armor of God, we are going to start at the top of our head and go down. The first piece of armor that we have when we do that is the helmet. This scripture lists it as the helmet of salvation. I am going to start there because it is the top piece, but also because I believe that it is the most crucial. Without salvation, all the other pieces of armor will not work. Matter of fact, if you don't have salvation, you don't have armor. The most important thing to address here in this chapter is the question, *what is salvation*. You may have been a pastor for 30 years, but you still need to read this chapter and learn. That may sound like a strange thing to say, but this is one area in which the devil has created so much confusion. There are a lot of people sitting on a church pew every Sunday who have no idea of what salvation means. I am not going to preach any particular doctrine to you here, but I am going to open up God's Word to you. I know that every denomination has its own idea of what salvation means, but I also know that there is only one truth and if we don't find it, then we won't make heaven our home. I am preaching to the preachers here for a minute. The most terrible torment there will be in hell will be for preachers and teachers who deceived the people they ministered to and failed to open up the truth to them. They will constantly see the faces of those they deceived knowing that they are in hell with them. It is time church that we lay down our denominational ideas, our preferences, our misconceptions, and we pick up the Word of God, and we seek God's face, and find out what salvation is all about. If we miss this issue, then we will miss it all. We will think that we are fine until the day when we see the Lord and He says depart from me, I never knew you.

You may think that you know all there is to know, but be willing to seek God's Spirit. Isn't it important to hear from Him what the truth is so that you can be sure that what you preach and teach is the truth? Isn't it important to seek Him so that you know what you believe is the truth? If after you read this, you have not changed in what you believe, then what have you lost? I am not asking that you listen to me and accept what I have to say, I am asking that you seek the Lord, seek the Holy Ghost, and find out what He has to say. Your soul may be at stake. When we allow this truth about salvation to be distorted by the enemy (and that is his main objective), we are standing on the sinking sand instead of on the solid rock foundation of Jesus. We need to be sure that we are walking in the truth. We need to seek the Lord and have a relationship with Him that is close enough where He can lead us into the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

I am not trying to tear your salvation away from you. I know that this is a tender area to talk about. So many people are being beaten up by the devil concerning their salvation. He will tell you a hundred times a day that you are not saved. He will tell you that you

don't know God, that God is over a hundred miles away. That is one of the enemies' tactics. Here in this chapter I want to talk to two groups. I want to explain salvation tenderly to those who may be going through this battle so that they are encouraged in their faith. For those who may be letting the enemy separate them from the Lord because of how he is distorting salvation, I want to offer you deliverance and freedom. I am also writing this chapter so that those who know the truth can be strengthened and encouraged in this. Also, when you read this chapter, it will give you an incentive to witness to others, and help in to do so. It will be a good witnessing tool.

Why is understanding salvation so important? Here is a good illustration. We have a food bank as part of our ministry where we serve food boxes to people in need. Bishop Goad recently came into the office and told us that he was going to put together a tract to put in the food boxes. He said the main ideas that we needed to cover in the tract were thoughts that the Lord had shown him. Most of the people who are in the food line are there because of lack of knowledge of God, His ways, and salvation. They have allowed habits, addictions, and lifestyles that are a mess to steal from them to the point that they aren't even able to provide themselves and their families with the basic need of food. He said that the Lord had shown him that we needed to instruct them in what salvation means, and tell them how that can change their life. This is so true. It is easy to preach salvation to them, but not teach them what it is and how that can change their life. That doesn't work.

I don't know if it is just because they are coming to a church to get food, but nearly everybody who comes in puts on what I call their religious ways. They may come in so high they don't know they are in the world, but they will talk about how they love the Lord. They may come in cussing with one breath, but talking about the Lord with the other. The Bible says that bitter and sweet water don't run from the same fountain. James 3:10 and 11 says, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?" At first I would shake my head and think they were lying. But through the years of working with this I have become convinced that they think that they are saved, that they are fine with the Lord. That is what makes this all so sad. They will talk about how much they pray. They don't show any evidence of the Lord answering their prayers. They may be trying to walk with the Lord, but have no idea of what that means. Their ignorance of the truth is destroying their lives. I would like to say that you only see this in food bank lines, but sad to say I also see it on the church pew in many churches. That is why it is so important to find out what salvation is, then teach and preach it. Don't assume that everyone around you knows what salvation means just because they have been in church for 30 years. I have seen far too many who didn't know.

Here are some more examples of what I am talking about. We live in a mixed up world. Wrong is made to seem right and right is made to seem wrong. The Bible talks about an "untoward generation", a backward generation. Here are some examples. I see people

who constantly smell like cigarettes and liquor. They can't open their mouth without cussing. But if you mention God to them, they quickly turn religious and talk about how they pray and how God is there for them. I know people who live like the devil, but if something goes wrong, they right away start praying and expect God to be there for them. They don't commit a thing to do it God's way, but expect Him to commit to them. I know a guy who everybody said was the best. He loved people. He constantly was doing things to help them. He was an all around good fellow. But he never acknowledged Jesus as His Savior. When he died everybody talked about how surely he went to heaven. I know a guy who used to sing in bars. He says that most nights in some of the nightclubs they would end with people requesting Gospel music. I guess it was because when everybody got drunk by the end of the night they would get more and more guilty feeling, so they would start singing Gospel music. What about all these people that we talked about in this paragraph? Were they saved? When they die, if they don't change anything in their lives, will they go to heaven? Do they have salvation for real?

You see if your understanding is wrong about salvation, then you don't know what you have in your "salvation package". Without understanding, you are easy prey for the enemy who wants to steal from you. Without understanding salvation, your mind can get messed up with wrong ideas that lead you wrong. One example is this. We know from God's Word that salvation is not based in our feelings, but in faith. I see so many people who get saved. Then the emotional high wears off a little, and they think that they have lost their salvation, because they no longer feel saved. They didn't have understanding to know that it takes a lot more than that for them to lose their salvation. Their lack of understanding what salvation is all about allowed the enemy to steal it away from them. You need to understand what salvation is all about. As pastors and teachers you need to understand how to explain salvation, and the importance of doing so. How can you do that, if you really don't understand yourself? Maybe these people we talked about in the last paragraph really see themselves as being saved because they don't understand what salvation means. This makes their battle all the harder. They can't overcome these habits and they may even wonder why God isn't there to help them. They may start, then stop out of despair, then start, then stop. What a hard way to live. All the while they may be thinking that they have all of salvation and God that there is.

The Lord showed me something that has helped me understand people and salvation (and many other things that the He has for us). I am simple. The Lord knows that about me, so a lot of times to keep from confusing me, He shows me pictures to explain things that He is trying to get across to me. He showed me some people crawling around on the floor. They were picking up crumbs. They were so excited over those crumbs on the floor. Someone would find a little bigger crumb, and they would boast about what they had found. The sad thing about this picture was this. The Lord shifted my view from those people on the floor to just over their head. They were crawling around on the floor under a huge banquet table that was spread with a wonderful feast more with more food than they could ever imagine. All they had to do was to pull to see what was over their head. All they had to do was pull up a chair and feast. They were too busy settling for

the crumbs to do that. I believe that is how a lot of people do salvation. They have a table full of wonderful things, but instead of feasting on that, they crawl around on the floor and settle for crumbs. They don't find out about the blessings and all the wonderful things that salvation brings them, and they settle for crumbs instead of feasting on all the wondrous things. They continue to stay bound in things God can deliver them from. They continue to accept the bondages that the enemy has them in. They settle for halfway.

Why do I think that this happens to people? I believe there are two reasons why this happens. The first is that they are ignorant of the existence of the table. They don't know it is there. They don't know the truth about all that salvation can bring. That is why we decided to start putting the tracts in the food boxes. Sad to say, I know people who have been to church for years who do not know what salvation means in its fullest sense. They don't know about the banquet table. Why? Because their pastors and teachers didn't know and they weren't opening up their eyes to see it. Also, the enemy tries to blind us from seeing the truth. It takes anointed ministers, teachers, and pastors to be able to declare the Word of God in a way powerful enough to break through the bondages of the enemy that we have around us keeping us from seeing what salvation is all about. Sad to say most preachers and teachers aren't anointed and don't even know what that means. Also, most people don't pick up their Bible and ask the Lord to reveal the truth to them. They just want to receive what is being handed them, and that is all. They don't want to put a priority on reading and studying their Bible. When they read it, they read what they want to read, and leave out the rest. I am convinced that a lot of people only have about 10 pages in their Bible because they totally ignore the rest. We have to, as the saying goes, have the whole truth and nothing but the truth to be able to see what salvation is all about. So when people's pastors and teachers fail to give them the whole truth, they aren't getting it because they aren't seeking God for the truth themselves.

Another reason why people fail to pull up to the banquet table is because it requires effort. It requires commitment. It requires setting priorities in their life. When you serve the Lord for real, you have to give up your self-will and let Him become Lord of your life. Jesus says this about Himself in John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." You see that is what salvation is all about. Salvation is about having a relationship with Jesus that is real. Salvation is not a thing we have, but it is a relationship with the Lord. It is an everyday experience. You can't pick it up when you need it and lay it down when it is uncomfortable. When you have a relationship with the Lord, it will change you, especially one with the Lord. A relationship with anyone demands commitment and sacrifice. Love demands that. A relationship with the Lord of All demands that we seek His will instead of our own. It demands that we lay down the things that are destroying us. Isn't that what love demands? It demands that we consider what He wants for us before we consider our own will because after all He is Lord of all and knows what He is doing. He can lead us to great things, if we will just lay down our self-will enough to follow Him. That is another reason why I believe that people fail to pull themselves up to

the banquet table. They would rather crawl around on the floor and settle for the crumbs instead of giving up things that are destroying them, things that are just empty ways and counterfeit treasures. Isn't that sad? What about you? Are you settling for the crumbs because salvation demands something of you?

Where am I getting all this? Let's read a section of scripture in Matthew 7:21-27. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. "

I believe that this section of scripture is going to change lives. Why do I think so? Because the devil really fought me being able to get this scripture into this book. It took me 3 days looking several times each day to find this scripture. It is a scripture that I use lots, but this time, I couldn't find it in the Bible, or in three concordances looking up every word in the verse. I am not good at remembering scripture references where things are located. So I use concordances a lot. It was like this scripture vanished out of my concordances. I was almost convinced that I needed to give up and go on and forget using this because it wasn't really there, it was just something that I had in my mind. I finally prayed through this battle and opened up the concordance, and it almost leaped off the page at me. That is another reason why a lot of people fail to get to the full knowledge of the truth of what salvation is all about. They have an enemy who is camped against them to keep them from the Word of God and having it revealed to them.

Lets go back to that scripture in Matthew 7:21-27. This is a key to explaining what salvation is all about. We see here that the Lord tells us that not every one who calls Him Lord will enter into heaven. The Bible tell us that the devil knows Him and calls Him Lord. We can know all about Him and still miss heaven. In verse 21 we see one key to understanding salvation. Jesus says that the ones who enter into heaven are the ones who do the will of His Father, which is in heaven. I know a lot of people who do a lot of things to get into heaven. They are doing so much and so frantic about doing these things that it almost drives them crazy. They are doing it all except they are not doing the things that the Lord is directing them to do. They are leaving out the will of God. To find the will of God, we have to first lay down old flesh and self will. We have to give up what we want, and we have to do His will. To do that we have to be able to hear what it is that He wants. To know what someone wants us to do, to follow someone, we have to get a

relationship with him or her. That is the second key that we find in this scripture to unlock the meaning of salvation.

Here in this scripture we meet some people who are very busy. They are casting out devils and doing many wonderful works. Sounds like they have it all, and that they are going to be blessed people because of all that they are doing. Then we read in verse 23 what Jesus says about all they are doing. He says "I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity". Wow. That isn't the kind of reaction in the natural that you would expect to receive after doing all that. The key to it all is found in four little words in this scripture. He told them to depart from Him because HE NEVER KNEW THEM. You see, they were doing all kinds of things, but they never found a relationship with Jesus that was real. They never knew Him. They were doing it all for wrong motives, because if you don't do it out of love then the Bible says that it is just like tinkling brass and sounding cymbals, just a lot of noise.

To find what God wants us to do, we have to submit our will to Him and yield to Him. To do that for real, we have to fall in love with Him, and with Jesus. Love is what enables us to yield our will. When we love someone with all our heart, we are willing to give in for their good. Old self will is so strong. It isn't easy to give that up. If you want to give that up, you have to fall in love with Jesus. Those people in the last paragraph were doing their own thing even though they thought it was what God wanted. They were proud of all they were doing. They just hadn't bothered to get to know Him enough to find out. They were doing what they thought He wanted them to do instead of getting to know Him enough to find out what He wanted them to do. That is the key to unlocking salvation. It is a relationship with a Savior who loved us enough to die for us. It is a relationship with God who loved us enough to send His only Son to die on the cross for us to be saved. If we fail to have a relationship with God, then we will find our lives have been built on sinking sand instead of on the rock of Jesus. We may not know this until the winds and waves of the storms of life blow, and the house of our life falls in ruins.

Salvation starts with Calvary, and Calvary is all about love. We have memorized John 3:16, but few of us really hear its words. That is because we just read that one verse and don't continue on to the rest. Verse 16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Let's keep going on to verse 21, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." We see in John 3:16 that salvation comes because of love. Then we see because of that love, we

don't have to be condemned. But then on in that verse we see that the ones who are condemned are the ones who have not believed in the Son of God. Who are the people who will not be saved? They are the ones who did not believe.

We can say we believe, but we can say anything. It isn't what we profess. It is what we possess. What is the condemnation that comes when we don't believe? This tells us that when light came into the world men loved darkness rather than light because they were doing evil. There were many who hated light because they would rather do things that were evil. They didn't want to go to the light because they might be reproved for their deeds. If you are of the truth, this scripture says, you will run to the light. Why do so many people run from a relationship with the Lord that is real? Because they would rather sin than have the truth. Boy, isn't that sad. God loves us enough to send His only son to die for us. He loves us enough to want the best for us, and He is smart enough to know what is best. After all, He has been around for forever. We aren't willing to give up our will and our sin enough to feast at the banquet that He has spread for us. Instead, we would rather crawl around on the floor picking up those crumbs. The Bible says that if we stay down there, we won't enter into heaven. We may think we will. We may pretend we will. We may convince ourselves that we are the greatest people in God's kingdom. But if we aren't laying down our sin and our will enough to commit to a relationship with God that is real, then we will bust hell wide open. Who says? I didn't say all this. You read it in God's Word.

I think that one of the main issues that is dividing the church today is the issue of salvation. Why? That is where it all starts. Why are there so many views of this today? People want to do what they want to do. They want it to be convenient. They don't want salvation to require any kind of change, or any kind of commitment. It is easy, they think, to believe that no matter what you do you can still go to heaven even if you sin willfully. There is nothing that is worth giving up heaven and going to hell for. No matter what you believe, you need to find out the truth about this. The Bible says in Hebrews 10:24 and 26, "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." What is this saying? We need to provoke and encourage one another to do good works and to stay away from sin, because if we willfully continue to sin after we know better then there is no more sacrifice, no forgiveness for that sin.

This kind of teaching isn't popular. It isn't popular to tell people to stay away from sin. It is popular to wink at sin, and say that it isn't right to judge people for their choices. It is popular to be politically correct and run away from telling the truth about sin. It is popular to take all commitment out of salvation. It is popular to tell people that to make a priority in serving God is overdoing things, that it is being fanatical. It is popular to say that anything goes, because God loves you and because of that it is fine to do what you want. It is popular to preach and teach that it is wrong to discriminate against sin. Isn't that what the world demands? But is it the truth? It is popular to tell everyone that there isn't anything wrong with gay marriages until one of our children, or a loved one comes

home and announces that they have aides. It is popular to tell everyone that we don't need to discriminate against someone else's faith and life styles until we begin to see the sorrow that this life style or belief had caused and we realize that we had the truth that would have turned this person's life around, but we failed to give it to them. What is wrong with the world? The world has no hope until the church can get it right. When the world looks at the church and sees a hopeless mess, why should they want to find out the truth?

There is one truth and His name is Jesus. There is one truth and it is found in God's Word. Sure it is open to interpretation, but let's get to know the author well enough so that He can interpret it to us. That is what the Holy Ghost is for. John 16:13 says, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." If you want to know the truth, be willing to seek the Holy Ghost. Don't go to your denominational headquarters, but go to God. Don't go to your pastor or overseer, but go to God. Dare to find out the truth.

In everything in God's Word there is a balance. We have to be sure that we aren't convinced that is OK to sin. But we also can't let the enemy condemn us over every thing that we do to the point that we think that salvation is beyond our reach. I have known several people who put off being saved because they thought that they couldn't do it. They were convinced that if they couldn't stay saved. They were convinced that if they got saved, and they messed up or made a mistake, that they would be cast away from God for forever. I have known people who were convinced that they had blasphemed the Holy Ghost and could never be saved, because they had messed up. Remember, this thing is a relationship with God. If your child messes up and does something wrong, do you stop loving them? Do you cast them out of your presence because they have disobeyed? Or do you continue to love them? Why do you have those rules, those things that you desire them to do? Is it because you want them to mess up so that you can put them out, or is it because you love them enough to want the very best for them? You have heard of tough love. Tough love is the kind of parent's love where you demand better of them. If you don't, then they will break your heart one day because you gave into them, and they always got their way. Their way isn't the best. Isn't this just like our heavenly Father? He isn't a pushover. He demands our best. I am so glad that He does. Why does He do this? Isn't it called love?

I remember one time overhearing a conversation between two teens. The girl was talking about how her mom doesn't love her because she wouldn't let her do what she wanted to. She wanted to go somewhere that had a potential to turn into a bad situation, and her mother wouldn't let her go. She made the comment that she knew her mom didn't love her because she wouldn't let her go to this event, and it seemed so important to this girl at the time. A boy sat listening to her. Finally he jumped up and in anger had some things to say about all this. I will never forget his words to her. He said, "I have been almost on my own for most of my life. My mother doesn't know where I am and doesn't care. She

knows that I am on drugs, but doesn't care enough to help. She doesn't know if I am OK or not, alive or dead, and she is too busy with her own life to want to know. Don't complain to me about a parent who loves you enough to try to keep you away from trouble. Don't complain to me about a parent who won't let you do what you want to do because they love you enough to stop you. I don't want to ever hear you talk bad about that any more." Wow. There is a lot of truth in that. Sometimes we as Christians are like that girl. We complain and get bent out of shape because we want to do what we want to do, and we feel that God restricts that. We are just like spoiled kids wanting our way even when our way is heading for disaster on a one-way street. Like this teenage girl, we are too stupid most of the time to see what is ahead of us, and to realize the pain that is ahead if we don't change our ways. We want to do what we want to do and we will make every excuse we can to be able to do it. We will even change God's Word to make it seem OK to do what we want. We totally disregard His love and His wisdom. When He says don't, don't. He loves you enough to set those boundaries. Don't be fooled into thinking that it is fine. Don't be like the teen that wanted her own way. There has been more than one teen that has bounded on past the loving rules of her parents. There has been more than one teen that ran on past those rules just to die. Don't run past God's love. Your death could be spiritual death, and that is far worse than a physical death.

Sure sometimes it is tough. God doesn't let us get by, just like you parents who love your children enough to demand their best. It isn't about rules and regulations to keep us away from His love. Those rules draw us to His love and keep us in that love. He doesn't cast us away because we aren't perfect. He begins to perfect Himself in us through His Spirit. He comes inside our hearts and from there begins to perfect us, and work in us. We can't do it by ourselves. We will mess up. That is why He had to send His Son to die for our sin, because He knew we would sin. He doesn't leave us there, though. He begins a work in us. We are His workmanship. We have to allow Him to do this. We have to open our heart and our life. We have to yield to His Spirit. We have to put our will on hold, and obey Him. We have to let His Spirit fill us up so that we have more of Him than we have of us. We have to love Him enough to let Him do this work in us. All this is what salvation is all about.

Sure we will mess up as we go along. It is the motive behind these mistakes and what we do with them that counts. If we continue to sin willfully with the attitude that we are going to do what we want to do, and the Lord has to forgive us and live with it, is that the right thing to do? If we have that attitude and continue in that attitude, what kind of life will we have? Will it be one that is filled with all the blessings of salvation? If after we sin, we harden our heart and fail to confess our sin and repent of it, is that what we need to do? What does repent mean? It means that we are sorry for what we have done--so sorry that we have disappointed the one who loves us so much that we will never do that same thing again with His help. That is what love is all about. God doesn't want us to stay in our sin. He makes a way to bring us out of it bringing us into victory. If you are an alcoholic, God doesn't want you to get saved and stay in your addiction, you are too precious to Him. He will deliver you and help you stay free. How do I know? I was an

alcoholic. I am glad that God didn't love me and leave me there. He set me free. I had to want to. I had to let Him. But I have been free for over 40 years. If you are an addict, God doesn't want you to get saved and stay in your addiction, you are too precious to Him. He will deliver you and set you up on a high place, and don't mean high on drugs. If you are gay, or a homosexual, God doesn't want you to get saved and stay in a lifestyle that can destroy you, you are too precious to Him. He can deliver you if you will only admit that you need deliverance. If you are a sinner, like all of us were before you came to the Lord, God doesn't want you to get saved and stay in your sin, you are too precious to Him. Let's get real with God, get in His Word and find out what kind of baggage that we need to lie down, and let Him deliver us from it.

Now when you first start out serving the Lord it is a lot like being a baby. We will mess up. We will fall down. Just like when a baby starts learning to walk. When we fall down, we have to get back up and try again. I know a baby who learned to walk really late, because she had a bad fall and she was afraid to get back up and try to walk again. I know people who do the same as new Christians. They fall and mess up, and they are afraid to try again. All the while God is waiting with His great love to welcome them back home.

