

Study for the Month of May, 2009

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

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***“It is not safe for us, when going to battle, to cast away our weapons.
It is then that we need to be equipped with the whole armor of God.
Every piece is essential.”***

In my King James Bible “war” is mentioned some 215 times, 200 in the Old Testament; the rest in the New Testament. While its first mention is found in Genesis 14: 1-4, where a confederacy of four kings “made war” and defeated Bera, king of Sodom allied with three other kings in the Valley of Siddim, war goes back much earlier in time—and not on earth but in heaven itself. Rev. 12: 7-9:

And war broke out *in heaven*; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Rev. 12: 7-9, N.K.J.V.

The Bible deals as much with war as with peace, with defeat as much as with victory, with evil as much as with good, with darkness with as much as with light, with error as much as with truth, with the counterfeits as well much as the genuine items. This is the nature of the great controversy, the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan and their respective agencies and followers on earth. The gospel is also the good news that Christ, the truth, and His true followers on earth will soon ultimately and eternally triumph, although through six centuries since the fall of man these appeared to be defeated, outnumbered, and rejected by the world.

War language, war strategy, war policy, war mentality--anything and everything that has to do with war, conflict, rebellion, revolution, dissatisfaction, pride, doubt, subterfuge, evil-surmising, envy, jealousy, and hatred, *originated* in perfect Heaven. And so was the origin of sin--the transgression of God’s law. 1 John 3:4.

Why heaven of all places? No finite, mortal, earthling can give a complete explanation of the mystery of iniquity, the origin of sin which gave rise to the original war, whose eternal wages is the “second death to which there is no resurrection.” To find a reason for the origin of sin is to excuse it. Notice:

“To many minds the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a great source of perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love. Here is a mystery of which they can find no explanation.

And in their uncertainty and doubt they are blinded to truths plainly revealed in God's word and essential to salvation. There are those who, in their inquiries concerning the existence of sin, endeavor to search into that which God has *never* revealed; hence they find no solution of their difficulties; and such as are actuated by a disposition to doubt and cavil seize upon this as an excuse for rejecting the words of Holy Writ. Others, however, fail of a satisfactory understanding of the great problem of evil, from the fact that tradition and misinterpretation have obscured the teaching of the Bible concerning the character of God, *the* nature of His government, and His principle of His dealing with sin.

It is *impossible* to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet *enough* may be understood concerning both the origin and final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. Nothing is more plainly taught in the Scriptures than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. *Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it.* Could it be excused, could a cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is 'the transgression of the law; it is the outworking of a principle of war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government.'" - *Great Controversy*, pp. 492-3.

"Sin originated with him, who, next to Christ, stood highest in the favor of God, and highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of Heaven. Before his fall, Lucifer was the covering cherub, holy and undefiled. The prophet of God declares, 'Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou was *created*, till iniquity was found in thee.' [Eze. 28:18]." - *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 4, p 316, "Origin of Evil" chapter.

No mortal knows where Heaven is. The Bible does not give us its exact address or its precise location in the universe relative to planet Earth or from any celestial body out there that the most advanced method and latest technology and equipment of astronomy and astrophysics will be able to ever come up with. But the inspired Word provides more than adequate information to all those who "seek for immortality" and "strive to enter life lawfully." Rom. 2:7; 2 Tim. 2: 5; Luke 10:25-28. And yet the inspired writer tells us the New Jerusalem will descend from a point in the sky relative to our position on earth identified as the center of the sword of the constellation Orion (more details on this will be included in subsequent studies).

Heaven is a blessed place full of activity, perfect harmony, music, joy, peace, love, unity, purity, and holiness where all is in the eternal pink of health. Pain, sorrow, tears, unhappiness, disease, alienation, estrangement, death, or anything that defiles morally and physically cannot exist there for it is the home of the Godhead and the unfallen angels. It is also the school where the finally redeemed will be constantly learning and growing in the knowledge of God and the marvelous plan of redemption by which the redeemed were saved eternally. It is the faithful Christian's final and eternal home where order and cleanliness are and where the Creation Sabbath will be kept "from one new moon to another, from one Sabbath to another" throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Isa. 66: 22, 23; 65:17; Rev. 21: 1-5. It is the place where God is finally and eternally all in all in all His creatures—as it was in the beginning. It is the eternal permanent address of the mansions that Christ built for each one who is eternally saved.

That it truly exists, however, requires the same measure of faith that believes in the gospel of the Bible, in the plan of redemption taught in the sanctuary message, and in Christ, the Creator, Redeemer, Savior, High Priest, and King of kings.

If we lose eternal life we lose not only the inheritance of Jacob, the earth made new, and the heavenly mansions Jesus prepared for the redeemed of the earth—we lose more! Notice:

“There is a great deal more to this subject than we can take in a glance. O that all might see the importance of carefully studying the Scriptures! *Many seem to have the idea that this world and the heavenly mansions constitute the universe of God. Not so. The redeemed throng will range from world to world, and much of their time will be employed in searching out the mysteries of redemption.* And throughout the whole stretch of eternity this subject will be continually opening to their minds. The privileges of those who overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony are beyond comprehension. [But] We have each to battle with the fallen foe. . . . Begin the warfare at once by gaining victories over self. Do not give place to the devil. . . . Throw all your weight of influence on the side of Christ.” – *That I May Know Him*, p. 367.

As Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but *those things which are revealed* belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Satan baited our first parents with the first and deadliest of temptations—to desire to know what God purposely withholds for our own good—veiled in the language, “knowing like gods both good and evil”---and they fell for it. Gen. 3:1-6. If we haven’t learned from this history of sophistry, we are doubly cursed by its repetition.

Therefore it is our moral responsibility to know as precisely as is possible all that God has revealed and to be equally vigilant against indulging *prying curiosity* into matters which He has withheld. This puts us in accord with God’s law. To do otherwise is transgression of God’s law, or lawlessness. 1 John 3: 4.

That there was a war in heaven is revealed. “*And war broke out in heaven.*” As to who were the original protagonists is revealed. “*Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought.*” As to the outcome of this mother of all wars, is revealed. “*But they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in Heaven any longer.*” As to what happened to the losers of this original war and rebellion, is revealed. “*So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*” Rev. 12:7-10. Jesus himself said to the seventy disciples: “*I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.*” Luke 10:17, 18. This spiritual battle of battles, the great controversy between Christ and Satan was, and is as real as the greatest and bloodiest battles and wars fought on earth ever since, and infinitely much more.

In chronicling the histories of all major world wars other wars of conquest waged by tribes, religions, nations, and empires, many brilliant historians and scholars, revered by the world for their knowledge and wisdom, fail to trace all these conflicts to their very roots—to Satan, its author and mastermind—and to the “third heavens” itself, where war first given birth to and staged. And because of this ignorance of things spiritual and eternal, none of these worldly-wise men have actually contributed anything towards *permanently* preventing wars, revolutions, rebellion, and conflicts on earth.

