

# THE HELMET & THE SWORD

*By John Gagliardi*



We are in a battle! Daily, hourly, moment by moment we must face onslaughts from our implacable enemy the devil, aka Satan, the accuser, the deceiver, the liar, the tempter, the murderer and the thief. From his names alone, it is clear that he is not a nice person to be around, and he has been around for a very, very long time.

He knows us very well, and if we are sons and daughters of the Living God, he also hates us with a hatred so intense and all-consuming that with him there can never be any negotiation, any truce, any peace treaty. He is smart and he is cunning – and he is malevolent beyond any human understanding.

In the Bible, this fallen angel, cast out of heaven after a futile attempt to rebel against Almighty God is known as “... the great dragon ...that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9). After failing in his rebellion, he and his like-minded angels were cast down to earth where they continue to plague and trouble us to this very day.

The devil is patient and he is cunning – he knows how to “get” to each one of us in the area where we are most vulnerable. He knows our “hot buttons” only too well, and he knows how and when to push them!

Notice that the Scripture says that he “deceives” us – he is a liar, accuser and deceiver. He gets into our minds when our defences are down – when we are disappointed, fearful, anxious, angry, jealous, hurt, lustful etc – and inserts his insidious poison. Like his namesake the “serpent”, he envenomates us with his toxic infection.

It is clear that in this never-ending spiritual battle, the devil knows only too well the best place to strike – our minds! Joyce Meyer some years ago wrote a very insightful book she called *Battlefield of the Mind* – she had a clear understanding of the devil’s strategies for knocking Christians out of the game.

She writes: “1. we are engaged in a war; 2. our enemy is Satan; 3. The mind is the battlefield; 4. The devil works diligently to set up strongholds in our mind; 5. He does it through strategy and deceit

(through well-laid plans and deliberate deception;) 6. He is in no hurry; he takes his time to work out his plan.

“He begins by bombarding our mind with a cleverly devised pattern of little nagging thoughts, suspicions, doubts, fears, wondering, reasonings and theories ... Remember he has a strategy for his warfare. He has studied us for a long time.

“He knows what we like and what we don’t like. He knows our insecurities, our weaknesses, and our fears. He knows what bothers us most. He is willing to invest any amount of time to defeat us. One of the devil’s strong points is patience.”

Thankfully, God has given us an impregnable defence against the wiles of the devil – the “whole armour of God” (Ephesians 6:13-17). This spiritual armour is what we need to fight spiritual warfare:

- For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12)
- For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4 and 5)

God tells us to bring our “thoughts” into captivity – to control and discipline our minds and our thought-life. But how do we defend our minds against the lies and accusations and deceptions and temptations the devil puts into our minds?

We put on the “helmet of salvation” – the specific part of the “whole armour of God” that is specially designed to defend our minds and our thoughts. God tells us in Ephesians 6:17 to “take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”.

The helmet to protect our mind is of utmost importance – the devil attacks the mind first, and then from the mind he works himself into the emotions. First a thought, then an emotion – and then an action. A tried and true formula for the devil to do his work.

Satan cannot force us to commit sins and rebel against God – he has to rely on connivance and cunning and persuasion. And as mentioned earlier, he is very, very good at it! He works through some tried and true techniques that we are warned about in 1 John 2:15 and 16 – “Do not love the world or the things in the world ... for all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world”.

Sexual temptations, greed for money, power and the “good life” and pride – nothing new, but powerful and alluring if presented at the right time in the right way. God warns us very directly to be careful – not just when we are weak and fearful, but also when things are going well. He says in effect: “When you are standing strong and confident, that’s just when you have to be especially careful, in case you fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12).

The helmet of salvation is activated by faith and trust in God and His Word – it is linked in the same verse with the Sword of the Spirit – the Word of God. That is not accidental – it is by wielding the Sword of the Spirit that we activate the Helmet of Salvation. We stand on Scriptures that reassure us that God is in control, and that He will protect us, supply all our needs, and give us His peace. That through Him, we are “more than conquerors” (Romans 8:37) and can “do all things” (Philippians 4:13), and that we have the “peace of God that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:7).