Jesus tells the story of the Prodigal son to explain His father's love for those who fail. It is found in Luke 15:11-32. Please get out your Bible and read this story. I am not going to write it all out, but I am going to summarize it here. A son went to his father. He told him that he was ready to get out on his own and to see the world. He wanted his inheritance so that he would be able to do this. I get the feeling that he wanted to do his own thing for a while, instead of doing his Dad's thing. Well, he did just that. He started out having a good old time. Lots of partying, lots of so called friends, lots of things that he called fun, but they were things that were eating away at his soul, his health, and his life. Soon his money ran out. When his money left, his so called friends left. Eventually it says that he got a job feeding the pigs. He found himself so hungry that he ate the pig slop with the pigs. That is when he finally got real with himself. Sometimes we will put up with our sin until we find ourselves eating slop. The world has a lot of slop. It calls it fun, it calls it great because everyone is doing it, it calls it OK because whatever we want to do is fine, it calls it good because we shouldn't discriminate against someone because their lifestyle is different, it calls it enlightening because we shouldn't let anyone restrict what we do, it calls it all kinds of things, but it is still slop. It will eventually destroy you and your life if you don't get out of it. When he found himself eating slop, he knew he wanted out of it. He thought that if he went home and told his father that he just wanted to be a servant in his house, he would at least eat good stuff. He headed home. As he got close to the hills of home, he saw someone standing on the hills outside his home. It was his father. Now his father had no way to know that he was on his way home. Remember, this was before the days of cell phones. Why was he there? He had been going there every day waiting for his son to come home. When he got there, there was a huge celebration. His father restored him to the full rights of being his son. Why? Because he

loved his son. Will God cast you away when you mess up? You know the answer to this from this story.

There are some keys to this story that we need to see. The son had to realize that he didn't want the slop of the world and he had to go home for his father to restore him. If he had stayed in the pigpen making excuses for being there, he would never have gone home. We have to admit that we are sinning. We have to get tired of it and turn away from it to head home. Then we have to believe that our father will receive us, or we won't have the courage to go start toward home. Then we have to do it. If we put off going home until the day we die, we won't go to heaven, no matter what our good intentions are. Most of the people in hell will admit that they have put off making things right with their father until it was too late.

Are there people who will go so far in their sin that the Lord will not let them return? Yes, there is one unpardonable sin, blaspheming the Holy Ghost. I believe that happens when you continually ignore the Holy Ghost when he convicts you of your sin. I believe that this comes when you continually make excuses for your sin until you come to the place where you no longer hear God's voice. You shut yourself away from His conviction when He is dealing with your heart to come out of the sin you are in. When you do that, you put yourself beyond God's reach. John 20:23 tells us, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained". We have to make up our mind Who we want to serve. We can't act like the world and say we are God's children. It doesn't work that way. Revelations 3:15-16 tells us how Jesus feels about people who are neither cold or hot, but they keep things in the middle of the road, trying to have it both ways. He says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Let's just think a little about what it means to be saved. As a teacher I try to ask all the students who come into the school if they have been saved. When I ask that question, I get a lot of answers. Some are a little strange. Some look at me and say, saved from what? That is a good question. What are we saved from? We are saved from spending eternity in hell. But there is a lot more. We are saved from a lot of things. One thing that we are saved from is loneliness. Loneliness drives a lot of young people (and old) into doing stupid things just to have friends. Have you ever been there? Loneliness drives us into doing anything just so we can fit into a crowd. Who cares what the crowd is doing, just as long as we fit in. When I first got saved, one of the things that I noticed right away was that my loneliness was gone. God is the best friend you can ever have. He is always there. He knows you better than anyone else can, and loves you like you are. He sees all your weaknesses and still loves you. The Bible says that we are precious to Him. We are loved. Jeremiah 31:3 says, "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee." God loves you with an everlasting love. We get a glimpse of how great that love for us is when we read John 17. Please read this whole chapter. This is

the prayer that the Lord prayed when He was praying in the garden before they came to take him to the cross. Some of my favorite verses are verses 20-23. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” This is a glimpse of what salvation is all about. How much does God love you? When you read these verses you know that in order to answer that question, you have to think about how much He loved Jesus, His only begotten Son? He loves us the same as He loved Him. He loved us enough to send His only Son to die for you.

I don't understand how Jesus did all that, but that doesn't change the fact that He did it. I don't understand exactly all of the reason why it had to be that way; I just know that it did. I don't understand everything there is to know about God, because God is a whole lot bigger than I am. God is a whole lot smarter than me, and He has been around for forever. I do know that for most of my life, He has walked with me every day, keeping me, guiding me, strengthening me, making the rough places smooth, loving me when it seemed like no one else was there, being the best friend that I could have, keeping me straight when I needed Him to. Still I don't understand all there is to know about God. He is that big. We may not understand it all. That is what faith is all about. Faith is taking Him at His Word and accepting what He says, and what He has done as true. I don't understand why He would love me as much as He does, but that doesn't change the fact that He does. We even have to take His love by faith. He says it is so and that settles it. That is what faith is. Faith is taking God at His Word even when we don't understand how it could be that way. We will talk more in a chapter coming up about our shield of faith. Salvation works by faith, by taking God at His Word.

If you have been saved, let's talk about when we first got saved. I want to do this just so you can remember what this was like for you. This will encourage your relationship with the Lord. It will also help you as you lead new converts to the Lord. Lets talk about what happened when we first got saved. Before we get saved, God starts dealing with our heart. What does that mean? He starts showing us that He is real. He starts showing us that we are doing wrong. The Bible says that we are all so bad that we really can't naturally by ourselves do anything good. Just naturally, on our own, if God doesn't show us what is right and what is wrong, then we can't know it on our own. It isn't in our nature to know the difference. It is our nature to want it our way. It is our nature to make excuses for the wrong we do so that we can keep on doing it. Doing things our way won't give us a peaceful victorious live on earth, and it certainly won't lead us to heaven. God shows us what is wrong when He convicts us. Then He starts leading us to give our heart and our life to Him. We start to feel His love. Somebody will say something about Him, and we start to feel lonely for Him. We start to want to have His help in our lives. Then we might be at church or talking to one of His children, or just lying by ourselves in

bed at night and it happens. We start to feel God's presence. We feel His love just like He is there drawing us, wrapping His arms around us. Nobody has to tell us He is real because we feel Him there with us. We may start to cry. We know that He is asking us to make a decision to give our heart and life to Him. We do. We say yes. We pray, God I give you my heart and life. We ask Him to come into our heart. We confess our sin and repent. We tell Him that we are sorry. Our heart breaks because we can feel His love and we are sorry that we ever hurt Him by doing wrong. Then we ask Him to forgive us. Maybe we remember John 3:16. We know He will forgive us if we ask. Then we feel a load lift up off us. We know somehow that we have been washed clean from the inside out. We feel His love in a mighty way and we know that we are forgiven. We ask Him to come into our heart, and we know that He does. His Spirit comes inside of us. We feel different-new and changed. And we aren't lonely any more.

We don't have that empty feeling inside of us any longer. We know that we are loved with a great love-the greatest love we could ever find. We know that we are precious in His eyes. We become God's own children. We are special. We fit into a crowd that is the best crowd that anyone could ever belong to, God's family. It doesn't matter after that what anyone thinks about us or says about us. It doesn't change how we feel about ourselves. We are loved. No we aren't perfect. No matter. That doesn't change His love. God's love will love us like we are, but it is a love that will change us. There is a little song that says, "He's still working on me. To make me what I ought to be". That is how we are. We are a work in progress. We can be proud of who we are, even if we know we aren't perfect, because we know that God is working on the things that aren't perfect if we yield to Him and let Him, and we are willing to do it His way.

Another thing that we are saved from is hopelessness. We don't have to be hopeless. God is our Father. He spoke and made the whole world. He made it right. It is a mess because we messed it up. If He can speak and create the whole world, then we know that He can take care of us. No matter how big your problems seem, or how bad the world seems, you have hope that things will turn out better. Romans 8:28 tells us, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." You might go through bad things, but even those will be turned into good. The Bible says plainly that you don't have to be afraid. You don't have to worry. 366 times in the Word of God it says to "fear not". If I look at the world and all the bad situations my heart will fail me with fear. If I concentrate on all the bad things around me, I will feel bad all the time. Some people actually are sick because all they think of all the time is the bad things around them. If I think on things that cause me to be afraid all the time, I will have panic attacks and health problems. If I think about God and his Word, His love and His promises to me, I will be all right. No fear.

Another thing that we are saved from is having no direction. The people who have a purpose for their lives are the ones who stay out of trouble. Their life and their future is valuable, so they try not to do stupid things to mess them up. They are swimming strong, heading in a definite direction. They don't get pulled down as easily as the drifters.

When you are saved, you get a new direction for your life. God calls us according to a purpose. He creates us with that special purpose in mind. He works on us getting us ready for that purpose. Yes, God calls preachers, evangelists, missionaries, singers, songwriters, people who work in churches and ministries. But He also calls teachers, mechanics, dentists, accountants, computer specialists, and more. This world is full of people without God who have no hope or purpose for their lives. Because of this, it is filled with people who don't know right and wrong. They don't care. When they do their jobs, they do them poorly. Because they don't know right from wrong, you can't trust them to be honest. Where would we be without Christian workers doing their jobs in the world? Find out God's purpose for your life. You have a reason to be alive.

God also saves us from failure. We talked about how in the last paragraph some people give up because they fail so many times that they are afraid to try. When God comes into your heart, and helps you, you no longer have to be afraid to try. He gives you the strength to make it. We can't face life on our own. It is impossible. We can't overcome all there is to overcome on our own. We will fail, time and time and time again. But with God, when we fail, He will pick us up. When we keep trying, we will get it right, with His help. We don't have to stay a failure. He comes inside of us to help us through His Spirit. He enables us.

God also saves us from ourselves. I was a mess when I came to God. I had been saved when I was in the 6th grade. But when I was in college I left everything I had learned about God and headed out to find out what the big, bad world was all about. It didn't take long for me to wreck my life. I was an alcoholic by the time I was in my 20's. I was a reject from the 60's. I had tried every kind of drugs there were to try. I had done all the sinning there was to do until I was a total wreck. Like I said earlier, I had been saved when I was in the 6th grade. I knew right from wrong. My parents had taught me. I read the Bible when I was young. I went to church. Then one day I decided I was tired of being good. I wanted to know what it was like to be bad. I found out. It only took me a few years to wreck my life to the place that I couldn't fix it. I didn't care about anything because I had messed up for so long that I thought there was no hope for me. I am thankful that God kept me safe and kept me alive because I know that without a doubt if I had died in those days, I would have gone to hell. Then God opened up my eyes so that I could see again. He started dealing with me about coming back home to His love where I belonged. When He saved me, He saved me from myself. Every day He saves me from myself. At my best, I am a mess. As a whole, I am special. Why? Because of Jesus in my heart and life, because of God's Spirit working in me. Because of God's Word in my mind leading me. Because of God's victory at work in me. Every day, He saves me from myself.

God saves us from our sins. We are forgiven. The bad that we have done in our past can no longer touch us unless we let it. We are made new. The Bible says that you are a new creature in Christ. Our past is gone. Who we were is gone. Our past sin has been thrown into the sea to be remembered no more. I had a lot of baggage with me from my life of

sin. I had a lot of battle scars. When God saved me, it took a while for me to lose these. For me to accept God's love for real, I had to get rid of these. I had to be delivered from these before I could accept love because they hindered me from being able to accept it. God had to shake this stuff out of me. I am reminded of a little boy who was kind of simple. He had gotten saved in a youth meeting. I asked him how he felt. He answered, "I kind of feel like Jell-O, all light. I feel like someone took me by the heels and shook me upside down and got all the dirt out." God will get out all the dirt. We can be saved from our sin, if we just let Him.

I always try to ask people if they have been saved. I do this because I know who I was when He saved me. I don't want them to go through things I went through. When I ask people this, I get all kinds of answers. Some people tell me that they know they are saved because they go to church. The Bible tells us there is only one way to heaven and that is by having a real relationship with God. It is important to go to church. The Bible tells us to do that. It strengthens us. It puts us in the middle of the right crowd, and we need that. But church can't save us. We have to be forgiven, to ask Jesus to come into our heart, and then we have to serve Him with our whole heart. Jesus says in John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Then in verse 15 He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." How many people do you know that go to church on Sunday, and go out during the week and act like the devil, cussing, drinking, smoking, partying, and doing whatever. Then they go back to church on Sunday. Do they really know Jesus? Do they really love Him? Are they keeping His commandments? Are they really saved? Going to church can't save you. It can help keep you, but it can't save you.

Some people say that they are saved because they don't drink or party. They say that they are a good person and go to church, and because of that they are saved. We have already read enough to know how that doesn't make us saved. We can't be good enough on our own. The Bible says that our righteousness, the best we have, is filthy rags in the site of a most holy, perfect God. In other words, we can't be good enough. That is why Jesus, the only perfect one, had to die for our sin so that we could be forgiven.

Some say that because they are baptized they are saved. The Bible tells us that accepting Jesus is the only way to be saved. Being baptized can't save us. Baptism is something that you do to show people that you have been saved and forgiven of your sins. We are baptized because it represents that we have been saved and made new. The water doesn't save us or make us new. The blood of Jesus shed on Calvary, and our accepting it and the forgiveness that it brings is what saves us. If we are a sinner when we go down into the water at our baptism, and we haven't accepted Jesus as our savior, and we don't have a relationship with Him that is real, then when we come out of that water we are still a sinner. We are just a wet sinner.

You can be saved. You can know that you are saved. Some young people, and old, tell me that they don't know if they are saved or not. There are some denominations that

teach that you can't ever know if you are saved. You won't know that until you get to heaven, if you happen to make it. Even if other denominations don't teach this, there are still a lot of Christians that feel this way. One of the reasons that they do is because of the devil whose main job is to make sure that we doubt our salvation.

Make up your mind. Commit your heart to the Lord. God will meet you more than halfway. If when you read this chapter you feel Him dealing with your heart, don't turn Him away. If you feel Him talking to you in your heart, if you feel His conviction, don't shove it away or ignore it. It is precious. If you haven't been saved, don't ignore that feeling that He is knocking on your heart's door. Open wide your heart. Let Him in. If you have been saved, and you feel His conviction, that feeling that lets you know that you are not where you should be in your relationship with Him, that you are doing things or having attitudes that aren't according to the best that you can be in Him, don't run from Him. Repent. Ask for His forgiveness. Ask Him to help you change through the power of His Spirit that is in your heart. He loves you so much and you need that love more than you'll ever know. Run to Him. I know that He will be there. If you feel that you don't know whether or not you are saved, then I know one way to find out so that you can stop the devil's lies. Rededicate your life to God. It is kind of like when married couples have gotten divided from one another's love, and they reunite. They will often have another wedding ceremony to celebrate their finding one another's love again. Rededicate your heart to the Lord. Get saved again. That will shut the devil and your own doubt up. Reaffirm your love for God, and reestablish in your mind his love for you.

To sum it all up, when we are saved, we acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God. We acknowledge our need for salvation. We repent because God's Spirit is dealing with our hearts, leading us to him. Then we ask Jesus to come into our heart. The Holy Spirit, a part of God, comes into our heart to live. We were created to house Him. We are created to have a place in us where God's Spirit can live. Sounds fantastic, but that doesn't mean that it isn't true. Before we are saved, we have an empty place that is inside of us. When we are saved, God's Spirit comes in and we are no longer empty. When He comes into our hearts there is a change. God wipes us clean. I have known people to lose years off their faces, even their looks changed. When God changed their life through salvation, years of hard living, the wages of sin, rolls away and they were made new. When that happens, we no longer want to do the things that are destroying us. We open our eyes and see things the way they are. Bad no longer looks good. We have someone inside of us helping us to stay away from those things that can destroy us. Addictions no longer bind us. God will deliver us. All the mess of our life begins to straighten up. We are made new. We have the Spirit of God inside our heart to help us stay new. God helps us to change from the inside out. He comes in and enables us to change. We then acknowledge our commitment to God because of His love for us. Salvation is like marriage. The Bible compares the church-God's people-to a bride. One such verse is Isaiah 62:5, "...as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Salvation is like saying your marriage vows. It is a lifetime commitment because of God's love for you and your love for Him. Then you start to grow in your relationship

with Him, just like you would grow in your relationship with your spouse. You get to know God. You get to know Jesus. You get to know the Holy Spirit, God's Spirit. They lead you and keep you. They strengthen you. They continue to change you and enable you to win whatever battles you face.

All this is what it means to be saved. Do you have to be like all those people I mentioned in the paragraphs before this one: the guys at the bar singing Gospel music in their beers, the man who was good but didn't know the joy of loving and serving God, the people bound in their sin. Praise God, no you don't have to be that way. You are saved.

I don't think that it is just accidental that Paul used the helmet of salvation to guard our minds. One of the biggest battles that we go through is the battle of the mind. When we know what salvation is, and we know that we are children of God walking in obedience to His Word, and then we know that there is nothing that can destroy us. We can stand against the enemy who causes us to doubt that we are saved. The knowledge of the Word of God protects our mind. That is why it is so important to read God's Word. There are so many people that only get the Word of God as it is preached from the pulpit. Get it out. Dust it off. Take it into your heart and spirit. Let God's Spirit reveal it to you. He will. There is no greater blessing, no greater strength that you can find than to steal away with the Lord and His Word and let Him open it up to you. It is personal. It is through the Word that we receive salvation. In I Peter 1:23 we read, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." When we receive salvation for real, it is through the Word of God. The Word of God will stand. It will carry us through the storms. It will hold through those times when the enemy tells us that we are not saved. It holds us through the times when the enemy tells us that we are not children of God. It will also straighten us out during those times when we get drawn aside by our lusts and pride. It will do all those things if we will only let it. We will talk more later about the Sword of the Word of God.

How can our mind get messed up and how can our helmet of salvation protect it? What are the things that cause us to get holes in our helmet? The Bible says that the main battle we fight is in our mind. How we think can defeat us. If we are filled with worry, doubt, fear, unbelief, then these things will destroy us. When we have on our helmet of salvation, the Holy Ghost will stop these things from overcoming us if we will just ask Him to. If the enemy tries to get us into wrong thinking concerning our salvation or our walk with God, our helmet of salvation will protect our mind. God will reveal these to us, if we just listen when He speaks. If we have such a jumble in our mind that we can't think straight, God will straighten that out if we have on our helmet. If we get wrapped up in the things of the world, and we begin to drift away from God because our minds are too filled with everything else, if we have on our helmet of salvation, God can draw us back to Himself through the power of His Spirit and His Word. These are all ways that we can guard against holes in our helmet, and ways that we can fix them if we do see that we are getting them.

Not knowing what salvation is all about is one of the main things that can also cause us to get holes in our helmet. As I mentioned earlier, we may think that we know all about salvation, but if we haven't as the courts say "found the whole truth and nothing but the truth" then that definitely leaves holes in our helmet. The Bible says that God's people perish for lack of knowledge. I think that is the biggest hole that we can leave in our helmet. Sad to say, that is the thing that is easiest to fix. We spend hours on Google researching something that we need to know. We spend hours on Facebook keeping up with what everyone is doing, and letting everyone know what we are doing. We spend hours watching TV. We spend hours gossiping with our friends to find out what is going on with everyone. But we lament because we don't have time to study God's Word. Let's get real about that. We have as much time as we make. Nothing is as important as studying God's Word. It is good to read books about God's Word. Evidently I think that is good. But nothing can strengthen us like going to His Word and letting His Spirit anoint and reveal it to our hearts. That is the main way to fix holes in your helmet. To really find out what salvation is all about, you have to let God reveal the whole package to you.

It is kind of like insurance. I bought insurance one time, and it would have taken a rocket scientist to explain what all was in the package. I had to know it all to know what my insurance covered. I studied it out to see what was covered. We need to study out the protection plan of salvation to see what all is covered. Until we do, we will have holes in our protection, holes in our armor, holes in our helmet of salvation.

Just like this, we have many misconceptions of God's Word if we aren't careful because we fail to go to the author and seek His face. We fail to have a relationship with Him that is real so that He can quicken us with His Spirit and reveal His Word to us. We have a relationship with the pastor, with the others on the pews. We listen to what everyone says about everything, but we never get to know God enough to find out the truth. We never get His Word out to read our salvation package. The devil has won already. Our mind is a jumble of truths and half-truths, and that is what the devil loves. He can do lots with that.

One of the greatest tools that the devil has is different church denominations. God didn't create the church that way. You don't see any evidence of that at all in the scriptures. Our church at our ministry is a non-denominational church. I hear a lot of pastors make comments like, "I really don't believe all my denomination teaches, but I am a part of it, and I teach what they teach about salvation and other doctrines. I don't like it, but that is part of what my church does." That is not only sad, but it is scary. Get out. Get out. Get out. You don't have to have a denomination to have a church. Become part of a non-denominational organization that has a statement of faith that you agree with.

Don't be part of organizations that are deceiving people. Don't deceive people. The Bible warns about this. Matthew 18:6 says, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his

neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” I know this is talking here about children in the verse prior to this, but the sheep in your field are God’s children. Beware about how you teach and preach to them. Especially when you preach and teach about salvation. Ezekiel 13 gives a very plain warning about this. Please read this whole chapter. I will put here the last two verses in the chapter. Again, it is very important that you read the whole chapter. “Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.” Wow. Don’t deceive God’s people with half-truths concerning salvation because the denomination you are with tells you to. If you are deceiving people in any part of God’s Word and God reveals this to you, then you are messing with their salvation. You will lose in the long run. Eventually if you continue this it will get to you and steal your own salvation. You will be in hell with those you have deceived. I know people who have done this for 50 years. They will have a lot of faces before them in hell. This is not my word for it. It is God’s. Get out. Get out. Get out. Let God lead you into a place where you can declare the truth.