History is replete with the records of how the Roman Catholic church utilized the civil powers of both the crown and the state to perpetuate the idea that in order for peace--in accordance with her designs to control conscience--may prevail, war must be unrelentingly waged against those who reject her decrees and claims of authority to dictate upon the individual conscience. The same perversion of truth says that darkness is necessary in order that light may be seen; that without error there is no truth, there can be no righteousness in the absence of unrighteousness. Thus, sin and war are not only excused; they are justified and deemed necessary.

Cicero once said in *De Officiis*, "Wars are to be undertaken in order that it may be possible to live in peace without molestation."

Lord Byron, in *Don Juan* philosophized, "War's a brain-spattering, windpipe-slitting art, unless her cause by right be sanctified."

Publilius Syrus, in *Sententiae* said, "Wars should be long in preparing in order that you may conquer more quickly."

Shakespeare, whom countless revere, wrote in *Henry IV*, "The arms are fair, when the intent of bearing them is just."

Titus Livius in *History*, said, "War is just to those whom war is necessary."

John Milton in *Sonnets: To Lord Fairfax*, comes closer to the truth when he posed the question: "For what can war but endless war breed?"

Seneca, in *Thyestes*, sums it up this way: "Worse than war is the fear of war."

Stevie Wonder, the blind black songwriter and singer composed a song that glorifies the idea that "all is fair in love and war."

Instead of diminishing, wars and "rumors of war" among tribes, cultures, religions, and nations have been steadily increasing through the centuries becoming bigger in scope more devastating in effect and consequences. The much sought-and-fought-after peace that the anti-war peaceniks and love-fest proponents who adored Bertrand Russell and swayed and warbled alongside the Fifth Dimension's "This is the Age of Aquarius" and John Lennon's "Imagine there's no heaven," is even more an elusive dream than ever before. In fact, the definition and meaning of peace has become so relative no one really knows what it really means anymore--except those who have experienced "the peace that passeth understanding" that can only be found in obeying God's word. This is what drove the persecutors of the Waldenses and Protestant Christians crazy. They could not comprehend how their wretched victims had absolute serenity in their demeanor and faces as they were being led to the scaffold, and were singing praises to God while they were slowly being burned alive!

A class of science, technology, politics, and economy of a global scale has grown out of war. Certain national economies would collapse without some form of a war or conflict going on somewhere in the world. War is business, and business is war. Mankind has been at war ever since; he cannot live without it or under its shadow. That's the way of the fallen, sinful world. And with what speed are we approaching the climax of this

conflict of the ages and yet the world is fast asleep in false carnal security! “When they shall say, ‘peace and safety,’ then sudden destruction cometh; and they shall not escape” 1 Thess. 5:3.

Those of my generation are fortunate (I’m now 59 years old). We experienced the horrors of the Second World War vicariously. I grew up reading, listening, and learning about war from magazines, classics, comic books, radio programs, TV, and the few movies I managed to sneak into, as movie theatres were taboo places to us. And yet as kids, we played cops and robbers, cowboys and Indians, batman and superman versus the evil ones. We grew up hating the Communists and the Japanese. We invented all kinds of hero-versus-villain plots in our play. However, I don’t recall imagining playing the role of David confronting the giant Goliath or Jonathan and his armor-bearer taking on the whole garrison of the Philistines. Biblical war stories just didn’t seem to fit into such a mold. They were just too “religious.”

War strategy and war technology is a complex, modern science and the engine of economies that oversee and underwrite the constant re-writing of legalese that justify creating enemies, and then “eliminating them” and re-drawing the lines that separate friends and enemies, allies and temporary confederacies and coalitions. We are daily exposed to an overwhelming deluge of hyper aggressive sports entertainment that encourages the “killer instinct.” We glorify the collection of war memorabilia, and are glib-tongued with the newspeak and war jargon from the DVD movies of hard-core rappers. Is it a wonder then that we have become war-like ourselves, tangling with war-like people at home, in the neighborhoods, in the workplace, in the streets, highways, and freeways?

Some of the highest members of the government who claim to be Christians even endorse forms of torture such as “water boarding” as a means of extracting information from suspected “terrorists.” We are progressively approaching that final church-state combine of end-time prophecy, when its predecessor, the “leopard-like beast” of Revelation 13 defined what a “heretic” was during its despotic reign during the Dark Ages; he was any one who opposed the edicts of the church and was declared “without a soul.” Hence, the worst forms of torture ever invented by mankind that were inflicted on him were never called “torture”—even up to this time because the Papal church, who has ever claimed infallibility, believes it never errs.

In retrospect, I looked up my notes on the war on Iraq last August 2005. And here’s the notes that I had jotted down on my note pads:

“The ill-starred, ill-fated “War On Iraq” rapidly deteriorated from bad to worse after it was confidently declared “over and done.” As of August, 2005, the new face of this illegitimate war—presuming that certain wars can be “justified”—has turned to *sectarian* violence. Indiscriminate killings, assassinations, and suicide bombings have been escalating between Sunni Arabs and Shiites. And Congress was convinced to go to war on the premise-promise that by taking down Saddam Hussein—dubbed by the media as “The Butcher of Iraq,” a catchy sound byte of the war strategists—that peace and democracy would finally come to that centuries-old volatile region. A Democracy of compromise? Perhaps. True peace? Never—as world war history eloquently testifies. Out of sheer desperation, the idea now being floated is that “civil war may be necessary” so that “peace may be finally achieved in Baghdad,” National Public Radio said, quoting one prominent Iraqi official. John Milton was right. War begets war.”

Today we look back and stagger at the precious lives that have been destroyed by this war and all the wars waged on earth---lives that have been purchased at the infinite cost

of Christ's blood. Countless will never be identified by human records but all are recorded in the books of heaven. While those left alive continue to suffer the insupportable the pain of losing their loved ones in such a violent way, we can thank God that the dead "know not anything" nor feel anything; suffering has ended. How precious indeed is the Biblical truth regarding the nature of man at death—to the saved, it is but an interlude of complete silence and nothingness!

Back to the Iraq War: according to the Associated Press, April 23, 2009:

"Iraq's government has recorded 87, 215 of its citizens killed since 2005 in violence ranging from catastrophic bombings to execution-style slayings, according to government statistics obtained by the AP that break open one of the most closely guarded secrets of war. Combined with tallies based on hospital sources and media reports since the beginning of the war and an in-depth review of available evidence by the AP, the figures show that more than 110, 600 Iraqis have died in violence since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

The number is a minimum count of violent deaths. . . estimated actual number of deaths is 10 to 20 percent higher because of thousands who are still missing and civilians who were buried in the chaos of war without official records. . . .