In a recent article *The Helmet of Salvation*, Norm Rasmussen says: “Our thought life needs to be carefully guarded. Satan wants to control, to influence what we think and the way we think.

“The Holy Spirit wants to influence the way we think. The mind is a constant battlefield, where good and evil spirit beings seek to influence our thoughts moment by moment ... we must learn to let the Holy Spirit saturate our minds with Truth instead of lies.

“When our thoughts begin to differ with what God has declared in His Word, we must quickly realign our thoughts with God’s Word. It is no coincidence that God’s Word reads this way in Ephesians 6:17 – ‘And take the helmet of salvation **and** the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God’.

“God is saying clearly here that you do not have the helmet of salvation on to protect your mind if you are not using the “sword of the Holy Spirit” – which is the Word of God ... (and) how do we swing that sword effectively? By letting the Word of God replace lies in our mind ... change the way we think, which ultimately changes the way we act ...

“By having the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, a transformed mind, one day we will have the privilege of trading in our helmet for a crown.”

As this writer suggests, we can have the “mind of Christ” (Philippians 2:5) and be transformed by having our mind renewed (Romans 12:2) as we saturate ourselves daily by washing in the water of the Word (Ephesians 5:26).

It is a good thing – I would say a vital thing – to have Scriptures memorized that we can use in times of need – attacks often come suddenly, out of the blue. It can happen when you are at work, or travelling, or in some other place where it is inconvenient or impossible to pull out a Bible and look up a relevant verse.

Soldiers carry a sword for instant use – attacks on our mind come without notice, and we need to be able to grab that “sword” instantly to use it to cut and thrust and defeat the enemy. Having some relevant Scriptures memorized and ready for instant use is a key to success in spiritual warfare!

The devil doesn’t play fair – we can’t ask him to hang about a bit while we go home and find our Bible and look up a powerful verse. It doesn’t work that way.

Even Jesus Himself used Scripture in his wilderness battle with Satan. Three times he said, “It is written” and unsheathed a potent weapon that left his adversary confused and defeated (Matthew 4:1-11). And we can do that too, because Jesus assures us that we will be able to do the things he does (Matthew 4:12). We can have the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5) and we are further assured that the Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance what we need when we need it (John 14:26).

The very next verse is an excellent one for just that purpose: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). It is a powerful antidote against fear and worry. He says: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). He says: “Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today ... the Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:13 and 14).

Joyce Meyer: “The Word coming out of a believer’s mouth, with faith to back it up, is the single most effective weapon that can be used to win the war against worry and anxiety.

“Only God can deliver us, and He wants us to know that ... in every situation our first response is to lean on Him and to enter His rest.

“The mind is the battlefield! It is on this ground of the mind that you will either win or lose the war that Satan has launched.”

The devil’s first “sortie” is usually on the mind, and that is the point at which we can most effectively repel it by putting on the helmet of salvation and taking up the sword of the Spirit. But if we don’t, we

will soon start talking about it, and speaking it out, giving it the creative force and power of the spoken word.

It is not too far from that to the next stage – the emotions come into play, and before we know it, we are well on the way to acting out what started only as a thought, and finding ourselves in some sin or another and in another cycle of defeat and depression.

Don't underestimate our adversary – he lies and he deceives, and he has no mercy or compassion. Our only response to his attack can be to defend ourselves with the whole armour of God – especially the helmet of salvation and the shield of faith – and to launch a withering counterattack with the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

My personal favourite? If I had to point to a Scripture I lean on most often, it is 2 Chronicles 20:3-17. King Jehoshaphat is facing overwhelming odds – a “vast army”, and reacts like most of us do when initially faced with a huge challenge: “Jehoshaphat feared”. But immediately he made a good decision – he “... set himself to seek the lord”.

He turns first to God, and tells Him honestly how he feels: “O our God ... we have no power against this great multitude ... nor do we know what to do”. At this point, though, he guarantees his ultimate victory: “But our eyes are upon you!”

God's response? ***“Do not be afraid nor discouraged because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's ... You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you ... do not fear or be dismayed ... for the Lord is with you.”***