This is also true for those who sit on the church pews. If you are in a church where salvation is not preached in a true way, then get out. If you are in a church where the truth is not being declared, and God has revealed this to you, then get out. It will eventually cost you your salvation. I remember a lady whose family started a church. It changed hands so to speak, and another denomination took it over. That denomination was completely false. She knew better. They got a pastor that “chased” people out of the church when they used the gifts of the Spirit in the congregation. He “chased” people out of the church when they spoke in tongues, and told the people in their congregation that they were of the devil when they did so. She knows better. She was raised in old time Pentecostal beliefs. She still is sitting on that church pew. She wants to help her church make it. She wants to see that it continues so she stays. She has been doing this for years. She has no victory in her life, and every year she grows weaker in her salvation experience. She is losing this battle. She has long ago lost her victory. Where will it end? God has led her to leave, but she still holds on, disobeying Him. What will this disobedience cost her?

I remember going into a Jehovah Witness church. I was selling some property that was beside that church, and the Lord witnessed to me that someone in the church there would buy it. I took information by the church just as the church was dismissing. Those people were so nice. They were really friendly, joking and fellowshiping. I thought to myself, this would be a great place to go to church. They had a huge congregation. Then I caught myself. Wow, this is a false hood. They don’t believe in salvation at all. They don’t believe in the Spirit of God controlling your life. They are all bound for hell. It doesn’t matter that they were really nice. What matters is the truth that is preached and taught. I talk to all kinds of people in all kinds of churches where the truth of salvation is not taught. They are there because the people are so nice. They feel welcome. If they

aren't careful they will be in hell one day with those people, and they won't seem so nice then. If you are in a church preaching wrong about your salvation then you may lose it.

When I was a new Christian, I got into a church that had a wrong doctrine. I didn't know any better. These were really nice people. They were all sick. I mean they were very sick with crippling illnesses. I wondered why. God started showing me that they believed in a false doctrine. I was new at listening to God's voice, and I was unsure about what this meant. He started warning me to leave the church. I liked the church. They were all nice. They were friends. I wanted to belong to something like this. I wanted to stay. He sent a friend of mine I had known for many years to tell me to leave. I didn't listen still. I kept staying. Then one day I went to the church early to practice the piano, because I was playing for the services. The door was locked, but no problem because I had a key. I unlocked the door and pushed it open. It would open about 5 inches. I could see around the door, and there wasn't anything there to block it. I was determined to get in so I really rammed against it. An unseen hand held that door shut. I went back to church one last time, to publicly stand and tell them that I was leaving because of their false doctrine. Is God holding the door shut to keep you out of your church or your denomination, but you are ignoring Him? Is it time to move on? Listen to Him.

There is another huge hole that we can get in our helmet. It is called "double-mindedness". The Bible talks about the danger of being double-minded in James 1:6-8, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." I think that there are two ways that we can become double-minded. One is when our experience with the Lord is shaky. We straddle the fence trying to be a Christian on Sunday, but live like the devil the rest of the week. Like the old saying goes you can't be married to the Lord and court the world. You can't have it both ways. You can't choose a life of sin, and talk about how Jesus is your Lord. It won't work. Take God's Word for it, not mine. Revelations 3:15-16 talks about some people who were just that way. Here is what God told them. It is a warning today to those who are double-minded. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." It is dangerous to think that you can get by. You run a high risk of being spued out of God's mouth, out of His Spirit, and out of His eternal heaven.

Another way that we can be double-minded is by what I bluntly call "not knowing which end is up." The devil can get us so scattered by the battle that we don't even know our name, let alone what we are standing for. That is a huge hole for the enemy to creep in and destroy us. To keep this from happening, know that you are in God's will. Know what He wants you to do. Stay close enough to God and yielded to Him so that the enemy can't get you confused. When you do find yourself in total confusion stop and look. The devil is the author of confusion. Bind him.

Another way that we can be double-minded is best illustrated by the saying, “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything”. I see a lot of double-minded people who love to walk the centerline. They don’t want to offend anybody so they don’t have a real opinion about anything. We’ll talk more about this in the next chapter, but I believe the church world today is full of what will one day become the main premise for the one world church, enemy controlled. This is the thought that whatever is right for one person may not be right for me, and whatever is wrong for me might not be wrong for you. It is the thought that there is no wrong or right. We need to accept people like they are and love them that way. We have for so long let the world creep in until we don’t think that it is right to make a stand against sin, to make a stand against the world. We have become a church full of backboneless people who have no idea how to stand up. The devil just winds us around his finger. We don’t have enough backbone to stand up against him in our lives. We are double-minded because we can’t even make up our mind where it is that we need to stand. That leaves a hole in our helmet. I Corinthians 16:13 says, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.” If we don’t know where to stand, how can we stand? Hebrews 10:23 says, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised).” Like James 1:6 says, let nothing be wavering. Ask God for a forehead like a flint rock, and a backbone like a crowbar so that you can stand up in this last day and make a difference to those around you. Make up your mind that you won’t compromise, and that you won’t be double minded.

We need to consider another way that the enemy fights us in our minds. We have talked about the importance of walking in the Spirit and not in the flesh. This starts in our mind. It starts with the things that we think about continually and how we think about them. You see, our salvation experience means that the Spirit of God comes into us to lead and guide us. When we allow His Spirit to control us, we are walking in the Spirit. When we yield to Him, we are walking in the spirit. So when we fail to do this, and we are carnally minded, then that leaves huge holes in our helmet for the devil to march into and destroy our lives. Romans 8 talks a lot about walking in the spirit. Read that chapter please. The key scriptures we are going to talk about are verses 6 and 7, “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

What does it mean to be carnally minded versus spiritually minded? I see people who are so consumed with the world and how the world thinks that they are literally not able to think spiritually at all. The Word of God is an after thought. They never take time to read it let alone dwell on it. They don’t allow it to change their heart, mind, and life. They are too busy with other things to fellowship with the Lord. Prayer time to them is few hurried words before they fall asleep too exhausted from the days activities to spend time with the one who died to be their Lord. Jesus is not Lord of their lives. Too many other things crowd Him out. They generally are caught up in what every body else around them are doing, the “in things”. They are proud that they do so. If they think everybody is on Face book, they do the Face book things. If everybody has their kids involved in

this or that activity, they have their kids doing twice as much in that, and usually these are not church activities. If they think that some kind of other thing is the thing to do, then that is what they jump into whole-heartedly. The people around them and what they think is the thing to do becomes their god that leads them. Their relationship with the Lord is shallow, and though their relationships with other people are more important to them, these are usually a mess because the Lord has been left out of their lives. Because the Lord is not the focus of their lives they are always in a what I call a tizzy, some sort of drama going on, some sort of a frenzy, always a mess going on, no direction, just running around in circles like a gerbil on a wheel getting nothing of substance done. Their children are a nervous wreck because their parents are. There is no peace in their home. That is a good illustration of what it means to be carnally minded. That is death. Don't take my word for it; take God's Word for it.

I want to take this a step further. Most of the people sitting on the church pews serving God, even most pastors and teachers, are carnal and not spiritual even in their understanding of God, His ways, His Word, and how to serve Him. I think of Paul, or rather Saul, when I think of this. Saul (before God named him Paul) was a Christian killer. He delivered up the saints of his day to be killed. He was on the way to do that very thing when God spoke to him and blinded him when he was on the way to Damascus. The thing that you have to remember about this was that when he did this, in his mind he was doing God's work. He was a devout follower of God. He gave up his life to serve God. The reason why he was killing Christians was because he was doing what God wanted him to do. Or at least he thought it was. That was until he met the Master and Lord of his life for real. That was until he yielded his will enough to hear the Master's voice. That was until he stopped doing what he thought God wanted him to do, and started doing what God wanted him to do. Read that last sentence again. Are you doing what you think God wants you to do, or are you in love with God, yielded to His Spirit, listening to His voice, and doing what He wants you to do? There is a big difference there. To be carnally minded is death. To be spiritually minded is to have life, and to give life to those around you.

It would be a good time to get out your Bible and your concordance, and do a little research. Look up "walking in the spirit". Look up "carnal". Look up "spiritually minded". Look up other phrases that have to do with walking in the spirit as opposed to walking in the flesh. See what God has to say. Is your mind full of carnal things? Are you walking in the flesh? If you are then your helmet is definitely full of holes. How can you fix these? Seek God's face. Ask Him to help you to start thinking spirit led. Give up the world and its ways. Allow Jesus to truly become the Lord of your life. Make your salvation experience a focus in your life for real. Stop doing what you think the Lord wants, but let Him lead you and do what He really wants.

Time for some examples. I know someone who is carnally minded. She has made some bad decisions and some bad life choices because she had no idea of how to listen to God's voice and yield to His Spirit leading her. This has been bad. These choices have

affected her life and her children to the place that everything around her is falling down. She is a mess and her children are a wreck because she is walking in the flesh. The sad thing about this is that she when she made this decision she really thought that she did what the Lord told her to do. She was thinking with her carnal mind and that had left huge holes in her helmet wide open for the devil to get through. She has really paid for it. Thank God that this has all made her more aware. Now when I started this example I said, "I know someone...." Actually, I wish that were true. Truth is, I have known many, many people through the years that this is true for. It really costs when you are in the habit of being carnally minded, and you haven't been in the habit of listening and yielding to God's Spirit. Like the verse said, "To be carnally minded is death."

I have worked with children in our Christian school for many years. The saddest thing that I see is when parents who profess to be Christians make decisions, and have life styles that are destroying their children all the while professing to be Christians. They are too carnal to even see the results of their choices. Many times it is because they have no idea. They aren't in a church where the truth is taught. Or often they just aren't in church at all. Still, if they would only pull up to the table, they could feast on God's Word, and His Spirit would lead them to the truth. Sometimes we don't know because we shut up our spiritual ears. We don't want to know. What a price we pay.

Your helmet is a very important part of your armor. Guard against getting holes in it. If you were in a physical battle and you got holes in your helmet, you wouldn't go back into the war until you fixed it. You would know better. It is harder to see holes because these are spiritual and not physical. That makes it even more important that you watch for these, not less important. You can go into a physical war, be hurt, and survive. If you go into a spiritual war and you are wounded to death, you will spend eternity in hell. Seek God's face. He will let you know what is wrong and how to fix it. You don't have to be afraid of all this. You just have to be real.

I want to close with a long scripture. It is found in Ephesians 1:18. Please open your Bible and read from there through chapter 2. I am not going to write it all out here, but I want you to read it. It is a powerful section of scripture, so please read it all. This is my prayer for you. It is the prayer that Paul had for the saints at Ephesus that he wrote this powerful book to. Verse 17 says, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: That the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Now please get out your Bible and read verses 19 through 21 in Ephesians 1 and the whole chapter two. This is what salvation is all about. With so great a banquet spread over us, why settle for the crumbs. Let's talk about the next piece of armor that we have, the breastplate of righteousness.

CHAPTER 6. THE brEasTpl aTE of righTEousness

The Webster's dictionary defines righteous as being, "Acting justly; upright; virtuous; morally right; morally justifiable. Our guide for knowing what righteous means in the scripture is God Himself. The Bible continually refers to God as being a righteous God. Jesus is a reflection of God's righteousness. The first time the Word righteous is mentioned in the Bible it was referring to Noah. Genesis 7:1 says, "And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation." God spared Noah when He destroyed the world by flood because of Noah's righteousness. I think this scripture also reflects the righteousness of God. Why did He destroy the world if He was righteous? We read in Genesis 6:5-6, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at this heart."

You may be thinking how can God destroy all those people if He is a righteous God? You should be thinking, how could God let that go since He is a righteous God? God's righteousness is perfect. God hasn't destroyed the world since then, and it is plenty evil right now. So you can imagine how bad it was. It was bad enough that God regretted that He had ever made man. The verse says, "It repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth." (The Bible mentions several times that the Lord repented, or it repented the Lord. That isn't an idea that matches with all the verses in the Bible that talk about God being righteous. We know God is perfect. He doesn't have to repent. So what does this mean when it mentions God repenting? I think that a truer interpretation of this would be using the word regret. God regretted that He had made man. Regret and repent are similar in meaning. When you repent, you regret. I think that what the scripture is saying when it uses the word repent in this situation it means regret.)

There was only one man, Noah, who could even think good thoughts. Everyone else hearts' were continually evil. Wow, what a world. It is bad enough now. Can you imagine what it would be like to live in a world that bad? Now think about this. We know that the evil in the world has gotten worse through time. Can you imagine what our world would be like now if God had let this continue? It would be so bad that the righteous wouldn't be able to endure. So again I ask, should you think what kind of God would destroy the world for their evil, or should you think, what kind of God would have let that go?

The world (and the devil that leads them) paints a false picture of God. If we aren't careful this type of thinking can enter the church, and has in many of them. It paints the picture that God is a loving God and does not discriminate against people. This picture

portrays that He does not judge people. We are supposed to accept everyone exactly as they are. God does and they don't have to be set free. So we are not supposed to talk about people who have "alternate life styles" from ours. We aren't supposed to preach about this not being accepted. We aren't supposed to infer that people should repent, because it is not Godly to be made to feel bad about our "life choices" that we have made. This is all straight out of hell, and this is one of the main doctrines that I believe that the end time church will believe, the one world church that will rule during the time of the persecution of the true Church and during the time of the rule of the Antichrist. We are already seeing this come in more and more. The hate crime is one of the evidences of this. This doctrine has crippled churches around the world.

It doesn't matter what the world says. It doesn't matter what the law says. There is a right and a wrong. Read the Bible. God is a righteous God. The Bible says this phrase over 40 times. That isn't even counting the times it uses the word righteousness. Countless more times than this the scriptures talk about our righteousness, our call to be righteous, and the judgment when we fail to do this. If you are taking God's righteousness, His requirement for us to be righteous, and the eternal punishment when we fail to be righteous, out of the scriptures then you are leaving out pages and pages of scripture. You have a very thin Bible, a very thin relationship with the Lord, and a thin chance of ever making heaven your eternal home. Before you form an opinion here of what I am saying, wait and hear me out. Do yourself a favor and wait until you finish the chapter before you cut off what I have to say. There is more to this than what I am saying here in this paragraph. Wait and read it all.

I think that it is wonderful that the first time the phrase "God is righteous" is used in the Bible, Pharaoh in Egypt said it after he had seen God's mighty acts in setting His people free. Exodus 9:27, "And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked." Pharaoh himself acknowledged that the Lord was righteous. This was a man who at the beginning didn't acknowledge God as a god. He served a different god. Matter of fact, in some Egyptian periods of history, Pharaoh was worshipped as a God. By the time God got through with him, he knew that God was the true God and he knew that God was a righteous God.

Here are other verses that talk about the righteousness of God. These I have listed come from the Psalms. There are many more verses, but I am using the ones out of Psalms for a reason. You'll find out why in a minute. David talked a lot about the righteousness of God. Psalm 11:7, "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright." Psalms 19:9, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Psalms 112:4, "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous." Psalms 116:5, "Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea our God is merciful." Psalm 119:7, "I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments." Psalms 119:138, "Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are

righteous and very faithful.” Psalms 129:4-5, “The Lord is righteous; he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.”

All those scriptures are from the book of Psalms. There are over 40 scriptures that I could have picked from, but I picked these for a reason. As I mentioned, David talks a lot about the righteousness of God in Psalms. I love those scriptures, because I know that David knew more than most about the righteous judgments of God. If you remember, after David became king he was out on the rooftop porch one night and noticed a lady. Her name was Bath-Sheba. She was married, but that didn't stop David. He invited her over and she visited a lot because her husband was in the army serving his king (David) faithfully. Bath-Sheba got pregnant. David didn't want anyone to know what he had done, so as soon as he found out he sent for her husband Uriah. He knew that because Uriah had been gone for months, everyone would know he wasn't the father of the baby unless he came home. Uriah came home, but he was such a faithful person, that he refused to go to the comforts of home and wife while the others in his regiment were at war. David was even more desperate now because if a woman were caught in adultery she would be stoned to death. I am not sure of the man's punishment in this situation, but it was probably not a good thing for a king to be in that situation. So David's plan didn't work. He couldn't marry Bath-sheba and make it right since she was married.

David then did what many a man has done down through time who is caught in this kind of situation. David killed her husband. He didn't really do it with his own hands, but just as good as. He sent him to the front of the war where he knew he would die. Her husband was killed there. David thought all was well, that no one knew what had happened. He thought that he had pulled it off, and all was going to work. He thought that he had gotten by with it all. He was wrong. We don't get by with our sin even when we think we have pulled it off, and that no one knows about it. There is One Who knows and He is righteous.

After he was married, David got a visit from a prophet of God, Nathan. God had sent him a message. This was what David's punishment would be. The sword would never depart from his house. God would raise up evil against him out of his own house. The child that was born out of this would die. All this would come about and more as acts of God's righteous judgment of his sin. But David served his righteous God until the day he died, praising His righteousness all the more.

You see you can't have it both ways. I am so glad that I serve a righteous God. I know that I can trust Him to do what is right. I am glad that I can trust His judgments. The Word of God continually talks about the judgments of God being right. I can trust His judgments when it comes to taking care of those people who are trying to destroy both me and the work that I do in the Lord. This thing goes two ways though. We want to be able to trust the Lord to be upright. That is easy. But when He punishes us because of our unrighteousness, because of our sin, then we think He is acting unrighteous. We think that He shouldn't do that? What is that about? God called David a man after His

own heart. Why? Few of us have done anything so terrible as he did. It was what David did after his sin that mattered. He repented. We don't ever read of him doing anything like this ever again. He knew and loved God's righteousness. Even when he went through God's punishment, he loved God's righteousness.

I am not sure of this, but I wonder if David wrote Psalms 51 during this time. Get out your Bible and read it and see what you think. It starts out with these four verses, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." David understood the righteousness of God. He loved it. That didn't change in the middle of his sin when he was the one that was being judged.

I am so glad that the God that we serve is a righteous God. I might not always understand Him, but I can trust in Him. I can trust Him to do right in every circumstance. What if we served a double minded God who didn't even know what was right, but who served his own agenda at our loss? What if the God we served was like the Greek and Roman gods who were so busy sinning themselves, that often the mortals were destroyed by their sin? What if we served a God like Allah (who by the way is not our God) who encourages those who serve him to die for his cause? Praise God that we serve a righteous God. He never changes. He isn't double minded. He is the same way that He was when David praised Him. We will serve Him forever, and throughout eternity He will be the same. We can count on His judgments and decisions to be right. You can trust Him. You may not always understand Him, but if you hold on, He will reveal what you need to know. I don't want a god that winks at sin. I want a God who knows what is right, and what is wrong and who requires us to do the same. He doesn't wink at sin; He delivers us out of our sin. He expects us to be righteous because He is righteous. He doesn't just require this, but He provides a way for this to happen in us.

It isn't any accident that the part of armor that is given the name of righteousness is the breastplate. The breastplate protects our heart. The mind is a battlefield that we have talked about. The other main battle that we have is the heart. Jesus said in Luke 6:43-46, "For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" We can't serve God if our heart isn't right with Him. What we do comes out of our heart. We can have the best intentions to do right, but if our heart isn't right, then we will just fail. There are many verses in the scripture where it mentions that God knows the hearts of men. God knows the intentions of our heart. Out of our heart proceeds what we do and

who we are. When Jesus comes in, when the Holy Spirit comes in, He takes resident in our heart. It is very important to protect our heart.

How do we get our heart right? How do we keep our breastplate from getting holes in it? It is important that we want to do things God's way instead of our own way. We have to want things to be His way according to His Word. David didn't keep on sinning, doing his own thing after he repented. He let God bring His victory in his life. He overcame this sin after he repented. He didn't run and do this same thing again. That is the key to getting your heart right before God. You have to love God enough to want to get it right. David loved God with all His heart. He knew God's love for him. He didn't want to stay stuck there in the mess he was in. He reached up to God, God reached down.

Salvation is the beginning step of getting our heart right. We talked about in that chapter about Salvation how when we get saved there is a change that takes place. That is the beginning. Every day we have to allow the Lord to work in our heart and in our mind. Every day we have to allow His Word and His Spirit to work in us perfecting us, bringing us to be like Him. We have to put a priority on our soul's salvation. We have to guard our heart and our relationship with God. We have to spend time with Him, fellowship with Him, and allow His Spirit to work in us. That doesn't just mean while we are at church but every day we do this. We work hard on our relationships with so many people. Do we work that hard on our relationship with God? Isn't that relationship the most important one that we have? Our heart can only stay right if the love of God is there for real. Stay in love with God. Stay in love with Jesus.

In Revelations 2:4 Jesus is speaking to the church of Ephesus. He said that He knew about their works. He had something against them though. In verse 4 we read, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." He warned that if they didn't repent then He would remove their candlestick. Remember when you were first saved. You glowed with His love. Nothing was like God. You wanted to do whatever He asked. You wanted everyone to get to know Him. Do you still have that first love? Do you wake up and look for His presence? Do you desire above all else to serve Him? Do you need to go back to your first love? Maybe you need to repent and return to Him. Return to His love. Jesus is waiting for you. His Father is waiting to welcome you in. Love Him. After all there was a dear price paid to welcome you home to their love. Return to your first love. That is the number one way to protect your heart. We'll talk more in this chapter about God's love and our love for Him.

Another key to keeping our heart right is repentance. When God convicts us, when He deals with our heart about our sin, we have to repent. We can't make excuses. We can't blame everything on everybody else. We can't change the Word of God so that we justify our sins and ourselves. We have to fess up. We have to admit that we have sinned, and we have to be so sorry that we will not do this again with God's help. That is the key. When we do this, wrong attitudes, wrong ways of thinking, wrong ways of acting can't creep in. Wrong attitudes are dangerous. Some of the most dangerous ones I have found

are: rebellion, half-heartedness, hatred, bitterness, lack of concern, hardening of the heart, and many others. These can destroy you just like a worm destroys a huge oak tree. We have to get real with ourselves, ask God to show us things that are wrong in our hearts, and ask Him to deliver us from these. Through this process we can trust God to keep us, to keep our heart right. His righteousness protects our heart.