The data obtained by the AP measure only violent deaths—people killed in attacks such as shootings, bombings, mortar attacks and beheadings that ravaged Iraq. It excluded indirect factors such as damage to infrastructure, health care and stress that caused thousands more to die. . . .

The Iraqi Body Count estimate of deaths since the start of the war, excluding police and soldiers, is a range—between 91,466 and 99, 861. The numbers show just how traumatic the war has been for Iraq. In a nation of 29 million people, the deaths represent 0.38 percent of the population. Proportionally, that would be like the U.S. losing 1.2 million people to violence in the 4-year period; about 17,000 people are murdered every year in the U.S. . . .

While the Pentagon maintains meticulous records of the number of American troops killed---at least 4, 275 as of Thursday (April 23, 2009)—it does not publicly release comprehensive Iraqi casualty figures. . . .

A more controversial cluster study conducted between May and July 2006 by John Hopkins University in Baltimore and Al-Mustansiriya University in Baghdad, published in the Lancet medical journal, estimated that 601, 027 Iraqis had died due to violence. The authors said roughly 50,000 more died from nonviolent crimes causes such as heart disease and cancer because of deteriorating health conditions caused by the war."

Those who have been crying out for justice and will never find one on this sinful earth, can find the "peace that passeth understanding" in the precious and awesome truth of the judgment of God—the first being the pre-advent or investigative of all who have professed faith in Christ to determine who are worthy of eternal life, and takes place in heaven before Christ returns with His rewards; the second being the judgment of the wicked during the thousand years, and third and last one being the final destruction of all the unsaved.

"Vengeance is Mine; I will repay says the Lord." "He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword." Rev. 13: 10. That's the Biblical Golden Rule at work. Jesus repeated this truth in the Sermon on the Mount: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12. Apostle Paul echoes this truth: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." Gal. 6:7,8. Centuries earlier the prophet declared: "They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind." Hosea 8:7. One sows a little wind of strife but he reaps a whirlwind of chaos, destruction, and death. "Judge not, that you be not judged.

For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you.” Matt. 7: 1, 2.

So what’s new? Nothing, that is, to those who continue to study and believe the Bible, the Word of God. The wise man Solomon says: “That which has been is what will be. That which is done is what will be done. *And there is nothing new under the sun.* Is there anything of which it may be said, ‘See, this is new?’ It has already been in ancient times before us.” Eccl. 1:9,10.

What is new is only for those who do not believe or understand the true nature of the great controversy which is: there ever have been two wars raging since time began—the literal and the spiritual---both taking place simultaneously in the physical and unseen worlds. The former is both a smokescreen and a direct result of the latter. Sin gave rise to war.

THE TRUE NATURE OF THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

The true followers of Christ throughout all ages, have, and always will be engaged in a combat more real, fearful, fierce and deadly than all the wars of earth combined, including the current “war on terrorists” or any war before or after it in human history. And this warfare will wax greater and greater until the close of human probation earth’s history. Jesus declared: “All who endure to the end the same shall be saved.” Matt. 24:13. These are those who, like Paul, fought the good fight of faith.

But unlike the soldiers and fighting men and combatants of this world, Christ’s army of Christian soldiers wage a totally different warfare, fight totally different enemies, employ a totally different strategy, follow the orders of a totally different Commander-in-Chief, and put on a totally different armor--for their objective is a totally different one! By this world’s standard they appear to be as vastly outnumbered and outclassed--losers and hopeless in appearance---but not so by God’s reckoning. They are recognized and celebrated by the heavenly universe as eternal champions and heroes.

“Our General, who has never lost a battle, expects willing, faithful service from everyone who has enlisted under His banner. In the closing controversy now waging between the forces for good and the hosts of evil He expects all, *laymen as well as ministers*, to take part. All who have enlisted as His soldiers are to render faithful service as *minutemen*, with a keen sense of the responsibility resting upon them individually. . . .

There is earnest work to be done by us individually if we would fight the good fight of faith. Eternal interests are at stake. We must put on the whole armor of righteousness, we must resist the devil, and we have the sure promise the [Satan] will be put to flight. The church is to conduct and aggressive warfare, to make conquests for Christ, to rescue souls from the power of the enemy. God and holy angels are engaged in this warfare. Let us please Him who has called us to be soldiers.” *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 29.

The Word of God reveals who the real enemies are in this epic spiritual battle that needs to be soundly defeated and perfectly overcome. They are: (1) Satan and his angels, (2) temptations, deceptions, and delusions in all its forms (3) sin, sinful propensities and tendencies, and (3) self. The battleground will be the mind and hearts of man.

“Self is difficult to conquer. Human depravity in every form is not easily brought into subjection to the Spirit of Christ. But all should be impressed with the fact that unless this victory is gained through Christ, there is no hope for them. The victory can be gained; for nothing is impossible with God. By assisting grace, all evil temper, all human depravity, may be overcome. . . . You may be overcomers if you will, in the name of Christ, take hold of the work [of overcoming] decidedly.”- Testimonies, vol. 4, pp. 348-9.

“It is a terrible thing to be *self-deceived*; for many will, because of *self-confidence* and *self-sufficiency*, be eternally lost. Now, just now, is the time to wash our robes of character, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. We cannot afford to lose Heaven. Awful will be the revelation to those who find that the books of heaven testify that they have permitted themselves to become Satan’s helpers in *deceiving other souls*, and causing them also to lose eternal life. Inexpressibly sad is the picture of those whom others will charge with the loss of their souls. Eternal life was within their reach, but their deluded, proud hearts were not broken, and they refused to confess their sins.” – *Letter* 410, Aug. 26, 1907. par. 12.

Jesus Christ, our Example, Savior, Redeemer, and the Captain of our salvation, first demonstrated in His earthly life the true nature of the battle, and how to fight and win it. After His watery baptism by John the Baptist and confirmation of the Holy Spirit and the Father at the banks of the Jordan as Christ, the Anointed one, the Messiah, He was led of the Spirit into the Wilderness to be tempted and tried like all mankind is constantly subjected to. In His incarnated, adopted human nature of sinful flesh, four thousand years after the Fall, and weakened by 40 days of fasting from food and water, He was subjected by Satan, disguised as an angel of light, to all and every temptation that he constantly assails every human being with. Christ conquered by uniting His adopted humanity with the divinity in Him, trusting completely upon the power of the Father.

The Nature of the Strategy of Battle against God’s Law Revealed

“Satan is an artful foe, and his work will be performed by many least expected. . . . In these last days the false will take the field with the true, the spurious with the genuine. . . . To men whom he desires to delude and ruin, Satan does not come as an outcast, apostate spirit, but he comes personating as an angel of light. Satan will make the best possible use possible of his agents,--- apostasy, uniting in a desperate companionship to oppose the law of God. . . . Satan has stolen the livery of heaven in order to deceive the very elect. As he *seduced Adam*, he is *seducing* men to unite with him in *rebellion against the law of God*.

Never was Satan so fiercely stirred as now. *As never before he will inspire everyone who has apostatized from obedience to God’s law. He will work to create rebellion at the very time when the proclamation of the third angel’s message is going to the world.* He will inspire members of his synagogue [or church] to make most desperate efforts to clothe in defiled garments all who take an active part in this message. Not a stone will be left unturned, not a plan or device but will be set in operation to deceive, to hold in error and strong delusion every mind that he can control. . . .

He will stir up the minds of the disobedient and rebellious, and all apostates will unite in a firm and desperate companionship against the law of God, to war against the government of God. . . . As we proclaim the binding claims of the law of God upon every human being, those who will not be convinced, who turn away their ears from hearing the truth and are turned into fables, choosing to feed upon a dish of maxims, customs,

and commandments of men, will use *the best weapons they have in warring against the truth*. They will bear *false witness, manufacturing lies to blacken the reputations* of those who have proclaimed the message of truth. . . . All who come out of the world and are separated, must count on meeting ridicule, sneers, and reviling. They must expect that their lives and mission will be misrepresented.

We will bear in mind that 'all that live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution' [2 Tim. 2:12], and all who sneer at the truth and ridicule those who proclaim it, will weep and pray, 'Lord, open to us,' and He will answer, 'I know you not.'

Alarmed that their prey is escaping from their grasp, Satan and his synagogue will make most desperate efforts to retain every soul on his side. He will present every possible objection and device to turn aside those who would walk on the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord. A train of secret circumstances will be set in operation by the serpent to deceive, to allure the sinner, to wrench from him his convictions that he must return his allegiance to God. . . .

The conflict will be long and painful. At times there may appear to be partial defeat, but bear in mind that you counted the cost when Christ showed you the plan of battle. You are not leaders in this conflict, for Christ is there; the armies of heaven are enlisted in the warfare. . . .

Jesus would have every individual understand that the confederacy of evil is strong, artful in planning, and will use every dishonest measure in order to obtain the victory. *Yet, not one follower of Christ is to look at his own weakness and become discouraged. Looking unto Jesus [Heb. 12:2] we shall receive His inspiration. We shall know that we are fighting in full view of God, of loyal, holy intelligences, with all the children of light as companions. More than angels are in the ranks of every conflict. At the head is the Great General of armies [Jesus Christ], who says, 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' [John 16:33]. Jesus will surround His faithful ones with a heavenly, holy atmosphere, Their armor is invincible, their Leader never met with defeat, and they are to advance in victory.*" – Letter 103, June 15, 1893/LDE 151, 152.

"The stern conflict between light and darkness, between error and truth, is deepening in intensity. The synagogue of Satan [the apostate churches in confederacy with fallen angels] is intensely active, and the deceiving power of the enemy is working in the most subtle way in this age. Every human mind that is not surrendered to God and is not under the control of the Spirit of God will be perverted through satanic agencies.

All the vast, complicated machinery of evil agencies is put into action in these last days. Through generation after generation, from age to age, Satan has gathered human agencies through whom to work his diabolical purposes, and to bring about the enforcement of his plans and devices in the earth. The great, putrid fountain of evil has been continually flowing through human society. Though unable to expel God from His throne, Satan has charged God with satanic attributes, and has claimed the attributes of God as his own. He is a deceiver and with his serpentine sharpness, through his crooked practices, he has drawn to himself the homage that man should have given to God, and has planted his satanic throne between the human worshipper and the divine Father.

The conflict is not ended, and as we near the close of time, the battle waxes more and more intense. As the second appearing of our Lord Jesus draws near, satanic agencies are moved from beneath." – Manuscript 39, Oct. 9, 1894/LDE 155.

"Aggressive warfare is before all who believe the truth. We are to make unbounded progress and improvement in carrying forward the work that mortal man is privileged to do under the command of the great General of armies. God sends His *angels* as ministering spirits to go before the true worker, and unite with him. The truth is to work

our hearts by the Holy Spirit's power. We are to call upon those who know the truth to enter into the work of *cooperating with the angels of God*. We are to be discouraged at nothing. We are to hope for everything in moral advancement, in spreading the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ our Lord. We are to call upon the Lord in every emergency, at every step." –*Letter 67*, Apr. 8, 1889/*Last Day Events*, 11p. 23.

"God works in mysterious ways, His wonders to perform. . . . *Conflicts and trials* are the very means ordained or allowed of God to perfect the Christian character unto eternal life. Teach every soul to lean heavily on the Arm of infinite power. There is an individuality that must be preserved in every human agent in Christian experience and the responsibility cannot be removed from any soul. *Everyone has his own battle to fight*, his own Christian experience to gain, independent in some respects from any other soul; and God has lessons for each to gain for himself that no other can gain for him. . . . All are not tried in the same way. Some will meet more severe trials than others, but cling to God is the encouragement to us living down near the close of time. . . . We have no new strange path to tread, in which others have not had a similar experience." –*Manuscript 6*, 1889/LDE 103.

Martyrdom in the last days

Many mainstream Christians doubt or refuse to accept the truth that there will yet be many martyrs for the truth of the *third angel's message* in the last days of earth's history—before probation closes forever. In fact the Rapture theory teaches that all Christians will be raptured, or taken to heaven before what they call the "seven-year tribulation." But they contradict the very words of Scripture that "all that will live godly in Christ shall suffer persecution." 2 Tim. 3:12.

"The *two armies* will stand distinct and separate, and this distinction will be so marked that many who shall be convinced of truth will come on the side of God's commandment-keeping people. When this grand work is to take place in the battle, prior to the last conflict, many will be imprisoned, many will flee for their lives from cities and towns, and *many will be martyrs for Christ's sake* in standing defense of the truth. They will be brought before kings and rulers, and before councils to meet the false, absurd, and lying accusations brought against them, but they must stand firm as a rock to principle, and the promise is, 'As thy days so shall thy strength be.' [Deut. 33: 25]. You will be tempted above what you are able to bear. Jesus bore all these and far more. The express command of God must be obeyed, for God has been working. [Luke 21: 8-19 quoted]."- *Manuscript 6*, 1889/ LDE 101.

The World Picture

"Those in the world, having lost their connection with God, are making desperate, insane efforts to make centers of themselves. This causes distrust of one another, which is followed by crime. The kingdoms of this world will be divided among themselves. Fewer and fewer will become the sympathetic cords which bind men in brotherhood to his fellow man. The natural egotism of the human heart will be worked upon by Satan. He will use the uncontrolled wills and violent passions which were never brought under control of God's will. . . . Every man's hand will be against his fellowman's. Brother will rise against brother, sister against sister, parents against children, and children against parents. All will be in confusion. Relatives will betray one another. There will be secret plotting to destroy life. Destruction, misery, and death will be seen on every hand. Men

will follow the unrestrained bent of their hereditary and cultivated tendency to evil. . . *This is the world picture.* What is the representation in the church? [2 Tim. 3:1-5 quoted]. God has a store of retributive judgments which He permits to fall upon those who have continued in sin in the face of great light. . . . The Lord keeps a record of every action of good or evil.