How do we live righteously before God? The Bible says repeatedly that we are to be righteous. It also says that there are none righteous. So if we can't be righteous, but we have to be righteous, then boy are we stuck. What is the answer to that? When we get it right, how do we keep it right? We see a glimpse of the answer to how we can do this in Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." What is this saying? Jesus died for us. That is part of what Calvary is all about. We also have to die with Him. Our self will, our flesh, our weakness, our stupid humanity, has to die with Him there on Calvary. Then the life which we live we live by faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. God didn't just say, hey you have to be perfect. You have to be righteous. I know you can't, that is tough, but that is the rule. Even though you can't you have to anyway. Most Christians never get past this way of thinking. They know that they have to be righteous, but they don't know how. They try and fail, then eventually give up, never knowing that God has made a way for them. They get discouraged in their heart. They get holes in their breastplate and their heart is destroyed in the battle. So then how are we supposed to do this?

We live this life through faith in God, through His Spirit working inside of us, through His love keeping us, through His power strengthening us, through His Word empowering us, through the fellowship of the saints keeping us, through Jesus who is praying for us. With all that going for us, we don't need to ask how we can do what is right, we need to ask how can we fail. We just don't see it right. We are out there trying to do it all on our own. We fail to see the big picture. On our own, forget it. With God, all things are possible.

Paul knew about this. He wrote about this throughout the books he wrote. Romans is one book that is filled with teaching about how we can overcome our flesh, our stupid humanity, and live victoriously in spite of it. Read the book of Romans for some great teaching about this. Romans 6:15-25 and chapter 8:1 is a great passage. In this passage, Paul talks about how the things that he wanted to do, he failed to do, and the things that he didn't want to do, he was doing. He had the law of God in his inward man, but there was another law warring against that bringing him captivity to the law of sin that was in his members. In verse 1 he said that there was no condemnation for those who walk not in the flesh, but after the spirit. What is he saying in this passage of scripture? Is he saying, "We all know what we are to do, but we can't do it, so forget it. There isn't any condemnation. It is fine to fail. We don't have to stay away from sin. We don't have to

what we know is right, and it is fine to do what is wrong.” We all know from all we have talked about that this isn’t right.

Let’s read on in chapter 8. The key phrases that we see over and over is “walk in the spirit”. We read about the carnal mind, or the part of us that is the opposite of the spirit man. We talked earlier about walking in the spirit. Let’s discuss it more. When you read chapter 8 of Romans, we see that if we don’t walk in the spirit then we can’t find victory in our lives. We see that we can’t even please God. What is walking in the spirit, and how are we to do that? The key is to quit trying. Let God do it in and through you through the power of His Spirit in you. Yield and let Him rule in you. Let His Word do its work. God will perfect Himself in you through the power of His Spirit. You can’t, but He can. Let Him. Put yourself on hold and submit to Him.

Why is it so hard when it sounds so easy? Our human nature doesn’t want to give up and give in. We don’t want any one to tell us what we are to do. We don’t want any one else to get in front of us in line. We don’t want to get behind any slow drivers on the highway that slow us down. We want to get where we are going without any interference. We want the fast food meals and we get angry when we have to wait in line for those. Face it. Our flesh is a mess. And it is a spoiled mess. We don’t want to let God have His way in our lives. How do we get there? He can bring us to that place if we really want to in our heart. He knows how to humble us. He knows how to get our attention. He can stop our pride in its tracks. He can stop our self-will in its tracks. We just have to desire it with all our heart.

If we don’t guard our hearts, we can get little foxes. We read about little foxes in Song of Solomon 2:15, “Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.” It isn’t the big things that we easily see that can spoil vines. It is the little things that slip in that do the worst damage. That is the same with our soul. It is the little sins that, little things that the enemy slips into our lives that we need to guard against. If we aren’t careful, we allow the devil to sneak in what we call creeping sins into our lives. This is something that might not seem so bad. We have already talked about attitudes. Those are some little “foxes” that creep in. It may be habits that control us, or things we like to do that we have put above God (fishing instead of going to church is one example). These things may seem small, but so is a fishhook. Ask the big fish hanging over the mantle in the seafood restaurant if that little hook was insignificant. Watch out for the creeping sins. They may seem small, but they can put holes in our armor that are big enough for the devil to march in.

When I think of “little foxes” and how little things turn into bigger problems, I think of Samson. When we first read about him in Judges 13, we read that an angel appeared to his mother to tell her that she would have a special son and gave her instructions for his life. That was his beginning. When we read about the end of his life in chapter 16 we read about him being imprisoned and made to work like an animal by the Philistines who mocked him daily. What happened? He was a promise of freedom from bondage to the

Israelites, but became bound by the very people who he was supposed to deliver them from. You know I haven't studied this out, but I don't remember very many people in the Bible who had an angel announce their birth. Isaac, (an angel appeared to Abraham), John the Baptist, and Jesus were the only ones that I could remember. These were all key people. So Samson must have been very important in God's plan. What happened?

Samson had a little fox, something that he desired above God. He kept messing around with the Philistine women. The Philistines were his enemy. They were the reason that he had been born. He was born to deliver Israel from the Philistines. The enemy began slowly to become the apple of his eye, the thing that he desired most. God knew that Samson's purpose was to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines. He also knew that the enemy had become the apple of Samson's eye. Judges 14:4 tells us that when Samson asked for a wife from the Philistines, "...his father and his mother knew not that it was of the Lord, that he sought an occasion against the Philistines: for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel." I believe that God was trying to turn Samson against the Philistines. He allowed the thing that was trying to entrap Samson to become the thing that he was angriest at. God works many ways in our lives. This must have worked. Judges 15:20 tell us, "And he judged Israel in the day of the Philistines twenty years." Often when we think of the story of Samson, we think just of his failures. We think of Samson and Delilah. We forget the 20 years that he judged Israel as an upright judge.

There were 20 years that he served the Lord in the purpose that the Lord had for him. Then things started to go wrong again. His old problem cropped up again. Why does this happen? We have seen so many people in the limelight as well as those that we are familiar with in our own lives who had served God faithfully for years. Then something went terribly wrong. I was talking with someone who was telling me that a pastor in their church had to be dismissed because he was having an affair with a woman in his congregation. How do these things go so terribly wrong in the lives of those who have served God for years?

Sin is like a weed that grows in our spirit. Have you ever weeded your garden on a hot and dry day when the soil was baked? When you try to pull up that weed, you get everything but the roots. Then before long you go back again and you can't even tell that the weed has been pulled. It is thriving more than ever. When the soil of our heart is allowed to get hard and dry without the watering of God's Word and His Spirit, it is hard to get out the roots of sin. God will convict us over and over. We will pull up the part that is showing. We change our behavior or the part that can be seen above the soil. However, we fail to deal with the part that is beneath the surface, the root of why we sin. The sin keeps coming back. The devil begins to condemn us for this sin, and this sin gives him a hook to catch us with. This sin gives him a stronghold over us in our spiritual lives, which leads to a stronghold in our physical lives. He is very gifted at manipulating our sins and weaknesses. The struggle eventually wears us out spiritually.

We give in to that sin. These “sudden falls” that it seems people make are not sudden at all. This process might have gone on for years. In Samson’s case it was for 20 years.

(Here is just an added note: Habits like cigarette smoking have taken over the house of God. I have driven by some churches and I would think that surely they were having a holy service because of all the smoke that was outside. I would wonder why they were having church outside though. Little did I know it was a smoke break. As a congregation, they had voted on having a smoke break between the service and Sunday school. They couldn’t stay free from their addictions long enough to stay in service for a couple of hours. That is sad. No wonder the world doesn’t see much help in the church from addictions. We are addicted. If it isn’t to cigarettes, then it is to prescription medicine, and so many other things. Church, we are a mess. These addictions separate us from God and lead us away from Him. They cause us to feel convicted, and if we don’t deal with our conviction, repent and let God deliver us, this will cause a breach in our relationship with God. I have heard Brother Goad say many times that he has no confidence in any one that the devil can control using a little 5 inch long stick. If the devil can control this much of your life, then can God count on you? This is a huge hook in your jaw. No wonder we fail to have the anointing in our churches.)

God’s conviction is a blessing. It is one of the most loving things that God can do. When God convicts, he shows us the places where the roots of sin are hiding in our lives. When we repent of these and submit them to God, He delivers us and these roots are pulled out. The key is that we have to really want Him to do this. That is where so many fail. In the deepest part of their heart, they really don’t want to let this go. The soil of their heart becomes harden. They pull and pull but only get out the top part. If the soil of your heart is tender toward God, then God can pull everything out, root and all. Let God do a complete work. There will be no roots left to crop up later. How would Samson’s story have ended if he had done this?

The roots of Samson’s sin cropped up again in Judges 16:1, “Then went Samson to Gaza and saw there an harlot, and went in unto her.” Now remember that Gaza was Philistine territory. Here he was in the enemies’ camp because of the roots of sin that he hadn’t allowed God to deliver him from. When the enemies’ camp becomes the apple of our eye, be sure that our eyes can be put out by that sin that drew us there. Whether it is our physical or spiritual eyes, we will loose our vision. That is just what happened to Samson. We read in verse 2, “And it was told the Gazites saying, Samson is come hither. And they compassed him in, and laid wait for him all night in the gate of the city, and were quiet all night, saying, when it is day, we shall kill him.” I think that this trip was the beginning of Samson’s fall. Why? The enemy now knew his weakness, and they began to devise a plan to use that weakness to destroy him. The enemy will know about that little root that you allow in your life. He will devise a plan to destroy you by using this against you. In the next verse, Delilah came on the scene and we all know what happened from there. Samson was blinded, he was bound, and he was grounded by the devil.

I love the mercy of God. We are blessed to serve such a wonderful God. God had mercy on Samson on that last day, and he let his strength return once more. The house that day was full of Philistines. Probably many of them were enemies' that Samson had regarded as friends in the compromised state of his sin. Just on one roof the Bible says there were 3,000 Philistines. They had gathered there that day not only to mock Samson, but also to mock his God that had been the source of his miraculous strength against them for over 20 years. God gave him a last touch. Judges 16:30 tell us, "And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

God was merciful to Samson. Here is one thing to think about though. How might Samson's story have ended if it hadn't ended there? What if he would have continued in his supernatural strength as an upright judge for another 20 years or more? What if Samson would have been like Joseph in Potiphar's house when he ran out so fast that he left his coat in the hands of the "harlot", Potiphar's wife? Because of the price of sin that he had to pay, we will never know. Sin demands a price. It doesn't matter that no one knows what is going on in your heart, or it seems like no one is watching. You will pay. So will your family and those that love you. Sin is never worth the cost. The devil can paint a pretty picture but it is not reality. Sin is reality. It is never worth it. That is why it is so important to keep our breastplate of righteousness on to protect our hearts.

One of the biggest holes that we can get in our breastplate of righteousness is when we justify our sin, when we make excuses for what we do. I know someone who as long as I have known him has never found totally victory in his life. He knows the truth of the word of God. He knows about salvation in its true sense. He knows that a habit of smoking that he has been bound with since he was small is sin. He knows that he needs to get free from this to be able to have a sound relationship with God. He knows about the Baptism of the Spirit and how to find victory through this experience. The sad thing is he knows but he doesn't do. He doesn't do because for over 20 years he has been making excuses for what he fails to do. He is a master at this. He has an excuse for everything. He doesn't want to live in reality. He has successfully talked himself into thinking that everything is fine. He has self-justified himself. This is one of the most dangerous ways to be. This is one of the largest holes in our breastplate that we can get. It is so dangerous because no one can tell him any different. The Spirit of God can't convict him because he justifies it away. I think that this is very close to what the Bible calls blaspheming the Spirit, which is an unpardonable sin. When we stop letting God convict us, then how can God turn us around? How can God deal with us for our sin? How will we ever repent? If we don't repent, how will we make heaven our home? Beware of ever starting down that road.

How do we keep from getting holes in our breastplate? Walk in the Spirit instead of the flesh. Trust in God and allow His Spirit to convict us. Repent when we feel His

conviction. Don't shake off His conviction, but repent. Get real with God. Let Him work in your heart and mind. Love Him with all your heart, and let Him love you. Keep His Word close in your heart and mind. Meditate on His Word. It will keep you. Let His Spirit dwell in your heart. Let His Spirit move in your life. Get filled up with His Spirit. The Baptism of the Holy Ghost is a very real and powerful experience that will keep you. Find out about that. I have written a book titled *The Baptism of the Holy Ghost* that you can download for free on the Internet. Go to my website at www.freechristianonlinebooks.com. You can also find it on www.amazon.com. I won't go into details here, but it is important to find out about this amazing gift of God, and how it can empower you to serve God. It is in the Word of God, and it is for you.

The main way that we can guard our heart is to stay in love with Jesus. Love is the key to any relationship. Love is a key to keeping your armor free from holes. Out of curiosity, I went back through what of this book I had written before this to see how many times I had used the word love in regards to all parts of your armor. I was amazed at how many times I had used it. We talked before about how being a Christian is about really about having a relationship with God, and a relationship with Jesus. Keeping your relationship with the Lord is more important than keeping any relationship with anyone, husband or wife, or family member. Staying in love with God, Jesus, in love with His Word, His righteousness, all of Him, is a key to overcoming the enemy. Fall in love with God. Fall in love with Jesus. Fall in love with their righteousness, their Word. David talked about how He loved the Word of God. The longest chapter in the Bible, Psalm 119, is a Psalm David wrote talking about how He loved God's Word. It has 176 verses in it. Throughout the Psalms we hear David talk about the love of God, or his love. The word love or loved is mentioned nearly 30 times in the Psalms. God is love. If we don't let Him love us, and we don't fall in love with Him, you miss out on this thing entirely. David knew about that love that God had for him, and he fell in love with God. That love kept him through the hard times, and David knew about hard times. That love kept his heart from departing from God. That love guarded his heart as part of his breastplate. That is why it is so important to guard our love.

Another thing that causes us to be separated from God's love is when we face tribulations, when we go through things that are really hard. Our love can get worn out. We face things that cause us to doubt God's love for us. I know you have wondered why, if God loved you, you had to go through something. David did. If you have studied the story of David, you will remember the story found in I Samuel 30. David and his men had been out to war. They came home to find that their women had been made captives. Their city had been burned by fire, their sons and daughters taken captives. To make things worse the hearts of the people were so grieved that they took it all out on David. His men talked about stoning him to death. Now I know that you may have faced some things, but you have to admit, this might even be worse than what you have gone through. David, I am sure, wondered about God's love for him at this time. He probably thought, why God did you let this happen. Why do I have to go through this? You love me more than this. Why am I having to face this?

When we go through heartaches and trials, we wonder where God is and if He loved us so much, why did this happen. Sickness is one thing that is so hard to overcome, because of this. When you are sick, it is easy to fall into self-pity because you don't feel good. It is easy to doubt God because your mind isn't right, it is sick. You don't think right. When your finances are falling apart, you get stressed out. Stress is a bad thing. Another word for it is fear. When you are afraid, you don't think clear. You can't concentrate on the Word of God. Fear separates you from God's love. Any time you go through a trial, if you aren't careful, you can lose sight of God's Word and His love for you. You get holes in your breastplate. Your love can grow dim. You must guard your love. You must guard your heart. Keeping in love with God is the key. We know this, but sometimes when you are going through the battle, it is easy to forget it. What did David do that helped him through this time in his life?

We read a key to getting through the hard times in I Samuel 30:6, and in verse 8. Verse 6 starts out with "And David was greatly distressed". It closes with "But David encouraged himself in the Lord." When we are in the middle of a battle, and it seems like the world is falling around us, we need to encourage ourselves in the Lord. We need to step back and remember. We need to remember God's word. We need to remember the times that He has seen us through. When I face a battle, I remember the times that the Lord saw me through something that was similar to what I was facing at the time. I remember God's love. I go to Him. The devil tries to get us to draw away from Him when we go through things. That definitely puts a huge hole in our armor. Instead of running away, or drawing back, draw to Him. Let Him love you. Let Him encourage you. Let His Spirit fall on you and strengthen you. Steal away in the hours of the morning when it is just you and God, and let Him love you. Feel His presence. Let Him encourage your heart. Remember His love. Remember what He has done before. I am sure that when David encouraged himself in the Lord that day, he remembered Goliath. He remembered all the battles he had faced and the Lord God had stood with him and caused him to triumph. He remembered the victories. When you go through the battle and the battle is clouding out God's love, encourage yourself in the Lord, like David. Encourage your heart in God's love. That will fix that hole in your breastplate.

Then verse 8 tells us the next thing that David did. It tells us that "David enquired at the Lord". He found out what God wanted him to do about the situation. When he found out, he did it. He didn't debate about it. He didn't think about it and go on and do whatever he thought. He did what God told him to do. If you want to stay encouraged in the Lord, you have to obey Him. That is the key. If you want out of the battle, you have to listen to the commanding officer, and do what He tells you to do. If you don't, then you will just continue to stay there until the enemy defeats you. Obedience is the key to keeping your breastplate intact. Obedience comes from love. If you have really fallen in love with God, you will delight to do His will. Love helps us to yield ourselves to the point where we can obey. If we don't obey, then eventually what love we have for God

will die. The battle will get so hard that we can't continue. Obedience is a key to keeping your heart right.

When we encourage ourselves in the Lord it is important to remember that everything isn't always instant, and that this thing comes often by faith and not by sight. Sometimes we have to trust and have faith. We have to remember that it isn't over until it's over. We have to wait on the Lord because things happen in His time, not in our time. God knows what He is doing. We have to trust that. We have to also remember that sometimes bad things happen because we live in a bad world ruled by bad people. When this sort of thing happens, we have to remember that all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord. All things. Not part of the things some of the time, but all things. Even the bad things. The last part of Galatians 5:6 says, "faith which worketh by love." It is our love that will keep our faith whole. It is also our faith, which will keep our love whole. They work hand in hand. When you encourage yourself in God's love, it will encourage your faith.

One way to guard your faith and love is to keep bad attitudes out of your heart, mind, and out of your mouth. There are some people who I dread asking how they are doing, or how this or that situation is going. For one thing, I don't have time to spend listening to their two-hour monologue on what is going on that is bad. For another thing, it gets me down listening to them. Watch out for those old attitudes that can steal your faith. The devil is a master at getting us fixated on the bad so that every time we open our mouth something negative comes out. We can get this way in our minds as well. The Bible tells us what things to dwell on, and it isn't negative things, worry, depressing thoughts, all the bad that is going on, dwelling on the devil and what he is doing, dwelling on the bad that is in the people around us, stressing out about the problem. When I think about these thoughts and how they can get you down, I am reminded of a commode. When you get caught in them they are like a commode, just taking you down and out the drain. The Bible tells us in Philippians 4:8 what to think about. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." Wow. If you go by this scripture it will turn your world around. We will talk more about this later when we talk about your shield of faith. Keeping your mind on these things will keep from getting holes in your breastplate, and in your shield. It will also keep your love for the Lord and His love for you from getting torn up in the battle.

Another way to keep your heart is to keep your strength. The Bible says that the joy of the Lord is your strength. I went through a time of sickness. I mentioned that earlier in a chapter. I really believe that the reason why I had such a time with this is because I had gotten tired. I was dragged down. I was overworking, like always, but it was a little different this time. I had let the enemy steal my joy. This created holes in my breastplate. I lost my strength. I was just tired and worn out, and it wasn't a physical tired. I could rest but still be tired. I had given out, and given out, and hadn't taken in. I

hadn't renewed myself in the Lord. I had let the devil steal my joy and my strength. Then BAM he grabbed my physical health, and that made the whole situation worse. It is important that we guard our joy. It is our strength. Rejoice in the Lord. The scripture is full of that phrase. David used it a lot in the Psalms. He had learned how to encourage himself, and how to keep his joy, in spite of the storms. Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in His Word. Rejoice in His salvation. Rejoice in being able to serve Him.

Pastors, ministers, and other workers, please be careful to guard against giving out and giving out until you are down and out. Take in. Take time to feast in God's word, to drink from His Spirit, to rejoice in Him and in spending time soaking in His sweet presence. If you don't, then you will die from starvation and thirst. Renew your love.

How can your love grow? Find out about God's love for you. Find out about Jesus' love for you. Fall in love with Him. Encourage yourself in your love for Him and in His love for you. God's Word has a lot to say about His love for us, His children. Encourage yourself in the Word of God by reading these. Already we have covered many up to now throughout this book, but let's find more. Zephaniah 3:17 says, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." I love that scripture. God loves us so much that He rejoices over us with singing. II Thessalonians 3:5 is a prayer that Paul had for the church there. "And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ." Sometimes we have to patiently wait for Christ to come into the situation. Remembering, His love for us will keep us through these times. Read about this in Ephesians 3:13-21. Please read all this section of scripture because I am not going to write it all out here. We read I verse 13 that Paul isn't writing this because he is going through a great time when it is easy to remember God's love, but he is writing it during times of tribulation. He is writing it to encourage their faith in God's love. (This section of scripture won't do you a bit of good if you don't get out your Bible and read it.)

It isn't all about God's love for us. Our heart has to stay encouraged so that we are renewed in our love for God. Deuteronomy 6:5 is a verse that is repeated throughout the scripture. It is one that Jesus Himself used. "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." When Jesus quoted this he state that this was a requirement. We must guard our love for God and keep the enemy from stealing it out of our heart. Psalm 18:1 says "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." Our love is a key to our strength. Psalm 91:14-16 says, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him. With long life will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation." We love God because He first loved us. But have you ever thought about this. God loves us because we love Him. Love works two ways. Our love for Him unlocks all these things in our lives. Romans 5:8 reminds us of the number one reason why we need to love the Lord with all our heart. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What a love.

I will close this chapter with I John 3 and 4. Both chapters are filled with insights into God's love for us, and encouragement in our love for Him. I won't write this all out. Again, it won't do you any good if you don't read it. I will close with chapter 3 verse 1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Remember, you are God's child. He rejoices in loving you and in your love for Him. Love Him and let Him love you. That will guard your heart and keep you from getting holes in your breastplate.

Coming up next, we will talk about loins and girded. Find out what that is all about.