The time is right upon us when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. The flattering monuments of men's greatness will be crumbled to the dust, even before the last great day of destruction comes upon the world. The words of Revelation 18 will be fulfilled."

In the twenty-first chapter of Luke, Christ foretold what was to come upon Jerusalem; with it He connected the scenes which were to take place in the history of the world just prior to the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. . . Let all remember that these words were among the last Christ gave to His disciples. . . . In these sacred, solemn warnings the danger signal is lifted. It is this instruction that church members and the people of the world need; it is present truth." – *Letter 20*, Jan. 28, 1901/Last Day Events, pp. 190-2.

EPHESIANS 6: 10-18: The Christian's Marching Orders

"We are in the very shadow of that time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, which is fast approaching. [Dan. 12:1]. *We are not safe now in indulging our own desires, in having our own way, in following the imaginations of our own hearts.* Those who have done this in times past have lessons to unlearn, and lessons to learn of Jesus our Pattern. *The peril of believers is great.* Unbelief in the soul will marshal her power while faith is striving to gain the mastery in the battle. *Many battles will have to be fought in the heart of the believer.*

Wonderful is the struggle and great are the issues, although the contending elements make but little outward noise. *All heaven is looking on intensely interested to see what will be the result of these conflicts. The believer is fighting against a strong army.*

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood [Eph. 6: 12-18 quoted]. ***These are the marching orders to be followed out by every loyal soldier of Jesus Christ.*** If we obey orders, we shall then exercise faith and trust, knowing that there is One who is watching every soul in his fierce struggle with the powers of darkness. Satan will set in operation every satanic invention to hold the soul in his grasp, but help is laid upon One that is mighty, One who will come to the help of every soul in peril and turn back the forces of darkness, and make us more than conquerors over our enemies. Our part in the conflict is to obey orders, and He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of the Lord Jesus." – *Letter 85*, July 27, 1894/LDE 155.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. v. 10.

"He who was Elijah' strength is strong to uphold every struggling child of His, no matter how weak. Of everyone He expects loyalty, and to everyone He grants power according to the need. In his own strength, man is without strength; but in the might of God he may be strong to overcome evil and to help others overcome. Satan can never gain advantage of him who makes God his defense. 'Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.'" – *Prophets and Kings*, p. 175.

Paul admonishes us: “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier in Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please Him who enlisted him as a soldier.” 2 Tim. 2: 3, 4, N.K.J.V. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Phil. 4: 13. “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest in me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Cor. 12: 9, 10, N.K.J.V.

“We are soldiers of Christ; and those who enlist in His army are expected to do difficult work, work which will tax their energies to the utmost. We must understand that a soldier’s life is one of aggressive warfare, of perseverance and endurance. For Christ’s sake we are to endure trials. We are not engaged in mimic battles.”- *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 140.

“We are soldiers of Christ. He is the Captain of our salvation, and we are under His orders and rules. We are to wear His armor; we are to be marshaled under His banner. . . We are to keep on the whole armor of God, and work as in view of the universe of heaven.” – *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 296.

“Resolve, not in your own strength, but in the strength and grace given of God, that you will consecrate to Him now, just now, every power, every ability. You will then follow Jesus because He bids you, and that you will not ask where, or what reward will be given.”- *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 37.

“God will have a people zealous of good works, standing firm amid the pollutions of this degenerate age. There will be a people who will hold so fast to the *divine strength* that they will be proof against every temptation.” – *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 472.

“As Jesus was in human nature, So God means His followers to be. In His strength we are to live the life of purity and nobility which the Savior lived.” – *The Faith I Live By*, p. 93.

“Our precious Savior has invited us to join ourselves to Him and unite our weakness with His strength, our ignorance with His wisdom, our unworthiness with His merit. . . [But] there must be a new birth, a new mind through the operation of the Spirit of God, which purifies the life and ennobles the character. This connection with God fits man for the glorious kingdom of heaven. No human invention can ever find a remedy for sinning souls. There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before man can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness.” – *The Faith I Live By*, p. 96.

***Put on the whole armor of God,
that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. v. 11***

Every Christian is called to be a soldier to fight the battles of the Lord in His army, obtaining the divine strength of the Lord and the power of His might. He wakes up daily to battle against the wiles (unnumbered schemes, deceptions, and terrible temptations) of Satan and his agencies by putting on the whole armor of God. He is not only to overcome evil on his account; he is to help others overcome as well. If but one part of the

armor is missing the Christian will fall for Satan focuses all his energies against this vulnerable part.

“God has provided abundant means for the successful warfare against the evil that is in the world. The Bible is the armory where we may equip for the struggle. Our loins must be girt about with truth. Our breastplate must be righteousness. The shield of faith must be in our hand, the helmet of salvation on our brow; and with the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, we are to cut our way through the obstructions and entanglements of sin.” *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 502.

“When you die to self, when you surrender to God, to do His work, to let the light that He has given you to shine forth in good works, you will not labor alone. God’s grace stands forth to cooperate with every effort to enlighten the ignorant and those who do not know that the end of all things is at hand. *But God will not do your work. Light may shine in abundance, but the grace given will convert your soul only as it arouses you to put on the Christian armor and enter the Lord’s service as active soldiers.* Divine power is to cooperate with human effort the break the spell of worldly enchantment that the enemy has cast upon souls.” – *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 55-6.

“We must put on every piece of the armor, and then stand firm. The Lord has honored us by choosing us as His soldiers. Let us fight bravely for Him, maintaining the right in every transaction. *Rectitude* in all thing is essential to the welfare of the soul. As you strive for the victory over your own *inclinations*, He will help you by His Holy Spirit to be circumspect in every action, that you may give no occasion for the enemy to speak evil of the truth. Put on as your breastplate that divinely protected righteousness which it is the privilege of all to wear. *This will protect your spiritual life.*” – *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 31/ 6Bc1119.

“Satan assailed Christ with his fiercest and most subtle temptations, but he was repulsed in every conflict. Those battles were fought in our behalf; those victories make it possible for us to conquer. Christ will give strength to all who seek it. *No man without his consent can be overcome by Satan.* The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan.”- *Great Controversy*, p. 510.

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in high places. v. 12.

See also Eze. 28:17; Rev. 12: 7, 9; see EGW on Ps. 17; Dan. 10:13; 2 Cor. 2:11; Gal. 5:17; Rev. 16:13-16. A Battle against principalities and powers.

Wrestle: To contend by grappling with, and striving to trip or throw down, an opponent. 2 To struggle for mastery; to strive earnestly . To engage in (a match, bout, fall, etc.) in wrestling; to wrestle with; a struggle. *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary: 1942.*

The Battlefields

“The *fallen world* is the battlefield for the greatest conflict the heavenly universe and earthly powers have ever witnessed. It was appointed as a theater on which would be fought out the grand struggle between good and evil, between heaven and hell. Every human being acts a part in this conflict. No one can stand on neutral ground. Men must either accept or reject the world’s Redeemer. All are witnesses, either for or against Christ. Christ calls upon those who stand under His banner to engage in the conflict with Him as faithful soldiers, that they may inherit the crown of life.”- *Sons & Daughters*, p. 242.

“Battles are to be fought every day. A great warfare is going on over every soul, between the prince of darkness and the Prince of life. . . . As God’s agents you are to yield yourselves to Him, that He may plan and direct the battle for you, with your cooperation. The Prince of life is at the head of the work. He is to be with you in your daily battle with self, that you may be true to principle; that passion, when warring for the mastery, may be subdued by the grace of Christ; that you come off more than conqueror through Him that has loves us [Rom. 8: 37]. Jesus has been over the ground [Matt. 4: 1-11; Heb. 2:18; 4: 15, 16]. He knows the power of every temptation. He knows just how to meet every emergency, and how to guide you through the path of danger.” – *Ibid*, p. 160.

Battling with unseen powers.—[Eph. 6: 10-18 quoted]. “In the word of God are represented two contending parties that influence control human agencies in our world. Constantly these parties are working with every human being. Those who are under God’s control and who are influenced by the heavenly angels, will be able to discern the crafty workings of the *unseen* powers of darkness. Those who desire to be in harmony with the heavenly agencies should be intensely in earnest to do God’s will. They must give no place whatsoever to Satan.

But unless we are constantly on guard, we shall be overcome by the enemy. Although a solemn revelation of God’s will concerning us has been revealed to all, yet, a knowledge of His will does not set aside the necessity of offering earnest supplications to Him for help, and of diligently seeking to cooperate with Him in answering the prayers offered. He accomplishes His purposes through human instrumentalities.” -*MS 95, 1903/6BC 1119*.

Angelic protection: “Angels are near to protect us. If we have on the heavenly armor, we shall find that the assaults of the enemy will not have power over us. Angels of God will be round about us to protect us.” –*Review & Herald, May25, 1905/6BC 1119*.

“Could human beings know the number of evil angels, could they know their devices and their activity, *there would be far less pride and frivolity*. Satan is the prince of the demons. The evil angels over whom he rules do his bidding. Through them he multiplies his agencies throughout the world. He instigates all the evil that exists in the world.

But though the principalities and powers of darkness are both many in number and unceasing in activity, yet the Christian should never feel hopeless or discouraged. He may not hope to escape temptation through any lack of satanic efficiency. He who sent a legion to torture one human being cannot be repulsed by human wisdom or power alone.

Speaking of Satan the Lord declares that he abode not in the truth. Once he was beautiful, radiant in light. But God’s Word declares of him. “Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty.

Satan instigated others to rebel, and after they were cast out of heaven he bound them together in a confederacy to do all the evil possible to man, as the only means of striking God. Excluded from heaven, he resolved to be avenged by injuring the workmanship of

God. Around the standard of rebellion that he planted, evil workers of all generations have rallied. *Evil angels have united with evil men in a warfare against Christ's kingdom.*

Satan's aim had been to reproduce his own character in human beings. No sooner was man created than Satan resolved to efface in him the image of God, and to place his stamp where God's should be. And he has succeeded in instilling into the heart of man the spirit of envy, of hatred, of ambition. In this world he has set up a kingdom of darkness, of which he the leader in guilt, is prince. He desired to usurp the throne of God. Failing in this, he has worked in darkness, in crookedness, in deception, to usurp his place in the hearts of men. He has set up his throne between God and man, to appropriate the adoration that belongs to God alone." -MS 33, 1911/6BC 119.

"Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. They would have to fight [Eph. 6:12 quoted]. But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade them to be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks—the General of the armies of heaven." – *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 29.

The offense of the cross has not ceased. "As men seek to come into harmony with God, they will find that the offense of the cross has not ceased. Principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places are arrayed against all who yield obedience to the law of heaven. Therefore, so far from causing grief, *persecution* should bring joy to the disciples of Christ; for it is an evidence that they are following the steps of their Master. . . . Through trials and persecution, the glory---character---of God is revealed in His chosen ones." - *Sons & Daughters*, p. 307.

Satan preparing for last campaign against the true church. "While Satan is constantly seeking to blind their minds to the fact, let Christians never forget that they 'wrestle not against flesh and blood' . . . The inspired warning is sounding down the centuries to our time; 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.' [1 Pet. 5:8]. From the days of Adam to our own time, our great enemy has been exercising his power to oppress and destroy. He is now preparing for his last campaign against the church. All who seek to follow Jesus will be brought into conflict with this relentless foe. The more nearly the Christian imitates the divine Pattern, the more surely will he make himself a mark for the attacks of Satan." – *My Life Today*, p. 309.

Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth. v. 14.

Loins: "That part of a human being on either side of the spinal column between the hip bone and the false ribs; --chiefly in plural and often, in Biblical and poetic diction, denoting: **a** That part of the body to be clothed or girded. **b** The seat of generation or *procreation*." – *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary: 1942*. Procreate means "to generate and produce; to beget." – *Ibid*.

"The truth stands firmly established on the eternal Rock—a foundation that storm and tempest can never move. . . . Do not lower the banner of truth. . . . In order to unite with the solemn message for these last days, anything that will tend to hide the peculiar features of our faith." - *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 30/ 8T162.

The deeper roots of intemperance. “Intemperance is a *foe* against which all need to be guarded. The rapid increase of this terrible evil should arouse every lover of his race to *war against it*. . . . *But in order to reach the root of intemperance we must go deeper than the use of alcohol or tobacco*. Idleness, lack of aim, or evil associations, may be the predisposing cause. Often it is found on the home table, in families that account themselves strictly temperate [they don’t smoke or drink alcoholic beverages]. Anything that disorders digestion, that creates undue mental excitement, or in any way enfeebles the system, disturbing the balance of mental and physical powers, weakens the control of the mind over the body, and thus tends towards intemperance. The downfall of many a promising youth might be traced to unnatural appetites created by an unwholesome diet.” - *Education*, p. 202, 203/WGD, p. 111.

The drunkard is condemned while pride, selfishness, and covetousness—sins especially offensive to God—go unrebuked! “God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, as well as in that of man; but however trifling this or that wrong act may seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the sight of God. Men’s judgment is partial, imperfect; but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised, and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe.” – *The Faith That I Live By*, p. 60.