CHAPTER 7. Loins girded with truth

Our key scripture in Ephesians 6 detailing our armor says that we are to have our “loins girt about with truth”. I have always had an idea of what this was talking about, but for the book I looked up these words in the dictionary: loins and girded. In the Webster’s dictionary, loins are defined as being, “The lower part of the back between the hipbones and the ribs regarded as the region of strength and power”. To gird means “to prepare oneself for action”. To gird up your loins was defined as “getting ready to do something difficult.”

So the loins are our strongest part. It is what enables us to have the strength to do heavy lifting. I remember how they always tell you to lift something with your muscles in your torso (hip area, and upper legs) and not your back to keep from hurting your back. You can tell from that this is your area of strength. You wouldn’t know it now, but when I was younger, I was a runner. I loved to run. We had a farm with a lot of hills, and I would love to run in the fields up and down those hillsides. I knew about having strength enough to run in my loins, and in the upper part of my legs. That is what I think of the loins as being. When you see the Biology books with pictures of the muscles, the muscles in this area of your body are some of the largest in your body. The loins are where we have our strength. In the physical sense, a warrior would have to protect his loins. If he were wounded in that part of his body, he would no longer have the strength to continue fighting. He couldn’t run to either catch up to his enemy or run away from them. He might not die as quickly as he would from a head injury, or a wound to the heart or other vital organs, but he wouldn’t be able to continue fighting. The enemy would surely destroy him.

How can the truth be the greatest source of our strength? How can knowing the truth be a way to protect our strength? I guess the best place to start talking about that is to talk about the truth. This is beginning a part of this chapter in which we investigate the truth. I know that many of you may think that some of this is elementary. However, I am doing this for a couple of reason. One, because not everybody that reads this may know the truth. Two, we need to be able to give an account of what we know is true. We are called on to talk to many who are deceived, many who may be seeking the truth through a muddle of falsehoods. We need to be able to have all our facts right to be able to witness to them. This chapter will help with this.

The first time the word truth is mentioned in the Bible is in Genesis 24:27. In this story, we find that Abraham had sent his servant to go look for a wife for Isaac. God then led him to Rebekah, and the servant praised the Lord for leading him. He said, “Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham who hath not left destitute my master of his mercy

and his truth....” We need God’s truth to guide us in the right direction. Here are more scriptures about God being a God of truth. Exodus 34:6, Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalms 25:10, Psalms 40:11, Psalm 91:4, Psalm 100:5, Psalms 119:151. (Now just reading these references won’t do you any good. Remember to get out your Bible and read them.)

God is a God of truth. He is true. He is the only real God to serve. I was witnessing to someone who was getting caught up in some eastern religion. They were telling me about it. I broke in really quick. I told her that wasn’t for me because I needed to serve a God who was a winner, not a loser. That got her attention. I went on to say that my God raised His Son from the dead. If I am going to serve a God I want Him to have that kind of real power. If the people in her particular religion could say that, I am sure that they would have. To be able to make that kind of statement and not be considered entirely crazy, it would have had to be proven. It was proven that Jesus rose from the dead. (Just a few little added facts here. It is a historical fact. That is why no other religion can claim this. There had to be proof that it was true before something so out of the ordinary could be accepted as the truth. To start with, Jesus appeared to thousands of people after He rose from the dead. He spent 40 days on the earth, teaching people after He came back from the dead. His death was on public record. Hundreds saw Him die. When He came back from the dead you can be sure it caused a stir. It was talked about all over for years. It was written down and recorded as historical fact, not only in the Bible, but also in lots of other historical documents. It is a proven fact.) Then I told this lady that I was only going to serve a God who could send His Spirit to come inside my heart to help me to do those things that He asked me to do. Her god required her to keep trying to get it right even if she had to be re-incarnated several times before she could get it right. I knew my God was real and true because He lives in me. I am not worshipping some dead guy, or some freaky looking weird thing with several arms. I am not worshipping a god who lives somewhere in the cosmos who can’t contact me. I want a real true God. I want one that will walk with me, lead me, and keep me through the storms. I told her to leave me alone with her junk and she really needed to consider coming over to the winning side because I could tell from her messed up life that her god wasn’t working too good for her.

Praise God that we have a true God, and we know the truth. I have praised God many times for that. That is the basis of this whole thing. We need to know the truth. We need to know that we know that we know the truth. How can we witness to the world if we don’t really know this down in our heart? Now you may think I was a little hard on this lady, but hell will be harder on her if she doesn’t accept Jesus. I just told her the truth in a way that should shock her into some sort of reality. Sure it may have made her mad, but mad is better than a little pat on the back that leads someone to do nothing about changing. We don’t need to apologize to people for the truth when we are witnessing to them. Declare it boldly.

By the way, you hear people say all the time that there is only one God. The Moslems worship Him in their way, the Christians worship Him in their way, and the Indian

religions worship Him in their way. Each religion worships Him in a different way. That is such a lie. The God of Christianity is a God of love. The God of the Moslems is not. Is God a schizophrenic, a split personality? The God of Christianity requires holy living? Does the God of these other religions? Does the God of each religion require of their people the same things? If he doesn't then he is a weirdo that can't make up His mind. That isn't the kind of God that I serve. You can get to know God. You can have a relationship with Him that is real. He will guide you into truth. The truth is the truth, and there is only one truth. That is the nature of the truth. I want to serve a God that is true, not a schizophrenic liar. How can everybody that has a totally different belief be serving the same God that is guiding them into truth?

We serve the one true God. One way we know that is through His Word. Down through the years I have witnessed to people who asked this: how do we know that the Word of God is true. (As I said earlier, this chapter is a great resource to use when you are witnessing to people.) You need to know how to answer people when they ask the things that I have brought up in this chapter. Here are some facts to share. First let's look at what the Bible says about itself. Let's go to the source. Here are some scriptures.

Psalm 119:89 says, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." From the beginning of time to the end of time, God's Word will stand.

I Peter 1:25 tells us, "But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Here are some more verses about God's Word:

Jesus said this about the Bible in Matthew 24:35, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."

Psalm 119:105 tells us, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

Psalm 119:47-48 says, "And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved: and I will meditate in thy statutes."

The main reason why the Bible was written is found in John 20:31, "But these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

God's Word will last forever, even though from the beginning of time there has been a battle against it. Even though many have tried through time to destroy it, it still stands as a number one best seller. Why? Because God said in His Word that it would. So it is and so it has been. What other book comes with that kind of guarantee? Why can the Bible make the kind of promises that it does? Can another book say what this book says about itself? What makes the Bible different from other books? The main difference has

to do with its author. The Bible was written over a 1,500 year span for over 40 generations by over 40 authors from every walk of life. Yet every part of it from start to finish agrees. All of the separate parts of it that were written by all those authors agree just as if one author had written it. It is written about controversial issues. Churches today can't even agree on the issues discussed in the Bible. Yet all of those authors from all those thousands of years agreed. The neat thing about this is that most of them didn't have the rest of the Bible to read before they wrote their part. The Bible as the whole book that it is today didn't come about until most of the different authors wrote their separate parts. Then it was put together later. So each author wasn't looking at what others had written and adding to it. How could it be that their part agreed with what was already written?

Even though there were several men who helped write the Bible, God is the author. That is why throughout the Bible it is referred to as being God's Word. Jeremiah 36:2 tells how the Bible was written. In this verse God tells Jeremiah to get a scroll and write down the words that God spoke to him. That is how it was written. God told people what to write, and they wrote it. Ezekiel 1:3 tells how the book of Ezekiel was written. "The Word of God came expressly unto Ezekiel, the priest...and the hand of the Lord was there upon him." Acts 1:16 tells us about something that happened in Acts, "Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus." The Holy Ghost will speak through and to people. In II Peter 1:21 we read, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." God's Spirit told people what to write and they did. That is why the Bible is such a different book.

I've had people ask me this. Anyone can say that God told them to write something, and then just write anything. How do we know that this might be what happened? The hundreds of prophecies that are in the Bible prove that God's Spirit led people what to write. There are hundreds of prophecies in the Bible. There are over 300 prophecies that are just about Jesus, His life on earth and how He died. We can even read in the Bible about things that are happening today. How can this be so? God knows everything. Time means nothing to God. He is so big that in the past He could see the future. He knows your future as well as He knows the day you were born. He knows all the details about you all through time. He even knows how many hairs are on your head. Matthew 10:30 says, "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." He is different than us. In Isaiah 55:9, God tells us, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Time, future or past, is all the same to God. He knows everything. So thousands of years ago He was able to tell the Bible's writers what is going to happen even today.

Let's talk about some of the prophecies in the Bible that were written about Jesus. Here are only a few of them. Keep in mind that these verses were written sometimes hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Micah 5:2 said that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

We read in the Christmas story that this was so and how that came about. I am sure that the king that declared that they should go to their families' birth city to be taxed didn't read the scriptures and decide to make this decree so that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem. Isaiah 50:6 says that they would spit on Jesus and pluck his hair. We read in Mark, written hundreds of years later, that is what happened. Isaiah 53:5 tells us that Jesus would have stripes. Hundreds of years after that was written the Roman soldiers whipped Jesus with a whip leaving stripes on His back. Psalms 69:21 says that they would give Jesus vinegar to drink when He was on the cross. We read in the book of John that they did. In Psalms 34:20 it says that not any of Jesus' bones would be broken. At the time when Jesus was crucified, it was customary for the Romans to break the legs of those who were hanging on the cross. The Bible says in John that the soldiers didn't break Jesus' legs. These are only a few of the prophecies about Jesus in the Bible that came to pass. Remember, there were over three hundreds prophecies in the Bible concerning Jesus and every single one of them were fulfilled.

The prophecies that were written about Jesus aren't the only prophecies in the Bible. There were prophecies about who would be King, which country would be the most powerful, which countries would fall, which countries would try to overthrow other countries, cities that would be destroyed, and much more. There are even prophecies about certain things that are happening overseas today that were written about in the Bible. Through all this we can see that it is easy to know that the Bible was written because God told the people what to write. How else could all these prophecies have been true? All this just further proves that the Bible is true.

God is true. His Spirit is true. His Word is true. And His Son is true. If we believe in God's Word, then we believe in Jesus. John 1:1-18 talks about Jesus. Read that section of scripture because I am not going to write it all here. It tells us that the Word was God and came out from God to be a Light, which would light every man. It tells us that the Word became flesh and dwelled among us giving us power to become the sons of God. He was the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. John 8:31 and 32 tells us, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." To be free we have to know the truth. We can't waver in doubting whether or not we know it. We have to be established in the truth. We have to be fully persuaded. If we are not, then we will not have strength to overcome the enemy. If we are not walking in the truth, then our loins are exposed, the source of our strength is exposed to the enemy. We will become weak in the battle and easily destroyed.

We know that it is important to walk in the truth. We have talked about that many times throughout this book. How can we know that what we believe is the truth? In I John 2:27-28 we find clues as to how we can know. We will talk about this verse many times in this book in different aspects. "But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye

shall abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.” The Holy Ghost will teach us. God will lead us to His truth. The key is to get to know the Author. Then get out His Word and read it. We serve a risen Savior. He can reveal His Word to you if you just seek Him. You have to seek Him. You can’t seek your denomination teaching, you can’t seek your pastor’s word for it, and you can’t seek your teacher’s word for it. To find the truth you have to seek the Lord to reveal it to you through His Spirit. You have to get out His Word and seek His face.

Matthew 7:7-8 says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Sometimes we don’t have the truth because we aren’t asking, knocking, and seeking. It is easy to take somebody else’s word for it. Sometimes we do this because the truth isn’t convenient. The truth will knock our sin right out from under us. I am reminded of someone we knew who was in church. He had a sin that he was holding on to. Bishop Goad asked him if he wanted to be delivered from the devil that was controlling his life. He answered that he really didn’t want to because he had too much fun with it. Today that man is a wreck; his family is a wreck and his home in shambles. He is a mental basket case. The wages of sin is death whether we think at the time that it is fun or not. The truth of God will help us to be free, to be delivered from our sins. We just have to be willing to let them go. Just be sure that you don’t twist the truth of God’s word to suit you. That is one fast track to hell. Be willing to seek, knock, and ask. God will open up His Word to you.

The first chapter of Romans warns against turning the truth of God into a lie. Read this. It is surely a message to our society today in the United States and abroad. Why is our country in such a shamble? Because the church stopped proclaiming the truth and it twisted the truth to be able to meet its own needs. When you study the history of our country (and of the world), there have been several times when the course of history and of our country was changed because of revivals that were often called Great Awakenings. So many people were saved in moves of God that the whole country was changed. The church has a powerful influence. If the church had become a lighthouse to light the world, we wouldn’t have the mess in our country that we have today. We can blame our president and our politicians all we want to. It may be time to blame the church.

Just after the Lord came into the city of Jerusalem riding on the foal of an ass, hearing the cries of “Hosanna to the Son of David”, he went into the temple. There were a lot of things going on there that had nothing to do with God. There were the people who sold the animals for the sacrifices, and the moneychangers. They were cheating those who came to the temple. Jesus in His anger ran them out. Yes, He got angry. Matter of fact, He got angry more than once. We think that we aren’t supposed to get angry at unrighteousness, and the way that people do. We think that we aren’t supposed to get angry and stand against those who are deceiving the sheep with their lies. We think that we are not supposed to get angry when we stand up for the truth. If you believe that,

what about this? Jesus got angry enough to drive them out. I believe that we are losing our freedoms because the church has failed to stand up for what is right. The church has failed to stand up for the truth. We haven't known the truth. We lost our strength to stand. We didn't get angry when they began to take prayer out of schools. We didn't get angry when they told us to take the 10 commandments down out of our public places. We were taught that it was wrong to get angry. What a deception. No wonder the devil came in and slipped that one in on us. It is good to get angry. If we don't, we will lose all our freedom. It is time to declare the truth, to live the truth, to stand up for the truth. We had better get angry at what the enemy is doing to us, to our households, to our churches, and to our countries.

It is also time to preach and teach the truth. I want to take time to talk about the dangers when pastors, teachers, and ministers fail to declare the whole truth to people. The Bible tells us in Ezekiel 33 that as watchmen over his flock, if we warn people about their sin, and they refuse to listen, then they will be judged, but it will not be laid to our charge. It tells us that if we fail to warn them, and they are judged for their sin, then it will be laid to our charge. What kind of table are you setting for those who eat at your table? Are you preaching the truth that will set them free? Are you warning them of the pitfalls of sin and of the enemy? This is the kind of pastors that the Lord wants you to be. Read Jeremiah 3:15, "And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding." Acts 20:28 says, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made overseers to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Let's take time to look at Ezekiel 13, especially concentrating on verses 22 and 23. Please read the whole chapter. This chapter talks about some builders that were building a wall. Many of them were putting untempered mortar on the wall over top of where other builders had put good mortar. Can you imagine what that would do to a wall? What if this wall was the fortification of a city and the people depended on this wall to be safe from the enemy? That is what the truth is, a strength against the enemy. These builders were putting mortar on the wall that had no chance of standing up. They were declaring things to God's people that were not true. God is very particular over His people. He constantly warns throughout the Bible about failing to be good shepherds over His flock. You see, those people in your congregation who sit under you to hear God's Word are His people. He is very protective, very concerned about His people. He loves them enough that He sent His Son to die for them. Here in this chapter He declares the wrath that He will have on those who fail to declare the truth in full counsel as He sends it to His people. Now let's go to verses 21- 23. It is a very timely scripture for today's church. "Your kerchiefs also will I tear, and deliver my people out of your hand, and they shall be no more in your hand to be hunted; and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Because with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life: Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the

LORD.” Wow, what a warning. It is dangerous to fail to declare the truth in full counsel to those you minister to or teach. Now I am not saying this to scare you from becoming a minister if that is what God is calling you to do. I am saying it so that you consider this and ask God to help you to do this with care.

When I talk about the truth, I am not just talking about our need to stand against sin. I am also talking about all the aspects of God’s Word. If all you do is preach against sin, you won’t empower people. You won’t enable them to stand. You will only cause them to be defeated. Tell them about what it means to be a child of God. Tell them about the authority that they have over the enemy. Tell them about how God’s Spirit lives in them enabling them to do supernatural things. Tell them about the anointing of God. Tell them about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and how that will enable them and make them bold enough to stand. Tell them all the truth. Be careful not to get caught up in something that is not the truth. I am not just talking to the pastors and ministers here. We all need to be careful that we don’t get in a “study rut”. Sometimes we can get off on one tract, or a tangent to the side. I see this so often. It may be a tangent to study the history of Israel. Or a tangent to study angels. Or a tangent to study prophecy. Or a tangent to study archaeology through the Bible. All these things are fine, but many times if we aren’t careful, the enemy will get us started down detours and we will get lost because we lose site of the main road. The things that will help us be strong and victorious are often not the things that people popularly study. By that, I mean often people as a whole seem swept away in certain issues, or topics. These are popular issues or topics. Everybody is talking about them. It won’t be issues like the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, or your spiritual authority, or faith, or issues that will strengthen and enable you. It will often be vain, empty things when you really consider them that won’t enable you. We need to concentrate on the whole Bible, and not get off into side trails.

Not knowing the truth will be a huge hole in your armor. What will happen to those that don’t love and seek the truth? Read II Thessalonians 2:9-17. Not only are we to know the truth, we are to walk in the truth and to be filled with His truth. Joshua 24:14, I Samuel 12:24, Psalm 25:5, Psalm 51:6, II Timothy 2:4. We are required to speak the truth in Ephesians 4:14-15 and II Timothy 4:3-4. We are required to obey the truth in I Peter 1:22.

We talked earlier about how Paul was well acquainted with the battle. We read his own words in II Corinthians 6:6 and 7 of how he overcame. “By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left...” The word of truth and the armor of righteousness held him. I have heard Bishop Goad say many times, “If you stand for the truth, the truth will stand for you.” He knows about battles. He has been in the ministry for nearly 50 years. I have heard him say, “If you are going through a battle, it isn’t because you are doing something wrong, it may be because you are doing something right. If the devil isn’t fighting you, it may be because you are on his side.” I have watched him many times through the 30 years that I have

been a part of his ministry take the high road even when it was the hard road. I have watched him make a stand for the truth when it really hurt. I have seen him obey God even though the road he took was not a popular road, and it was going to cost him. I have seen him stand for the truth over and over through the years. I have also watched the Truth stand for him. When it looked like all was lost, at the last minute God would come through. Today he is still here, proclaiming the victory and he is preaching the same truth that he was preaching 30 years ago when I first met him. You see, the truth doesn't change. It will always be the same. If you stand for that truth, preach that truth, live in that truth, it will stand for you.

To close this chapter I want to quote the prayer that John wrote to the elect lady and her children whom he loved. I am sure that we are part of who he was writing to. We read this in II John 1:3-4, "Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love." May one day he tell you, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father."

Just as a footnote here, we read in that last verse that John wanted to rejoice that he found their children walking in truth. There is no greater legacy that we can leave our children than the knowledge of the truth. I see so many children who have little hope of finding the truth because they didn't grow up hearing it. They grew up in homes where people professed to be Christians, but who lived the opposite. They grew up in homes where the parents knew the truth but didn't walk in the victory it brings. Or they heard some false religion or didn't hear any truth at all. It is sad to say, but I have watched kids grow up without the truth, and their children reaped disaster in their own lives because they didn't have the truth. Then their children did the same. What kind of legacy are you leaving your children, your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren, and your great-great grandchildren? Do they hear the truth from you? Do they see the truth at work in your life? Is that truth something that will strengthen your family generations from now?

So how do you avoid having holes in your armor that is protecting your loins, your strength? Seek the Lord. Seek His Spirit. Get out His Word. Let Him reveal His Word to you. Let Him reveal His Truth. Refuse to walk in half-truths. Refuse to compromise on the Word of God. Declare the full counsel of his word to those you minister to. If you aren't a minister or teacher, declare it to those around you. Declare it to your children. Don't just declare it, but live it before them. Don't be like the people who say, "Do as I say, not as I do." Say it and do it. God's Word is powerful. It won't return forth void. Stand for it and it will stand for you. The enemy can't stand against the truth of God's Word. Your loins will be girded and you will stand powerful in God's truth.

Coming up next we are going to talk about shoes.

CHAPTER 8.

Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel

There are so many different kinds of shoes. There are sandals, tennis shoes, and boots. There are zillions of different kinds of things that people put on their feet. I am a practical kind of person when it comes to shoes. I like comfort over style. I am very practical in regards to shoes, too. I have been known to wear my farmer style boots to school during snowstorms, especially during the one that brought us nearly two feet of snow. I love tennis shoes for my work wear. I especially like the kind of footwear that soothes your feet when you have to stand and walk a lot. I am not a really small person; we won't go into this subject more than just briefly mentioning that fact (☺). I also am bad to walk on the edges of my feet slightly, just enough so that I wear out a pair of shoes quickly. To make a long story short, I wear out the insides of shoes. I will start having terrible pains in my knees and legs. When I first started having these pains, before I figured out it was my shoes, I would wonder what was going on. Now I am not a very active person as far as getting out and running. But if I were to be, it would probably have wrecked my legs and knees before I figured out what the problem was. We don't think about our feet as being that important until we start having problems with them. Now if I were to be a soldier in Bible times, I would have a serious problem because of my footwear. I have an understanding about the importance of the right shoes. The right footwear can make your life much easier, and it could definitely cause you either to win or to lose a war.

When I started thinking about what to write in this chapter, I thought about Washington at Valley Forge. These guys were fighting in the middle of winter. They didn't have a lot of money for supplies during this part of the war. They actually wore out their shoes. Many of them had rags wrapped around their feet for shoes. You would think that this would have cost them the victory, but their determination caused them to win. I think that part of the reason was that the enemy underestimated them and didn't expect them to do what they did to stand against them because they knew the condition that they were in. They didn't expect them to be able to march, and stand, and fight. The right footwear is definitely important. Even today in military training they concentrate on training soldiers on how to take care of your feet. If a soldier were to show up on the battlefield in her spiked high heels, either she would be immediately escorted off the field to change, or she would be psychologically examined. If we lose our feet, we lose our ability to stand, to move, to advance against the enemy. We lose our ability to fight. Taking care of feet is important.