“The same God who punished them [Ananias and Sapphira], today condemns all falsehood. Lying lips are an abomination to Him [Prov. 12:22]. He declares that into the holy city ‘there shall in no wise enter. . . anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or a lie.’ (Rev. 21:17). Let truth-telling be held with no loose hand or uncertain grasp. Let it become a part of the life. Playing fast and loose with truth and dissembling to suit one’s own selfish plans means shipwreck of faith. [Eph. 6:14 quoted]. He who utters untruth, sells his soul in a cheap market.” – *Acts of the Apostles*, p. 76.

Having put on the breastplate of righteousness. v.14.

Breastplate: “1. A sacred article of dress worn by the Jewish high priest (Exo. 28:15-30). 2. Armor designed to protect the body in battle (Rev. 9:9); see ARMOR. Figuratively, righteousness Isa. ___:17; Eph. 6:14), or faith and love, constitute a spiritual breastplate (1 Thess. 5:8).” - *A Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 103.

“Clad in the armor of Christ’s righteousness, the *church* is to enter into upon her final conflict. ‘fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners’ [Song of Sol. 6:10] she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer.” – *Prophets and Kings*, p. 725.

“We cannot manufacture righteousness for ourselves. Christ has in His hands the pure robes of righteousness and He will put it upon us. He will speak sweet words of forgiveness and promises. And He presents to the thirsty soul fountains of living waters, whereby we may be refreshed. He bids us to come unto Him with all our burdens, all our grief, and He says we shall find rest. We must therefore believe that He speaks pardon, and we must show our faith by resting in His love. . . This feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross of Calvary. The sense of sinfulness has poisoned the springs

life and true happiness. Now Jesus says, ‘Lay it all on Me: I will take your sin, I will give you peace. Destroy no longer your self-respect, for I have bought you with the price of My own blood. You are Mine, your weakened will I will strengthen; your remorse for sin, I will remove.’” – *This Day with God*, p. 63.

“All our righteousness are as filthy rags’ [Isa. 64:6]. Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled with sin. But the Son of God was ‘manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.’ Sin is defined to be ‘the transgression of the law.’ [1 John 3; 5,4]. But Christ was obedient to every requirement of the law. He said of Himself, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O My God; yea, Thy law is within My heart.’ Ps. 40:8. When on earth he said to His disciples, ‘I have kept My Father’s commandments.’ John 15:10. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us, He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, nor the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah.’ – *Christ’s Object Lesson*, pp. 311-2.

“To every one God has made an offer that will help to brace every nerve and spiritual muscle for the time of test that is to come to us all. I am charged with the message, Clothe yourself with the whole armor of Christ’s righteousness. . . And, having done all you can do on your part, you have the assurance of victory. To every soul is granted the gracious opportunity of standing on the Rock of Ages.” – *My Life Today*, p. 311.

And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. v. 15

Jesus said, “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword in Matt. 10:34, 35? What did He mean by that? Isn’t the gospel a message of peace? Why is peace so elusive? Why is mankind’s history from the very beginning marked with strife and war?

“Shortly before His crucifixion, Christ had bequeathed to His disciples a legacy of peace. [John 14: 27 quoted]. *This peace is not the peace that comes from conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left with His disciples is internal rather than external, and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention.*

Christ said of Himself, [Matt. 10:34 quoted]. The Prince of Peace, He was yet the cause of *division*. He who came to proclaim glad tidings and to create hope and joy in the hearts of the children of men, opened a *controversy* that burns deep and arouses intense passion in the human heart. And He warns His followers [John 16:33; Luke 21: 12, 16 quoted]. This prophecy had been fulfilled in a marked manner. Every indignity, reproach, and cruelty that Satan could instigate human hearts to devise, had been visited upon the followers of Jesus. And it will be *again* fulfilled in a marked manner; for the carnal heart is still at enmity with the law of God, and will not be subject to its commands. [Rom. 8:7, 8]. The world is no more in harmony with the principles of Christ today than it was in the days of the apostles. The same hatred that prompted the cry, ‘Crucify Him! Crucify Him! The same hatred that led to the persecution of the disciples, still works on the children of disobedience [those who are at enmity with the law of God]. The same spirit which in the Dark Ages consigned men and women to prison, to exile, and to death, which conceived the exquisite *torture* of the Inquisition, which planned

and executed the massacre of St. Bartholomew [see *Great Controversy*, pp. 272-3, 1911 edition], and which kindled the fires of Smithfield, is still at work with the malignant energy in unregenerate hearts. *The history of truth has ever been a record of a struggle between right and wrong. The proclamation of the gospel has ever been carried forward in this world in the face of opposition, peril, loss, and suffering.*

What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ's sake? *It was the union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ.* Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ [Rom. 8:35-39]. Never is the tempest-tried soul more dearly loved by his Savior than when he is suffering reproach for the truth's sake." – *Acts of the Apostles*, pp 84, 85.

"So bitter would be the enmity to the gospel that even the tenderest earthly ties would be disregarded. The disciples of Christ would be betrayed to death by the members of their own households. 'You shall be hated by all men for My name's sake,' He added; 'but he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.' Mark 13: 13. . . .

The servant is not above his master. The Prince of heaven was called Beelzebub, and His disciples will be misrepresented in like manner. But whatever the danger, Christ's followers must avow their principles. They should scorn concealment. They cannot remain uncommitted until assured of safety in confessing the truth. They are set as watchmen, to warn men of their peril, freely and openly. Jesus said, 'What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in the light: and what you hear in the ear, that preach ye in the housetops.'

Jesus Himself never purchased peace by compromise. His heart overflowed with love for the whole human race, but He was never indulgent to their sins. He was too much their friend to remain silent while they were pursuing a course that would ruin their souls, --the souls he had purchased with His own blood He labored that man should be true to himself, true to his higher and eternal interests. The servants of God are called to do the same work, and *they should beware lest, in seeking to prevent discord, they surrender the truth.* They are to 'follow after the things which make for peace' (Rom. 14:19); *but real peace can never be secured by compromising principle.* A Christianity that is spiritual will be opposed by the children of disobedience. But Jesus bade His disciples, 'Fear them not which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul.' [Matt. 10:28]. Those who are true to God need not fear the power of men nor the enmity of Satan. In Christ their *eternal life* is secure. Their only fear should be lest they surrender the truth, and thus betray the trust with which God has honored them."- *Desire of Ages*, pp. 355-6.

"The truth will triumph gloriously. Let the churches begin to do the work that the Lord has given them---the work of opening the Scriptures to those who are in darkness. . . There are souls in your neighborhood who, if they were judiciously labored for, would be converted. Efforts must be made for those who do not understand the Word. Let those who profess to believe the truth become partakers of the divine nature [2 Pet. 1:4], and then they will see that the fields are ripe for the work that all can do whose souls are prepared by the living Word.