When we talk about shoes, I am also reminded of the Roman soldiers. The Romans built a huge road system that they used to control nearly the entire world. (By the way, when I was in Romania we drove on Roman built roads that are still being used centuries later.

The Department of Transportation in the US should definitely take lessons from these guys.) For 200 years the Romans ruled to the extent that they had peace because they were the only ones in control. That peace was called the Pax Romana, the Roman peace. They were able to control the world around them by using these roads. They were so important because their military was constantly marching. You could imagine the territory that they had to cover. They had been able to conquer because of these marches. They had advanced around this part of the world on their feet. It is the same in the spiritual sense. We need to protect our feet. That is what we use in our war against the enemy. It is also what we advance with.

How does God tell us to protect our feet? Let's read in our key scripture in Ephesians 6:10-18 what we are to use to protect our feet. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace". Now for years I missed what this meant. For years, I thought that it was the Gospel of peace that we were to use to protect our feet. I missed the key words in there. That is the words "preparation of". It isn't the Gospel that protects our feet; it is the preparation of the Gospel.

At first you may think that preparation means studying and getting ready to spread the Gospel. I believe that is a part of it, but only a part of what this is talking about. It is truly important to prepare yourself with the Gospel to be able to carry the Gospel. A lot of the pulpits are a mess because those carrying the Gospel didn't study out the scriptures. That is important. However, I don't really think that is all that this is talking about. The feet are what we advance on. We march forward. We take territory with our feet more so than any other part of our body that is protected with armor. Yes, we use them to fight, but we use them to advance more than that. How do we advance in the war against the enemy? The greatest advance that we can make is by spreading the Gospel. That is how we advance and take in new territory.

Now at first you may think I am surely just talking to pastors, and ministers, and teachers since they are the ones that prepare the Gospel. If that is true then you could go on from there to assume that they are the only ones who need to protect their feet. We know that isn't so. So we know that we all need to do the preparation of the Gospel. We have talked often in this book about how we are all called. We are all supposed to be obedient.

Let's look at a sheep field for a minute. Where do baby sheep come from? Why that is a dumb question, you might think. They come from mom and dad sheep. Do they come from the shepherd? It may be his job to shield and protect and lead the sheep, but does he have baby sheep? Not unless evolution is really true and stranger than we thought. No, the sheep are the ones who have the sheep. Let's go for a minute to the church and take up that same thought. Is the pastor supposed to be the one to beget sheep? Who is? Is that how it is in most churches? Who is the only one who feels the responsibility of begetting sheep in most churches? What about you? When is the last time that you led someone to the Lord? When is the last time that you had a burden to lead someone? The church as a whole has lost its focus. No wonder many churches are dying. There is no

one with a concern to lead the lost to the Lord. Churches no longer have visitation teams. They only sit with a handful of people because that is more comfortable and have dug in there until the Lord comes back. What a sad way to meet the Savior who died for the world. Is that how you want to meet Him?

I am reminded of a parable that Jesus told found in Luke 14. This talked about a man who had a great supper. He invited lots of people. When it was time for the supper, he sent word that he was ready. They all began to make excuses about why they couldn't come right then. When the servant came back and told him what they had done, the master got angry and told his servant to go out into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. The servant did that. Then he told the servant to go into the highways and hedges, and compel them come in that his house would be full. In verse 24 Jesus said, "For I say unto you that none of these men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

There are two points to this parable. In the parable we see those who made excuses because they were too busy doing their own little thing to do what God wanted them to do. The end result of that is that they didn't get to come to His supper. If you are going to miss a supper, that is definitely not the one you want to miss because you are too busy to obey the Lord. The other main point I feel in this scripture is Jesus' command to "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And His command to "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled". I am reminded of the "Great Commission" which was Jesus last sermon while on earth found in Matthew 28:18-20, "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." This was something important enough that this was the last thing recorded in Matthew that He told His disciples. His words echo to us today. Go.

One of the last one on one conversations with a disciple that was recorded in John is found in John 21:15-18. Here Jesus was talking to Peter. He asked Peter if he loved Him. He answered Jesus, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Jesus then told him, "Feed my lambs." This happened three times. I have heard many times that the reason why Jesus asked him this three times was because Peter had denied him three times. Whether that is why, or whether it was just so important that Jesus emphasized it three times, both lead to the conclusion that this was important for Jesus to tell Peter. It was also important for all the disciples to hear. You see, all the disciples were martyred for their faith except for John who was exiled to an island. (Read the rest of Jesus conversation in verses 19-24. Talk about prophecy being fulfilled.) They had to pay a price to feed the Lord's sheep. They didn't stop until the day they died. In Revelation 6:9 they were among those privileged to have died for the Lord.

I want to address the churches today that are persecuted. New Life Ministries continually works with people around the world through both its minister association that ordains and licenses over 300 ministers and through New Life Bible College and Seminary that has over 50 extension colleges in around 20 different countries. We see this fact continuously. We in the US are spoiled and privileged. We complain about all that we are going through for the Lord. I used to do this until our ministry grew around the world. Every day we are in contact with many from other countries, and in most of these countries the church is under fire, under persecution. We in the US have no idea of what that even means. One of our courses, Crisis Management, was written mainly for overseas churches where there is persecution. Many of the US students can't even relate to what the book is portraying, it is so far removed from what we have to go through. Many times, I have had pastors and college administrators email to tell us to pray for a situation that was life threatening. In many of the countries where we have colleges, there are 3% Christians and over 90% Moslems. We think we have it hard in the US where every once in a while they kill many of us at a time. Every day in some countries Christians are being killed for their faith. I am honored and humbled by those who dare to establish colleges in these areas, and by those students who dare to attend. The Word of God is precious to these precious saints. We hear of many dying for their faith. They believe in what they are standing for. There is no compromise. The church under fire is a pure church. There aren't those who say they are saved, but they are far from God. To say you are saved in these countries you had better be close to God and obeying Him.

I am reminded of something that the Lord showed me many years ago. At the time, I didn't realize fully what He was showing me. He showed me a light shining. It was day, and you could barely see the light. Then the daylight in the room began to grow dim. As it grew dimmer, the light that was there shone brighter. When the room was totally dark, the light shone with such a bright light that it shone with a supernatural glare. As things get worse, as the world gets darker around you, that light that you hold will shine brighter. The truth will shine brighter. The light of the Spirit of the Lord, His anointing, will shine brighter.

It takes darkness for the light to shine at its brightest. The darkness can't put out the light. It will only cause it to shine brighter. If you live where you are risking your life for the truth, let it shine. Let it light up the darkness. It will.

I want to encourage those who are risking their lives for the truth. Throughout the scripture the Lord honors those who have made a stand for the truth, especially those who risk it all to stand. Stand for the Truth, and the Truth will stand for you. Don't let the enemy or fear cause you to back away from the full truth. Declare the Lord's full counsel. I am reminded of a pastor who smuggled Bibles in Romania during the days of communism. He confessed to me that at one time he had considered quitting doing this because he had been caught and beaten nearly to death. He admitted that he had slowed down a little while because of this. He was repenting because of this. (Later I heard him say that this wasn't the first time that he had been beaten.) The amazing part of this story

is that he started smuggling again only a few weeks after he had been beaten. Today he will tell you that everything he went through was worth it all. One day, when he stands before the Master that he loved so dearly, he will hear those words, “Welcome home thou good and faithful servant. Enter in to your reward.” It will surely have been worth it all. Hold true faithful and true servants. It will surely one day be worth it all. I believe that when we stand before the Lord, we will know those who we led to Him. I believe that the Lord will reveal that. You will see their faces, and know them. It will have been worth it all.

I want to talk to you in the US for a moment. We can't get off our comfortable behinds enough to visit. We are too afraid that someone will think badly of us if we tell him or her the truth. We don't want to get our feelings hurt by being rejected. Come on. It is time that we get real. The world is dying and going to hell and we are too busy in our rat-race world to do anything about it, or to even care. We are to go to the hedges and highways and compel them to come. If we don't get more real than many of us are about this, according to Jesus' parable, we may be some of those that He forbids to come.

Matthew 25:33-46 tells us about how God will separate the goats and the sheep. Please read it. Verse 44-46 sums it up. “Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.” How important is to get involved in reaching out to the lost? Very important indeed. How important is it to reach out to those in need? Very important indeed. How important is it to get real about serving God? Very important indeed. How important is to obey the Lord when He tells you to get up and get out and do something? Very important indeed. Is this only for pastors, preachers, teachers, missionaries, and evangelists? If it is, then the only people who will be in heaven will be them. What do you think?

Think with me for just a minute. Where would you be today if saints of God hadn't obeyed the Lord and reached out to you when you were yet in your sin? Where would you be if saints of God hadn't obeyed when you were new in the Lord? Where would you be if saints of God hadn't obeyed when you were weak and needed encouragement, when you were in need of prayer, when you were in need of a Word from the Lord, when you needed to have something confirmed that He told you? We need the body of Christ. We need people to obey the Lord. That is all the more reason why we need to obey the Lord and reach out. We need our feet to be busy about the Lord's work.

I had been saved as a child, but when I got into my early adult years I left the Lord behind. Like the prodigal son, I wanted to see what the world was all about. I found out. It only took me a few years to totally wreck my life. I was a bad sinner. I wasn't smart enough to stay away from some things, so I dove in headfirst. I was an evil sinner in that I did what I could to turn people away from the Lord. I think that I did this because in

my heart I wanted someone to stand up so that I would see that it did work to serve the Lord. I didn't find anyone who had enough God to stand up to me and to witness to me. My family held onto me, but no one else did. I went for years, and there was no one who tried to be a light into my darkness. It is so important to be a light even when the person you are trying to be a light to is shaking their head no with all their heart. Just because they are running in the other direction that doesn't mean that they won't one day come back home. Stay true. Keep loving. Keep believing. Keep witnessing. Hold on to them with both hands even when they are pulling away with all their might. When is the last time that you tried to hold onto someone for the Lord?

One thing that will help us to be serious about getting busy for the Lord is to realize that yes, there is a hell and yes, it is fearsome and it is eternal. We have watered down the truth so much that many in the church don't acknowledge that there is a hell. If they do acknowledge, they believe that it is only for the very worst people, the scum that don't deserve heaven. That isn't what the Word of God says. It is for those who do not accept Jesus as their Lord, have a relationship with Him, and walk in obedience to His voice and His Word. When you think of this, how many people around you really are going to heaven? If there has ever been a time to stand up for the truth, and declare the truth to those we love, that time is now. Hell is real. We need to get a glimpse of its fires. Some of the greatest soul winners that I have known are those who prayed to get a glimpse of what hell was like and God, through a dream, showed them. When we as a church get the knowledge of how hot hell is and how many are heading in that direction, then we will get real in what we do to prevent it. We won't have to be dragged out to obey God. We will be out there more than one time a month. We will be talking to those lost loved ones, even if we risk a family feud. We will be reaching out to those neighbors, even if we are afraid that they might reject us. We'll be talking to the unsaved at the office even if we lose popularity. We'll turn off that TV and hit our knees in prayer for the lost. Let's get real church.

I have written a book titled, *Water That Doesn't Run*. It talks about the dangers of being a church or a person that doesn't reach out for the Lord. When we are not actively obeying God, we get stagnant like pond that doesn't run. Here is the introduction for that book. *I almost hate to illustrate the theme of this book in the way that I am about to. That is such a beautiful poetic title. Here goes. I grew up on a farm. Many of the neighboring farms around us had ponds on their farms. Now this is not to be confused with the beautiful little lakes that are placed strategically in subdivisions for scenic purposes. These were holes that were dug out of the dirt and filled with water so that the cattle or whatever livestock would have a place to drink. The cattle or sheep or whatever would come in to drink at the pond. They would stir up the mud and silt. They would leave behind deposits. I have no idea why a pond for drinking water becomes the favorite bathroom spot. Guess that shows you one of the things that separate man and beast. Flies gathered there and all manners of those insects and larva that surround that sort of stuff. All kinds of scummy type characters would begin to hand around. The livestock would use all this to wallow in, rolling around in the filth and mud. This didn't help. Not a very*

clean place to play. When we were little, before germs were invented to bind up the undelivered souls that fall prey to this fear, we would climb out on little docks that were built over the water and jump in. Hey, water is water, and wet and cool is wet and cool on these hot July days. The middle of the pond was a little better than the outside edge, but only a little. Have you ever heard the phrase “filthier than pond scum”? A farm pond was probably the place where this saying was born. The filth around the edge of the pond often collected in the middle in a foamy slimy scum. This would ferment in the sun. You have to admit that even though this scene isn’t beautiful it is descriptive. I have a reason for wanting to be so descriptive. Just bear with me. Whenever you think of water that doesn’t run, I want you to picture this so that you never become like a farm pond.

You can imagine our joy when we got to go to the lake in the summer. It was beautiful and scenic with wonderful clear clean water. No scum. Fresh water. What a joy. What was the difference? No cows or sheep for one thing, but even if there were, it wouldn’t have made that much of a difference. You see in nature, water is made to run. Water is made to cycle. Man made ponds have no inlet or outlet for water to flow. They were just a hole dug in the ground that was filled by some artificial means. There is no flow of the water. So the filth that collected stayed there, stagnated, and turned to scum.

Too many times both we as Christians and our church as the body of Christ becomes like the pond. We need to keep the water flowing. We need to have both an inlet and an outlet to be an effective river of life that flows. One inlet is the Holy Ghost who brings this living water. If we allow Him to flow in our lives and hearts, and we allow him to flow in our church services as well, we will keep our pond clear and flowing free. This is the inlet, the source of our water. Jesus told the woman at the well in John 4:14, “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” We have a river of life, Christians. We have a river of life, church, that the world is dying to drink. We need to keep this river flowing in our hearts and in our midst as a church.

We also can keep water flowing by having an outlet. Matter of fact, if water doesn’t flow out, no matter how much fresh clear water comes in, it won’t help the water there to stay clear and clean and life sustaining. One example of this in nature is the Dead Sea. It is 1,292 feet below sea level, the lowest sea. It is the lowest body of water in the world. As you can imagine, it has lots of inlets, but the water never flows out. Since it is in a hot climate, the sun evaporates the water from the sea. This leaves a very high concentration of salt. It has such a high concentration of salt that things cannot sink. It would certainly be a great place to learn to swim. It has such a high concentration of salt that it kills things for miles around. The salt that actually preserves in other instances is in such a high concentration that it kills. Hence the name “Dead Sea”. Many times we as Christians and we as the church, the body of Christ, become like the Dead Sea.

Things flow in, but nothing ever flows out. We hide ourselves away from the world and become wrapped in our own little world. Instead of bringing life to those around us,

instead of being the salt of the earth, we actually kill those around us. At least the Dead Sea just kills vegetation and the animals that are foolish enough to drink from its waters. Tragically, when we as Christians or as the body of Christ collectively become stagnant we unwillingly bring spiritual death to those around us, even to those who are foolish enough to drink at our waters.

We as both a church and as a child of God need to make sure that both your inlet and outlets are running with clear life giving water from the rivers of life, Jesus Christ.

We need to be sure that we are going about the Lord's business, and we aren't becoming like a stagnant pond. If we want to stay alive and be able to go forward, to advance in our battle, we need to put on our shoes and be shod with the preparation of the Gospel. We will die if we do not. Being a Christian is an active, participating thing. It is not like a spectator sport. But so many of us live that way. We go to church on Sunday and relax in thinking that is all that is required of us. We are missing most of what this is all about.

I want to talk a little about pottery. I worked at a thrift store for several years. It was a huge thrift store that had about everything imaginable in it. There were some pottery pieces that were just totally for decoration. They weren't for any purpose, just for looks. You could tell this by the way that they were designed, and by the way they were fired. They were too fragile to serve any great purpose. Then there were pieces that you knew by looking at them they were designed for a purpose. They were sturdy enough to hold up to whatever they were used for. They were useful. That was the kind of pottery that I liked. Let's take this into the spiritual realm for a second. What kind of a vessel are you? Are you tried in the fire and proven so that you can hold up to whatever the Lord uses you for? Can He count on you to be a vessel that He can use? If you aren't, then how can you become one?

To answer the question, let's go to a potter's house in the Bible. It is talked about in Jeremiah 18:1-4, "The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it." The Master Potter is at work. He can make you to be a work that is just what He wants you to be, if you only will yield in His hands like the clay. You may think that you are marred and that God won't be able to use you. Just let Him make you a vessel as seems good for him to make. If you really want Him to, and you yield yourself and let Him do this work, He can take even brokenness and make it a vessel of honor.

We read about some other vessels in II Timothy 2:20 and 21, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a

vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.” God can shape us, making from us a vessel prepared unto every good work.

I hear people say all the time that they can't do anything for the Lord. Who can God use? In I Corinthians 1:26-31. Read this section of scripture. I am only going to put part of it here. “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.” God doesn't want people who will prove all that they are, He wants to use people who will prove how great He is. Here is an example of this. When I first started singing for the Lord someone told me this little story to encourage me to go ahead and sing. I wasn't that good of a singer, and still am not. They told me about two singers. One was polished, and educated in voice lessons. They were very talented. The other wasn't much. But the second was praying, “Lord, I can't do this. Please use me. Please anoint me as I sing.” Which of the two could the Lord use the most. The second one of course. It isn't whether or not you are highly educated, very polished as a speaker, even very smart. It is how you are letting God work through you. That is the key to being able to do supernatural things in the Lord.

I remember when the Lord told me to help start and be the Director of our Christian School. I told God that I couldn't do it. He told me some words that have never left my spirit since that time because of how He told me. He said, “I have created the heavens and the earth. How dare you tell me that you can't do something I have told you to do”? Since that time, I think of those words every time He tells me to do something. Just like that time over 25 years ago, He enables me to do what He told me to do. If God tells you to do something, obey Him. He will enable you to do it. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. After all, you are His workmanship.

I want to for just a minute go back to our key verse and point out something that I haven't talked about. Actually, I didn't even get this thought until I was mostly through this chapter. I kept feeling like I was missing something. I thought about trying to look up the Greek translation of this verse to see if it would help me by giving me the true translation of “preparation”. I couldn't because I was snowed in with 18 inches of snow and couldn't get to my Internet access at the office. I am glad. Sometimes we try to study things out so on our own. That is good, but there is another way, and the two ways balance each other. If you really want to know what a verse is talking about, don't go to the Internet, or to your Greek dictionary, but go to the One Who wrote the verse to start with. God really gave me an insight into what this verse is talking about. I'll explain why I am putting this all at this place in this chapter in just a minute.

Here is the verse. “And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”. God kept dealing with me about the word preparation. Then He showed me something. If I am preparing for something, then that means it is coming. If I prepare for someone to

visit my house, that means they are coming. If I prepare for an event that is to take place that means that it is coming. If we prepare for things, then they themselves are going to advance. This is totally exciting. At the beginning of this chapter I mentioned that some might think that we are the ones to prepare to take the Gospel. That is so true, but there is much more here to that. The Gospel is the one that is active in this case. The Gospel is the one that is coming, the one that is advancing. We are to prepare for it, but it is the focus here. We have talked a lot about the Word of God, but we will discuss It at length in the chapter dealing with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. I do want to discuss this much. The Word of God, the Gospel, is powerful. It will not return forth void. It is active. It is coming. It is advancing. It is a seed that when planted, grows and brings forth much fruit. It has stood the test of time. The Saints of God who were lifted up and strengthened by the Word of God in the days of the Roman persecution of the church, were no less strengthened or more strengthened than us today. It is powerful. It proceeded out of the mouth of God through His prophets, and others He chose to place His Spirit in. Through that same Word, God created the heavens and the earth. It has the power to create and the power to recreate. It changes lives, minds, and hearts. It renews spirits and souls. It brings life to dead people, dead both physically and spiritually. Through faith in its pages we are saved and we come forth to a new life. Through faith in its pages, many have been resurrected in the flesh being once dead but now alive. It advances through the world seemingly sometimes without anyone carrying it because of the anointing of the Spirit of God that can dwell in minds and hearts that opens up its pages to those who have never heard the truth. It isn't just a book sitting on the shelf. It is alive. It is a living Word. It advances. We just have to prepare for it to advance. The preparation part is ours. We can't do it all. We just prepare for the Word to do it. That is our part. Then God's Word does the rest.

Here is an example. The sower of the seed in Jesus' parable about the seeds just planted the seed. Another watered it. Another tended it. Another harvested it. It was the seed though that grew. It was the seed that created the harvest. The others just tended the seed. In the parable, the seed was the Word of God. Sometimes we get ourselves focused on what we are doing instead of on the power of the seed, on the power of the anointing that anoints the seed. Many times we fail in what we are doing for the Lord because of that. Instead of seeing supernatural things at work in our ministry, we only see the natural because we are focused on our fleshly selves instead of on the supernatural Word of God that will do a work and won't turn back void. There is another reason why we fail to see the supernatural at work in our lives. It is because we are focused on ourselves and we think that we can't do anything important. We think that we can't make a difference. We are afraid of messing up. I have learned through being a teacher that sometimes those students who never succeed are those who are too afraid to try. Sometimes we fail to succeed as workers for the Lord because we are too afraid to try. I am convinced that the most powerful workers for the Lord, the most powerful preachers, the most powerful singers, the most powerful witnesses for the Lord will never realize what they can do for Him because they never dare to start, they never dare to try. They are too afraid of failure. They forget that their part is only to prepare the way for

the Gospel. They forget that it is up to the Gospel and anointing it brings to do the work. They are only to prepare for the harvest and watch the seed grow.

That is why I am putting this here instead of earlier in this chapter. We have talked about how important it is to work for the Lord. I am sure that during that time, the enemy sat on your shoulder and whispered in your ear that there is no need for you to get excited about doing something more than what you are doing because you would only fail. I want to ask you now, is this true? Will you fail if you dare to step outside of your comfort zone and declare the Gospel?

What about your neighbors who are not saved, and their lives are a wreck because God is absent? What about those at work who are so miserable in their sin, but you haven't dared to say anything because you were afraid that you couldn't really make difference? What about your children who you have watched pull further and further away from God, but in your mind you think that it is wrong to force them to go to church when they really don't want to, and you don't think that it would do much good if they went? What about those family members who are pulling further from God, and you can watch disaster coming? What about those people in the grocery line that the Lord leads you to speak to, but you are afraid to say anything to? What about the people at the gas station pumps whom the Lord leads you to witness to?

Let me share with you something someone told me. This gentleman was at a gas station pump. The Lord led him to witness to a man who was at the other pump. It was cold, and he was in a hurry. He didn't even know the man and he didn't know what to say. I am sure that the devil gave him one hundred and one reasons why he shouldn't say anything. He quickly paid and drove off. On up the road an ambulance passed him going in the direction he had just come from. He had a feeling to turn and to go back. He did and there had been a bad accident. The car he had just seen at the station had gone off the road, and the man he was supposed to witness to had died instantly in the accident. There was nothing he could do to make that right. Can God count on you to prepare for His Gospel to work? You see, this man only had to prepare for the Gospel to work. He was only to obey the Lord and tell the man what the Lord wanted Him to say. Then the Gospel would have worked. Here is another thought. Would the man have had the accident if this gentleman had obeyed the Lord and delayed him by speaking to him? We don't know. We do know this. It is important to obey the Lord.

I am putting here a chapter from my book *There Is Hope* titled *Occupy Till I Come*.

The devil is a master at lying. He has even convinced many in the church world that there is nothing to the rapture. There is no second coming of Christ. He has convinced many that there won't be a time of tribulation. If you do believe in the rapture, he will even make you feel like, hey, after the rapture, if we do miss it, things will be bad, but it will still be OK. I have even talked to some people who have swallowed the lie that it is God's will for them to miss the rapture so that they can help people after the rapture.

This all sounds good. But what is the problem with all this. It is a lie. Answer me these questions. We have God's Word freely now. We have the Spirit of God to deal with our hearts and convict us and draw us to Him. We have preachers and teachers who preach God's Word inspired by the Holy Ghost, The Spirit of God. We have churches with people who want the truth and want to go in the rapture because they love God and want to do what is right even if it is hard. We have God's people around us talking to us, encouraging us, and loving us. If you can't get things right here with all that going on for you here, you can forget getting it right after the rapture takes place. If you can't live for God now, do you really think that you will be able to live for God when the devil takes over the world, and God has turned it over to him for a season for the world to be judged? Picture the world the way it will be. You will not hear the truth of the Word of God. His Spirit will draw back and it won't deal with people's hearts. That is why it is called God's judgment. There will be no true churches with the Spirit of God operating in them. There will be no truth, no love, no peace, no joy, no hope, and the other things that God's Spirit brings us. In the middle of this will be a time so horrible that people will cry out for the rocks to fall on them wanting to die. In the meantime there will be a time so horrible that grown men will crawl on the stomach weeping like a woman having a child. If you can't do it now, you can forget doing it later. The devil will walk in the body of a man and you won't have God's Spirit to lead you in overcoming him. There will be a very, very, select group of people who will go through this and overcome, and if you aren't select now, you won't be then. Don't play games with your eternal soul. This thing isn't a game like those movies and books suggest. Things will be far worse then people could imagine, let alone find words to write. Don't swallow the devil's lies.

Do God's people have to be afraid? God knows how to keep His people who are sincere in their hearts. He knows how to polish us up and keep us clean, ready and waiting for His coming. He knows exactly when that will be. He wants to take us to be with Him. He has done everything to make this happen. He has prepared a way for us. He is the way. It is His way or no way. If you want it with all your heart, and you have your hand in His hand, He will hold it and keep you as long as you keep your hand in His. He loves you with a love that you could never imagine. There is hope for you. You don't have to be afraid.

What a glorious day it will be when we see Him in the clouds. In an instance we will be changed to be like Him. We will be perfect like Jesus. We will step into a perfect world that he has spent thousands of years perfecting for those who love His appearing. This world will last for forever. The Bible compares us to being His bride. We are the brides of Christ. We are that precious to Him. He loves us with an everlasting love. Put your hand in His. His love will certainly keep you. If you aren't ready to go, there is a thought though that keeps coming to me. It is the question, now that you know, what are you going to do about it? We can know the truth, but until we do something, it will do us no good.

Even though this may be the time leading up to the end of time, to the coming again of the Lord, there is still hope for you. There is still peace to be found in the Lord. Trust in Him. He will see you through. He loves you and He will keep you in His love.

So what do we need to do while we are waiting for the Lord to come? Do we need to sit in the shade and take it easy, because we know things will turn out OK? Do we need to fret and worry our life away, waiting for this to happen? Keep reading. We'll find out.

We mentioned before how more and more people are getting the feeling and the attitude of what is the use. They are taking the attitude that nobody is listening or caring about doing right. Because they have lost their hope, they sink back into the church pews comfortably and they wait for the Lord to come back. They have stopped trying to reach out to those around them who don't know the Lord. Or if they do see the world outside their window, most churches and most people are fighting so to survive that they don't have the energy or the strength to do more than just hold on. I believe that as time goes on that churches will give up and shut their doors because they think that the struggle to be able to keep going is too great. That is the devil's plan. Nothing could be more wrong than to quit trying at this time. We know that the Lord is coming back. Don't underestimate the importance that a victory filled life and a church that is on fire can have on the world. Don't underestimate your effectiveness as a child of God. I am talking to both young people and older people. Don't underestimate what you are able to do for the Lord.

Jesus told a parable in Luke 19 about a nobleman and his servants. If you would please, read that story. It has a lot of truths in it that will help you. This nobleman gave his servants some money to take care of and he told them to manage his affairs while he went away to another country. He told them that while he was gone they were to "occupy until I come." That meant that they were to take care of his business until he came back. When he came back he called them in to check to see if they had been good stewards of his business and of his money while he was gone. He called them in to see how much money they had gained in trading and other things while he was gone. The first one told him that he had doubled the money the nobleman had given him making him a good profit. The next one said that he had gained a half of it back. Making 1 and 1/2 times the money he had originally been given. The third one told the nobleman that he had kept his money in a napkin and hadn't done anything with it because he was afraid that if he tried to do something he would lose it. The nobleman answered him in verses 22-25, "And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him." In the parable, the nobleman

told the stewards to occupy until he came. He was angry with the one who did not do that.

I get this feeling from a lot of people. People are tired of fighting for what is right. They are tired of making a stand. They are starting to give in. They are weary. They are starting to compromise and follow after things that aren't right. They are thinking what is the use. The Lord is coming back. Things are getting so bad that what we do isn't going to change a thing. Why do we need to keep telling people they need to get saved? Even when it seems that nobody is listening. They forget about Noah. If you remember the story of Noah, nobody listened. But because he obeyed God he and his family were not destroyed. If Noah had given up because no one listened, the ones to pay for that would have been he and his family. Here is another thought. Because he obeyed and didn't give up, we are here. Through Noah God kept mankind going. He preached on, even though no one listened. He kept building, even though every one made fun of him. On the day that it started to rain, he and his family were safe in the ark. I don't care if it feels like nobody is listening and nobody else is doing right, that is no excuse for you to quit caring. It is no excuse for you to give in and act like the rest of the world. It is no excuse for you to stop trying. If you stop, what will eventually happen to you and your family? Keep on standing up for God.

The Bible talks about the watchman in Ezekiel 33. Read that section of scripture. The watchman's purpose was to stand on the wall of the city and watch for the enemy. Then he was to warn the town when the enemy approached. The Word of the Lord came to Isaiah and told him that if the watchmen sees the enemy coming and he warns the people, but they don't listen, then he is guilt free and the problem and sin is with the people. If he doesn't warn them and they get destroyed then the guilt is on his head as well. Also, it says that if he warns them and they get to safety, and then the watchmen are blessed and so are the people. So whether the people listen or not, the watchman's job is still to warn them. That is our job as Christians. It is not our responsibility to make the people do what they should, that is their job. It is our job to make a stand and warn them. It is our job to prepare the way for the Gospel, and then to let the Gospel do its work.

Jesus is the one who told the story of the nobleman and the stewards. That steward hid what he was given because he was afraid. Because of this the nobleman in the story got angry. How do you think that Jesus feels when we hide behind our church doors, and settle into compromise because we are afraid to make a stand? How do you think that Jesus feels when we hide our gifts and talents because we're afraid it is not going to change anything so why do it? How do you think that He feels when we cop out on doing what we know to do is right because everyone else is doing wrong? How do you think that He feels when we don't read His Word and we don't let His Spirit deal with our hearts because it is just too hard to make a commitment these days? How do you think that He feels? Well to give you a hint, He is the one who told the parable.

Occupy until He comes. Step out and obey God. Listen to His voice. Go where He sends you and speak what He tells you to speak. Even if it is in Wal-Mart. God has given you gifts and talents. Use them for God. One of the saddest things that I've seen are kids who are in church who have beautiful voices to sing, but they don't know any gospel song though because all they know is the words to rock music. God gave you that talent. Use it for Him. I haven't yet known anybody that got their life changed and their hope back because they listened to a rock song. God's music can change people's lives. Use your talent for God. Love the people who are around you enough to want to help them. If you have been given any talent, God gave it to you. Use it for Him. Listen to His voice. Go where He says. Do what He says to do. Let Him use you. There is a world full of hurting people dying without hope and you have the life rope that can pull them out. Don't let the devil convince you that there is no use. I am so glad that the people who have thrown me life ropes in my life didn't take the attitude that there was no use to do that because I was hopeless. They looked past the mess I was in and let God use them. You can make a difference.

You may think that you are too young to make a difference. You may think that you are too old to make a difference. Let God decide that. Just do what He tells you to do, and see. I know about an 8 year old who turned his whole country around. His country had fallen into doing some pretty evil stuff. The whole country suffered because of it. This 8 year old started serving God and turned the hearts of his countries' people back to God. This changed his whole country. His name was King Josiah. His story is found in II Kings 22 and 23. Sure he was king and that gave him a little more power. But don't underestimate what you can do. At least you can change the lives of your families and friends and those that you love. Dare to be a light. Dare to wake up and get up out of your comfortable chair. If you sleep too long, you may have your eyes shut when the Lord comes. If you shut your eyes and pretend everything is OK, that still won't change the circumstances. If you remember the parable of the virgins at the bridal feast, Jesus is coming for those who are awake spiritually and those who are working watching, and waiting for His coming.

As far as thinking that you are too old, my grandmother was a prayer warrior, powerhouse until she died at age 93. She prayed every day for over 300 people she had on her prayer list. Until she was nearly 90, her and my aunt would visit shut-ins and people who had needs. Of course, she added them to her prayer list. They would give them out scripture lessons they had put together. They would pass out and mail out hundreds of these. People who read them would call or write to tell them the results of the Gospel that they prepared the way for. Their children would come to tell them that they had been saved through their witness. No, I don't think that age has a lot to do with what you can do for the Lord. It just matters that you are willing.

Now when I first realized how soon the Lord is coming back, I started thinking about all the people around me that I love and what they are going to face. I went through these things. The first was a feeling that how could a loving God do that to people that I loved.

Then back-to-back with that feeling was the thought that maybe this rapture thing can't be true. That is a comfortable thought, but I know that the truth isn't always comfortable. So I got out my Bible and I restudied it. I listened to sound preachers who have studied. And most important I asked God and had Him show me what was going to happen. Now these are three very important steps to discover the truth, and it is important to know the truth. When all three of them line up then you can know that you have found the truth.

Then when I came to know the truth that the Lord is coming back soon, I started freaking out. I went overboard trying to cram the truth down people's throats. I did a lot of spinning around unnecessarily because I was freaking out. I did more damage than good. God spoke to my heart and told me that I needed to calm down and do one thing at a time. The first step was to hear His voice the next was to do what He said do. That is how we occupy until He comes. We just take one step at a time, one day at a time. We do the thing that the Lord says to do then He will tell you what to do next. That is how we occupy until He comes.

The Lord is coming soon, and we need to be about His business. We need to have on our shoes. To close up this chapter about shoes, lets go back and look at the key verse again. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace". Here we see one last key word. This is a Gospel of **Peace**. Why can we have peace in spite of the storm? Because of the Gospel. Why can we have peace even though the world is falling down around us? Because of the Gospel. Why can we throw up our hands and shout the victory even though many have given into despair around us? Because of the Gospel. Why can we have peace even though we know that what is going on around us is only going to get worse? Because of the Gospel. Why can we rejoice in the coming of the Lord instead of hiding in a corner afraid of our shadow? Because of the Gospel. Why do we have hope in a time that seemingly to many is so hopeless? Because of the Gospel. I praise the Lord that we have the Gospel. What better thing can we do than to spread it around?

There is one more thing to think about before we close. I remember my mother telling me this over and over when we were growing up. It is an old saying. "Idle hands are the devil's work shop." I don't worry about getting into sin, and getting into trouble. When you are at work most nights until 8:00, and some nights until 10:00, and you come home too tired to do much else, you don't have time to sin. When you are busy about the Lord's work and that is a focus in your life, you won't have time to sin. When you are obeying God and letting Him lead you, you won't be in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong people. Stay busy for the Lord and the devil won't be able to slip in and destroy your life. I know so many people who are getting their lives out of focus, and destroyed because of social media. If you don't have time for the texting obsession and for Facebook, then you can't get led astray of them. If you don't have time to hang around with the other hunters and fishermen who are constantly drinking, then you won't be tempted to drink yourself. If you don't have time for the internet, and all the sex stuff

that goes on, then it won't influence you. If you don't have time to do anything but obey God, then you will reap the blessing you can find on your life by obeying, and you will miss all the curses that come from disobedience.

Coming up next we are going to talk about our shield. Read how it is one of the most important pieces of your armor, and how to keep it polished and strong.

CHAPTER 9.

Your Shield of faith

Here is our key part in the scripture. “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” Let’s start by defining what faith is. Webster defined faith as being “unquestioning belief especially in God, loyalty, complete trust or reliance.” Paul put it this way in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. This is the beginning verse of what has been known as the “hall of faith”. Read this chapter. It has some great insights into what faith is and some of the heroes of faith. Remember when you read about these heroes and what they accomplished that they were ordinary people just like you. The thing that made them great was God, and their faith in Him.

The Bible says that without faith no man can even see God. We can’t see Him in the natural. The only way that we can go to Him is if we believe that He exists. Hebrews 11:6, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Faith is the gateway we have to go through to experience God and His ways. It is like the key to unlock everything that we receive from God.

We have to accept by faith that the Bible is the Word of God. John 5:24, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.” If we doubt that the Bible is the true Word of God, then we are wide open to be deceived and the enemy can destroy us. Our whole experience with God is based on the Bible. Our faith is based in the Word of God.

We have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that He is the door to salvation. This claim that He died, and rose again, and lives forever, and that He can come into our hearts to live today is not something that is ordinary. It is definitely out of the ordinary. It isn’t the kind of thing that naturally happens every day. It is a supernatural thing. We can only accept this by faith. John 3:15 and 16, “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

We have to believe salvation exists, and we have to have faith to be saved. Romans 10:9, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” Faith is the key that unlocks salvation.

Through faith we know that we have eternal life. We can't see heaven. It isn't just over on the next block. We read about it in God's Word, and we must have faith that it exists. John 11:25, "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Through faith we know that we can be right with God. We can't do this thing on our own. The arm of our flesh will only fail us. We have to trust in God's Spirit to enable us to do what we need to do. That only can come by faith. Habakkuk 2:4, "Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith." Philippians 3:9 says, "And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

Through faith we are able to do things for the Lord. We are able to obey Him. John 6:28-29 says, "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent."

Through faith we know that we are able to overcome this world, and the devil. In I John 5:4 we read, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Ephesians 6:16, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." We can't overcome without having faith in God.

Through faith we can receive all things that God has for us. We can't get these things because we think we are really great. We get all things that God has for us through faith in Him. A lot of times we don't receive all God has for us because we are down on ourselves. It is not faith in ourselves that unlocks the blessings of God. It is faith in Him. All things are possible through faith. Mark 9:23, "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth."

Faith unlocks prayer. If we don't believe then we won't ask. God honors faith. If we doubt when we ask, then He won't hear our prayers. We have to ask in faith believing, and He will hear. Also, if we don't believe, then we won't ask. A lot of times we don't have because we don't ask for it. We don't ask because we don't believe God will do it for us. Faith is a personal thing.

Through all these verses, we see how important our faith is. If the enemy steals our faith, then he has us. He steals away all the things that these verses promise us. If our faith grows weak, then he eventually will steal our soul. That is why keeping your faith is so important. That is why it is a battleground.

We know that our faith itself is a shield. The shield was the number one part of the armor in ancient times. Matter of fact, in some cultures, the only part of armor they had in war

was their shield. If you at least have your shield, you have a chance to stand against the enemy. I think that faith is the most important part of your armor. If your faith stands true, you can endure. So it is important to learn how to guard your faith, how to cause your faith to grow, and how to protect your faith from getting destroyed by the enemy. We need to know how to repair our faith, renew our shield when it is weakened.

I have heard people say that they didn't have any faith. These were Christians, and they were talking about how they wanted me to pray for them because they didn't have any faith to pray for themselves. I knew that wasn't true for two reasons. The first reason was that God says He has given faith to all of us. Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." The second reason was that they believed enough to know that prayer worked. The enemy tries to talk us out of the faith that we have. He tries to make us think that this thing is focused on us, and not God. True, the way we live impacts our faith. If we live like the devil, and then need to have faith in God, that won't work. But if we are genuinely with all our heart trying to serve God, then our weaknesses are not what our faith is based on. It is based on God. Don't focus on yourself. Focus on God. Getting us to focus on ourselves is one way that the enemy steals our faith.

The devil also tries to steal our faith by bringing a battle that is so strong against us that it chips away at our faith. When you are in the middle of the storm, and the waves are so high that you can't see Jesus walk on the water coming toward you, that is when you have to have faith. That is when it is harder to believe. The enemy will bring a battle against you that causes you to be weak in body, and that weakens your mind. You can't think clearly. That hinders your faith. He causes you to have such a whirlwind life that you have no time for prayer, for Bible study, for praising God. Your focus becomes the problems or other things that are around you getting you down. When you stop focusing on God, then those things can destroy your faith.

He tries to steal our faith by causing us to compromise. James 1:6 says, "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." If we are compromising on God, and we are letting sin creep in, then we are wavering. We are wishy washy. We are double minded. That destroys faith.

Another way that we lose our faith is when the battle is against us. I can remember a time when I was going through a rough season. I was really getting down. I asked the Lord to show me what was wrong. He showed me a picture in my mind of a shield. It was really beaten and banged up. It had held through the battle, but it was in rough shape. He explained that was what I was going through. The enemy had so buffeted me that he had done a number on my shield. I needed to get a new shield. I started focusing on my faith and God renewed my faith.

You see, it isn't in how much faith we have. We all have faith. We talked about that earlier. That is what God says about it in His Word. Matthew 17:20 tells us, "And Jesus said unto them, ... For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." I have heard this preached that a mustard seed is tiny and God used this as an example to show how tiny an amount of faith it takes. I think that there is another reason why He used this example. I grew up on a farm. When the season came when the wild mustard in the field bloomed, the fields were yellow with it. It spread everywhere. You couldn't keep it out of a field once it started. It wasn't the size of the mustard seed that caused it to grow. It was the fact that the mustard seed had in it all of the things that was needed for a mustard plant to come out of that. If the conditions were right, that little seed would really do its thing that it was created to do. It just did what God created it to do, and grew, and spread all over. Your faith is there in you. If the conditions are right for it to grow, it will grow, and spread and take over. Your faith will do what it is made to do. If you will let it. If you have the right conditions for it to grow.

Sometimes our faith doesn't grow because we don't let it. We don't turn it loose. If the mustard seeds were planted in a little box, it wouldn't take over the world. We box our faith in and we won't let it out. Sometimes we are afraid to try. Sometimes we are too concerned about what people think, and the fear of failure stops us from trying. Sometimes we are too focused on who we are instead of who God is to step beyond the natural into the supernatural. Sometimes we don't want to get out of our comfort zone, and letting our faith loose is not always comfortable. We become lazy on God and settle for a halfway existence until a tragedy happens and we need our faith. Then our faith is weak because we haven't exercised it. That is the problem. If we use our faith only as a spare tire, then it will be flat when we need it. It doesn't stay "pumped up". Sometimes our faith is weak because we don't value it. We don't protect it. We let the enemy steal it away. Sometimes it is weak because we don't value it enough to do the things that strengthen our faith. Or we allow the enemy to beat our shield up so that it is weak, and we don't go to the Lord for Him to strengthen it.

God can increase our faith. We read in Luke 17:5 that the disciples asked Jesus to increase their faith. So we know from reading this that it is possible for our faith to strengthen. The Bible tells us that there are many ways that we can strengthen and renew our faith. The Bible is a powerful way to renew your faith. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The people who have the weakest faith are those who never get out their Bible. They don't go to church often, and when they do, they don't listen and take God's Word into their heart, mind, and spirit. God's Word is powerful. We'll talk more about it in the next chapter. It works. It will increase your faith. It can't if you don't read it or hear it preached. (That is why it is dangerous when preachers and pastors fail to declare the full counsel of God to His people. It causes their faith to be weak. Be mindful that part of the job is to increase the faith of those who listen to you. This goes for pastors, and the people on the pew. Are

you speaking faith to those around you? Are you encouraging the faith of those who hear you talk? Or are you bringing doubt and unbelief everywhere you go because your talk is full of negative thoughts?)

The Spirit of God working in our hearts and minds increase our faith. Faith is one of the fruits of the Spirit talked about in Galatians 5:22-23. Please read these. Now keep in mind that the words used in these verses are “the fruits **of** the Spirit”. We get discouraged because we don’t have these fruits, and we fail to realize that we have them all along. They are in us because the Holy Ghost is in us. These are His fruits. We are just too full of ourselves most of the time to let them out. Faith is one of His fruits. When we focus on walking in the Spirit instead of walking in the flesh, this will greatly grow our faith.

Another way to strengthen our faith is to use it. It is like exercise. I am not the strongest person physically because I don’t exercise. Those people who exercise parts of their body, those parts are the strongest. Here is an example. I knew a lady who had a great faith for praying for people who had cancer. Matter of fact, she was a key person who prayed for my mother when my mom was healed of lymph cancer. Countless people were healed through the years through her prayers. Am I saying that she was some sort of faith healer who healed people? No. I am saying that God healed the people, but her faith unlocked that healing. One day she had dared to step out in faith and pray for someone with cancer. That person was healed. The next time she had an opportunity to pray for someone, she obeyed the Lord. They were healed. Through the years her faith was strengthened because she used it. I am sure that during that time there were many who were not healed. She didn’t let this stop her from praying for the next one. Obedience unlocks faith. I am reminded of David when he faced Goliath. Can you imagine how facing Goliath and winning boosted his faith? Sometimes we have no faith because we don’t face the giants and see God win. We don’t know what God can do, because we never step out in faith. Because of this, our faith is never encouraged by the victories we win.

One of the biggest things that I believe strengthens our faith is our relationship with the Lord. To believe in someone, we have to get to know them. Sometimes our faith is weak because our relationship with Him is weak. Trust is built. Love isn’t an instant thing. Love and trust both grow when a relationship grows. Most of my life I have loved the Lord. I still find things out about Him that makes me love Him even more. My husband and I have been married for nearly 30 years. I still see things in him that make me love him more. He isn’t perfect by any means, not like the Lord. He has his faults. But our relationship with each other has grown through the years. I am still in love with him. We work on our relationship. It is a focus in our lives. We don’t take it for granted. This means that we have a priority on our relationship. We guard our relationship. We guard our trust for one another. We know each other’s weaknesses and strengths, and we complement each other in these. He is weak in some areas where I am stronger, and I am weak in some areas where he is stronger. We don’t criticize, we just love each other in

spite of each other in those areas. In the same way you need to work on and guard your relationship with the Lord. Just like in a marriage trust is essential to faith. My faith in the Lord grows through the years because I have learned to trust Him. He has done so much to see me through it all.

Galatians 5:6 says, “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.” Faith comes from love. Love of God is what makes our faith stronger. When we get to know Him, and we fellowship with Him, when He is the focus of our lives, and our relationship with Him is the most important relationship that we have, then it is easy to trust Him. The more I get to know Him, then the more wonderful I realize He is and the more I trust Him. Faith works by love. If you don’t spend time with the Lord, if your relationship with Him is only superficial, then your faith will be weak. Love makes your faith grow. Keep your love renewed. Take time to love the Lord. Hebrews 12:2 and 3 says, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.” He died for you. He considered that a joy. He endured the cross for you. Let that thought increase your faith. Focus on Him and less on you and you will have a much stronger faith. He is the author of your faith. If you let Him be, He will be the finisher as well.

You see, there are two parts to faith. You have to believe that God can do something. Then you have to believe that He will do it for you. I know a lot of people who have a great faith about what God will do for others. But they don’t think that God will do anything for them. I have been there myself at times. This is a matter of trust. Faith says that God can do it. Trust says that you trust Him to do it for you. Faith makes God the center. Trust makes God the center. We get this thing out of focus. We have said several times that when we are down on ourselves, this causes us to think that God won’t do for us because we aren’t worthy. This makes things out of focus. God does for us because He is worthy, not because we are. Trust Him because of who He is, not because of who you are. Love Him because He is worthy. His love will make you worthy. His love will make a wonderful person out of people who are not so wonderful at all. His love will change you if you let it.

Here are several verses about God’s love. I think that it would be a great place in this book to include these. Reading this will definitely increase your faith. I am not going to write them all out. If you just read the references and don’t read the verses, that won’t do you any good. Read them. I’ll say it again. Read them. When you read these, take them personal. When you read about God’s love, go from there to take it as God’s love for you. Some of these we have discussed in other parts of the book, but it won’t hurt you to read them again. When you read these verses read them in a personal way. Put in your name at the beginning of each. Claim each as a personal promise just for you.

Jeremiah 31:3
I John 3:1

John 3:16
II Thessalonians 3:5

Ephesians 2:4

These verses below talk about our part:

Deuteronomy 6:5

Deuteronomy 10:12

Psalms 31:23

II Thessalonians 3:5

Jude 1:2

Ephesians 5:2

Is your shield in good condition? Is it holding strong against the enemy? Is your faith unlocking the blessings and promises of God? If not, then go to God and ask Him how to strengthen it. He knows exactly what you need to do. After all, He knows you more than anyone else. Trust in Him and let Him keep you in peace. It is important now more than ever that our faith keeps us. This world is falling a part all around us. People are dying because of stress. We need the peace of the Lord to keep us. This peace grows from our trust and our faith in Him. Isaiah 26:3 says, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

Chapter 10.

The Sword of The Spirit which is The word of God

The Word of God is the basis of all that we do in regards to spiritual warfare. We have talked about God's Word throughout this book. You can't separate it from all the other parts of God's armor. We talked about how do we know that it is true when we discussed "Loins Girded With Truth". In that chapter we read many scriptures about the Word of God. Faith and God's Word go hand in hand. We talked about how faith cometh by hearing God's Word in the last chapter. Throughout this book in every chapter we have talked about the Word of God and its power to change lives, its power to release victory over the enemy in our lives. This book is full of scripture, which is another testimony about God's Word. You can't write a Christian book without reflecting it. It is the basis for all that we have as far as spiritual armor. It is actually the basis of all we have in God. What if God hadn't given us His Word? What if we had just had to go on our own without it? I really don't think that we as Christians would have made it, and Christianity as a whole would have been lost. It would be a dead religion like so many in the world.

Earlier in the book we have mentioned some of these things, but we will talk about them again. I haven't written the verses out so be sure to read the scriptures. God's Word is: eternal, never changing (Psalms 119:89), guaranteed to be fulfilled, (Matthew 24:35), spiritual food (Job 23:12), inspired by God's Spirit, (II Timothy 3:16), written in our hearts (Deuteronomy 11:18), will dwell in us (Colossians 3:16), keeps us from sin (Psalms 119:11), will rejoice our heart (Psalm 19:8), will light our path (Psalm 119:105), gives instruction for our life (Proverbs 6:23), better than gold and silver (Psalm 119:72), pure (Psalm 119:140), fire (Jeremiah 5:14), a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29), life-giving (Ezekiel 37:7), a powerful saving power (Romans 1:16), discerner of hearts (Hebrews 4:12), a blessing (Joshua 1:8), cleanses us (John 15:3), sanctifies us (Ephesians 5:26), purifies us (I Peter 1:22), is written with a divine purpose (I Peter 1:22), gives us hope (John 20:31 and Romans 15:4), gives us knowledge of eternal life (I John 5:13), is sacred (Revelations 22:19), will bring a harvest (Psalms 126:6), trustworthy (Isaiah 34:16). I am sure that you could continue on with this for a lot longer. Try it. Do a little research. Get out your concordance and finish this paragraph.

When we think of the Word of God in respect to our key verse, we see that it is the sword. It isn't actually armor in one sense like the rest of the armor is. I guess a sword could be considered to be armor because if you killed the enemy, it would surely be a protection to you. What makes it different from all the other parts of the armor that we mentioned? A sword is a weapon. It is offensive, while the other things are defensive. They are protection. A sword will advance you forward against the enemy. It just won't be a protection against the enemy. It can destroy the enemy. The Word of God is that powerful. How are we saved, and the enemies' influence destroyed over our souls? Through the Word of God. How is the influence of the enemy destroyed when he tries to come against our minds, and we are able to not only overcome him, but advance against him? Through the Word of God. How is the darkness of the world shattered by the light

of God, and consumed by it? Through the Word of God. How is the Gospel advanced and new people added to the kingdom of God? Through the Word of God. The Word of God is a weapon to advance the cause of Christ.

There is something that we have to consider here when we talk about the Word of God. It is more than just the Bible. Read John 1:1-14. I will write out only two of the verse, verse 1, and 14. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” The Word of God is the written Bible. It is also Jesus. Jesus is the embodied (come in a body) Word of God. God’s Word became flesh and walked among us.

God’s Word is also the Word that His Spirit speaks in our hearts. God’s Word as a written Word. God also speaks personally to us through His Spirit. That Word is also powerful. I have heard Bishop Goad preach many times about the power of God’s spoken Word, those commands that He speaks into your heart. He has told many times of how God told him to do something, and that command had the power to make what God told him to do possible to do. He uses the illustration of Peter walking on the water. Jesus spoke to Peter to come. Peter was able to come because Jesus spoke that he could. When God tells you to do something, you can do it. He has given you His Word that you can. His Word enables you, it strengthens you, it goes before you to make the crooked place straight so that circumstances line up, it enables you to walk on the water. His Word that He speaks to you in your heart has the same anointing that His written Word has. It has the same power.

When I started this chapter I noticed something that, sad to say, I had not noticed before when I would read about the Word of God in this verse. I always in my mind would just think about the sword as being the word of God. I missed the most of its title. I missed the part that says “the sword **of** the Spirit”. Wow. That is powerful. If we say the sword of Sandy, then you would know it was my sword. But it doesn’t. You see this isn’t our sword. It is the sword of the Spirit. It is what the Spirit uses, not us. It is part of our armor. It is for our benefit. But it is the Sword of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost of God inspired the Word of God. We read in II Peter 1:21, “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” The Holy Ghost anoints the scriptures. Isaiah 34:16 says, “Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.” The anointing of the Spirit of God increases the power of the Word of God. God’s Spirit carries the Word of God. It teaches us. John 14:26 says, “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” I John 2:27 says, “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” Through the anointing of God’s Word,

through His Spirit, the Word of God is preached. Through the anointing of God's Word and through His Spirit dealing with our hearts, we are saved, convicted, and sanctified. The two, the anointing and God's Word, go together. The sword is the sword of the Holy Ghost. That doesn't make it less effective for us, but much more powerful.

God's Word is also a sword because of what it can do inside us. Hebrews 4:12 tells us, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God will tear you up. It will get in your heart and mind and convict you even when you do your best to shut it out. It will get down to the very thoughts and intents of the heart. If there is anything in you to want to live uprightly before God, the Word of God will convict you, slice through your self righteous mess, cut through your excuses, slice through your defenses that you have built up, cut through the enemy's wrong ideas, and get rid of everything that is wrong in your heart and mind. It is sharper than a sword. After all, it is what will judge us all one day. We have to allow it to do its work.

When I think of scriptures talking about the Word of God, I think first of the longest book in the Bible. It is dedicated totally to God's Word. David wrote Psalms 119 to praise God and thank Him for His Word. There is hardly a verse in this 176-verse Psalm that doesn't mention the words: precepts, commandments, testimonies law, judgments, word, statutes, truth, and other words that all point to the Word of God. David honored God's Word. He honored the righteousness of God's Word. He honored the justice judgment of God's Word. We have talked about earlier how even though he sinned and paid the price for that, he honored God's righteousness in His Word. Throughout this Psalms we see keys on how to unlock God's Word in our lives. David started out this Psalm with these words. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. Verse 9 says, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word". Verse 11 says, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Verse 14, "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches." Verse 16, "I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word." Verse 27, "Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart." Verse 34, Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. The Psalm closes with these verses 173-176, "Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me. I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments."

When we read Psalms 119, through David's example we see many keys to how to unlock the Word of God in your life. One of the things I think of is that you can tell from what he wrote that David had a priority of reading God's Word in his life. He knew God's Word. He wasn't relying on someone to tell him. He was studying it out and seeking God's Spirit as he read it. I often hear people say that they would study God's Word more, but they just don't have time. I think of King David. He was at war for most of the time he was king, and before. He had the duties of leading a country. This definitely was not a 9:00 to 5:00 type job. He had a family, too, and he put an emphasis on his family. I think that he was a lot busier than most of us are, but he still took time to read and seek God's Spirit when he read. The thing was this. He made it a focus in his life. He made it a priority in his life. The things of God came first, and other things came next.

We also read many times how he honored God's Word. He sought it with all his heart. He respected God's Word. He hid it in his heart. He rejoiced in it more than he rejoiced in riches, and being king he had lots of riches. He delighted in God's Word. He asked God for understanding. He didn't just go in his own understanding, but he sought God for His understanding. He let God reveal His Word to him. Then he asked God for His help to keep His Word. This was important. If we just read it and never do it, we will never see the power of God's Word at work in our lives. It is like reading an instruction manual and not following the instructions. Whatever we are building will be a mess. Our life will be a mess if we read it and never obey it. David made a priority of obeying it. He honored its promises but he also honored its judgments, even when those judgments were against him. In an earlier chapter we talked about how even though the Word of God at one time judged him for his own sins, he still honored it. He loved the righteousness of God's Word. He asked God to help Him to walk in that same righteousness and repented for his shortcomings. He didn't try to change it to make excuses for his sin. He asked God to write it in his heart and help him to keep it. He longed for it. He did not forget it.

Please go back and reread Psalms 119. Look for more keys to release the power of the Word of God in your life.

Here are some more keys. A main key to unlocking God's Word in your life is to respect it. Respect means to honor something so much that it influences your life and becomes a priority to you to consider it above all else. In today's world an attitude of respect is not common. We hear mocking of God's Word and His people constantly. Through this, we can be drawn into an attitude of cockiness instead of respect, an attitude of submitting to no one. We cannot unlock the presence of God in our lives until we begin to respect Him and His Word. When we truly respect someone, we listen and obey with gladness. When we respect God and His Word we should do the same. We should show our respect as well as our honor. How much respect do we show for God's Word? Do we lift it up when it is not the popular thing to do? Do we obey it even when it hurts? Do we read it and

spend time studying and allowing God's Holy Ghost to unfold Its pages? Do we esteem It above our wealth? Do we consider it above our relationships enough to let It control them, who we have relationships with and what we do? Do we submit to Its Words and allow It to work in and through our lives by God's anointing? Do we submit to It and allow It to be as a two-edge sword, cutting away what doesn't belong in our lives, hearts, and minds?

When we respect God's Word, it is a part of God. When we release the Spirit of God, we release His presence. When we as individuals or as a church as a whole lift up and obey God's Word, lifting up His whole truth regardless of popularity, we will release the Spirit of God to work in our midst. If we deny the truth, stifle part of His Word, take out only what is comfortable to swallow, we will not have God's presence or His blessings in our lives or in our church. God's Word is what builds our faith. If we don't have sound Word we don't have a sound faith. We can't believe in His miracles. We can't believe in deliverance. We can't really even believe in the full victory that God promises in His Word. If we don't have God's Word as it is written in truth, then we don't really have His truth at all. If we lack the truth we cannot be free. It is God's Word that sets us free. If we are not free then we will be bound by sickness, sin, and all kinds of bondage.

We must respect God's Word and honor it as it is, without changing It to fit what we want It to be. Unless we do we will not have Its power in our lives or churches. God stands by His Word. We cannot honor God if we do not honor His Word in the truth It was written in. We can only find that truth through the revelation of His Holy Ghost. It takes God's Spirit to reveal what His Word means. It is spiritual. We can't understand it in the flesh. That is why so many people and churches get so many things twisted up. They become bound because they try to decipher God's Word with their own fleshly minds. They only get confused. Go to God if you want understanding of what His Word is all about. Who can explain It better?

How much respect is God's Word shown in your church? All too often we fall into the social way of things. We talk about good topics that up lift our congregation. We tell jokes to liven things up. We discuss political issues. We talk about the activities for the week. We fellowship and have a good meal. But God's Word isn't given respect. If it wasn't for God's Word, you wouldn't have a church, matter of fact you wouldn't need one. God's Word is what called for the church to be set up and the guidelines for the church. The Bible says that it is through the foolishness of preaching that we are saved. Through the Word we are instructed and taught what sin is and how to overcome it. We learn how to find victory for our lives, and the lives of our families. How much do your respect God's Word in your services?

Another way of respecting God's Word is by obeying It. If we never read and desire to live by It, we are not respecting It. If reading and hearing His Word do not have a priority in our life, we are not honoring It. If all the understanding we ever get is what someone else tells us, we are not honoring It. The Word of God has power to work in our lives,

change our circumstances, releasing us from bondage, healing our sicknesses, and lifting us up. The Bible says of Itself in Isaiah 55:11, “So shall my Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent It.” It has power to work in our lives if we allow It to, respect It, submit to It and obey It.

We have to read it to find that out. I have seen people struggling, fighting battles with their health, or their finances, or fighting to have faith just to survive, and I ask them how often they read their Bible, how often do they go to God’s Word to find strength in It’s pages. I am amazed at their answers. God gave us His Word for a purpose but if we never read It we will never know Its power. Or if we never obey it we will never know. It is easy to read the Bible and not live by what It says. When we do we are like the man described in James 1:23 and 24, “For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer; he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.” If we look at God’s Word and continue to do what we have always done and refuse to obey it, how can It change us?

God’s Word is a powerful sword. It is a weapon and a defense. When used correctly, it can take the battlefield for God. Honor this valuable piece of the armor that God has given you.

If God’s Word is so powerful, why does it seem sometimes that it fails? That is because it isn’t applied with faith, or obedience. Often it may be by how it is sown. Matthew 13:3-8 gives us clues. “And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.” The seed in this parable is the Word of God. Jesus told this parable to illustrate why sometimes the Word of God doesn’t bear fruit. For God’s Word to bring forth fruit, it has to fall where the enemy can’t just devour it and keep it from growing. It has to fall on good soil, where hearts are receptive. If you allow your heart to grow hard, God’s Word can’t grow there. Its roots won’t grow deep enough to hold it strong. When the battles come it will die. If you allow the cares of life, and the world’s junk to spring up and choke it out, then it won’t bring forth fruit. Sin can choke it out as well. If it falls on good ground, it will be bring forth lots of good fruit. It will work in your life.

I want to add a little note here to consider. There are times when the Word of God literally kills. We read about this in II Corinthians 3:6, “Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” Let me illustrate this. I once taught at a children’s home. The

leaders and counselors at that home were always pumping the Word of God into those kids. You would think that would be good, but it wasn't. They would constantly give them verses to memorize. These would be verses about sin, and God's judgment. It would be verses about telling them they had to live a certain way, and you would think this was good because we do, but it wasn't good the way they did it. It would be like if I left in this book all the rules and regulations, but took out all the reasons why we should do them, except the one that we would go to hell if we don't keep them. What if I took out of this book all the verses about the love of God? What if I took out all the verses that show us how to live a victorious life through God's Spirit? What if I took out all the verses about how God dwell in us through His Spirit giving us His righteousness, and when we yield to His Spirit, we can walk in that righteousness. What if we left out all the verses about the Baptism of the Holy Ghost and how that empowers us? What if I left out the anointing of God? How much victory would this book have? Would it enable you, or defeat you? That is what these people did. The letter literally killed those kids. Sad to say, they had opportunities to accept the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, but the doctrine of this home as a whole was against this. Matter of fact, I had to quit working there because the board came up with a document that I had to sign to be able to keep my job. This document said that I had to agree that there was no Baptism of the Holy Ghost, that there was no such thing as healing. It included other things. They were against the anointing of God. Those children became that way in their thinking. These were some of the most rebellious kids against God that I had ever met. Sad to say, it wasn't because of their sad lives before they came to the home, but it was a lot because of this way of thinking. The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life. You have to combine the Spirit of God with your teaching. If you don't, then those around you will just be defeated. In your own lives, you have to do the same, or you will just be defeated.

Here is another case when the Word of God brings death. I knew someone who had a photographic memory. He could read something and memorize it. He could quote more scripture than anyone that I knew. He was a young Christian and talked about becoming a preacher because of this gift. This killed him spiritually. That is a bold statement to make, but hear me out. He did not do what he read. It was all in his head and not in his heart. He was an alcoholic. He could quote scriptures about deliverance, but he never received deliverance. He doesn't let God's Spirit touch His life to work these things out. He runs around quoting the scriptures constantly, almost obsessed by this. He stayed at our ministry for a while, but we were never able to help him through this. If he doesn't change, this will bring death to him, not life.

The Spirit of God will keep you, it will empower you, it will make you bold, it will anoint the Word of God and sharpen it, it will increase your faith, it will keep you until the day when you are carried to meet the Lord through its quickening power. Allow God's Spirit to work in your life.

Footnotes:

I want to add an important note here. Our key scripture Ephesians 6:10-18 concluded with these words, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints”. This is an important part of spiritual warfare. I didn’t include it as part of my book though it is so valuable. The reason I didn’t include it is that it wasn’t listed with a part of armor and that was what I focused on in this book. However, we can’t underestimate the value of prayer, and the need for putting a priority on our prayer life. When we fail to do so, we reap the consequences. It leaves holes in our armor that the enemy can use to destroy us. It also leaves those we love and those saints of God whom we can pray for open to attack. Never let the enemy convince you that your prayers are worthless, and not being answered. Pray with perseverance. That means to pray no matter what happens. Pray no matter how the enemy fights. Pray without ceasing. Nothing will increase your faith greater than praying and seeing your prayers answered, than daring to continue to pray, and making it a priority in your life.

ConCl usion

We have been given powerful armor through God’s Word. You have all these pieces of armor available to you. Ephesians 6:10-18, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

All of this armor is yours. The only way it won’t work is if you fail to believe this, or you fail to put it on. It won’t work if you don’t wear it. God has supplied you with all you need to be able to stand against the enemy, and to overpower him and be victorious. His armor will enable you to not only keep yourself safe, but also to victoriously take over the enemies’ territory. It is for you. It will work for you the same as it has done down through the ages. Victory is yours when you put on and use the supernatural armor of God.