Will you put on the Christian armor? 'Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' you will be prepared to walk from house to house, carrying the truth to the people. Sometimes you will find it trying to do this kind of work; but if you go forth in faith, the Lord will go forth before you, and will let His light shine upon your pathway. *Entering the homes of your neighbors to sell or give away our literature, and in*

humility to teach them the truth, you will be accompanied with the light of heaven, which will abide in these homes.”- *Evangelism*, p. 114.

***Above all, taking the shield of faith
with which you will be able to quench
all the fiery darts of the wicked one. v. 16.***

Shield: “Shields were used by all nations of antiquity. The Israelites employed a larger and smaller kind (1 Kings 10:16, 17). The larger kind, translated shield, buckler, target, belonged to the heavy-armed spearmen and lancers (1 Chron. 12: 8, 24, 34; 2 Chron. 14:8). The smaller shield, rendered shield or buckler, was carried by archers (same as above verses). Shields were made of various shapes—round, oval, and oblong. They were commonly made of several thicknesses of leather or of wood covered with leather (cp. Exe. 39:9), which was oiled to keep it glossy and pliable, and to protect it against the wet (Isa. 21:5). They were sometimes covered with brass (Ant. 13: 12, 5), or made entirely of brass (1 Kings 14: 27, probably), or even of beaten gold (1 Kings 10:17; 2 Chron. 9:16; Mac. 6:2, 39). Bronze shields were often 2 or 3 feet in diameter. Sometimes a shield bearer accompanied a warrior into battle (1 Sam. 17:7).” – *A Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 54, 55, Westminster Press, PA, 1942.

Faith: “Faith in God’s Word, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will be our shield from Satan’s power and will bring us off conquerors through the blood of Christ. When souls are converted their salvation is not yet accomplished. They then have the race to run; the arduous struggle is before them to do, what? ‘To fight the good fight of faith, ‘ to press forward to the mark of the prize of the high calling which is in Christ Jesus.’ [1 Tim 6:12; Phil. 3:14]. There is no release in this warfare; the battle is life-long, and must be carried forward with determined energy proportionate to the value of the object you are in pursuit of, which is eternal life. Immense interests are here involved. The promise is, ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape.’[1 Cor. 10:13]. In the Lord we have righteousness and strength. Lean upon Him, and through His power you may quench all the fiery darts of the adversary and come off more than conquerors.”- *My Life Today*, p. 313.

Dart: Dart is a short lance or javelin In the RSV “dart” is the translation of: (1) the Heb. *massa* (Job 41: 26, a word of uncertain meaning; (2) the Heb. *shebet* (2 Sam. 18:14), literally “stick,” or “staff,” here probably a spear shaft; (3) the Gr. *belos*, “an arrow” (Eph. 6:16). In two other texts “dart” is used as a verb to indicate quick motion (Eze. 1: 14; Nahum 2:4). Textual evidence attests the omission of dart in Heb. 12:20. In the KJV “dart” is also from (1) The Heb. *ches* (Prov. 7:23), “arrow;” (2) the Heb. *shelach* (2 Chron. 32:5), “missile,” “javelin”; (3) the Heb. *tothach*, “cudgel,” “club” (Job 41: 29). *SDA Bible Dictionary*, Commentary Ref. Series, Vol. 8.

And take the helmet of salvation. v. 17.

Helmet: “Earliest helmets were made of leather, and had the form of skullcaps or pointed caps, occasionally with earflaps. In later periods helmets were made of metal. Egyptian reliefs of battle scenes show a great variety of helmets among various nations, especially among the Peoples of the Sea in the times of Ramses III. The Philistines are shown with a headgear of feathers. It is uncertain what kind of helmet Goliath wore (1 Sam. 17:5). The Bible mentions a helmet belonging to king Saul (v 38) and the helmets of Uzziah’s soldiers (2 Chron. 26:14). The Hebrew defenders of Lachish are depicted on an Assyrian relief as wearing pointed helmets with earflaps. The metal crest mount of an Assyrian helmet, the base on which the plumes were fastened, was found in the

excavations of Lachish. Paul likens 'salvation' and the 'hope of salvation' to helmets (Eph. 6: 17; 1 Thess. 5: 8)." - *SDA Bible Dictionary*, Commentary Reference Series, vol. 8.

The helmet is for protection, and in the battle for eternal life this helmet is the helmet of salvation from sin through the divine plan of redemption. See Titus 2: 11-14.

"Salvation means to us complete surrender of soul, body, and spirit. Because of the unruly elements of our [sinful human] nature our passions often gain the mastery. The only hope of the sinner is to cease from sin. Thus his will will be in harmony with the will of Christ. His soul will be brought into fellowship with God." – Manuscript 78, May 11, 1890/ This Day with God, p. 140.

"God bids us fill the **mind** with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the *great plan of redemption* [as taught in the sanctuary message]. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of the Scriptures."- *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 60.

"The mind must be *educated and disciplined* to love purity. A love for spiritual things should be encouraged; yea, must be encouraged, if you would grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth. . . . *Good purposes are right, but will prove of no avail unless resolutely carried out. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians; but they made no earnest effort, therefore they will be weighed in the balances and found wanting. The will must be exercised in the right direction. I will be a wholehearted Christian. I will know the length and breadth, the height and depth, of perfect love. Listen to the words of Jesus, 'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.'* (Matt. 5: 6). Ample provisions are made by Christ to satisfy the soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness."- 2T, pp. 265-6.

"We should *meditate* upon the Scriptures, thinking soberly and candidly upon the things that pertain to our eternal salvation. The infinite mercy and love of Jesus, the sacrifice made in our behalf, call for most serious and solemn reflection. We should dwell upon the *character* of our dear Redeemer and Intercessor. *We should seek to comprehend the meaning of the plan of salvation.* We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people *from* their sins. By constantly contemplating heavenly themes, our faith and love will grow stronger. Our prayers will be more and more acceptable to God, because they will be more and more mixed with faith and love. They will be more intelligent and fervent. There will be more constant confidence in Jesus, and you will have a daily, living experience in the willingness and power of Christ to save unto the uttermost all the come unto God by Him." - *Our High Calling*, p. 113.

"Many have confused ideas in regard to conversion. They have often heard the word repeated from the pulpit, 'You must be born again.' 'You must have a new heart.' These expressions have perplexed them. They could not comprehend the plan of salvation.

Many have stumbled to ruin because of the erroneous doctrines taught by some ministers concerning the change that takes place at the conversion. Some have lived in sadness for years, waiting for some marked evidence that they were accepted by God. They have separated themselves in a large measure from the world, and find pleasure in associating with the people of God; yet they dare not profess Christ, because they fear it

would be presumption to say that they are children of God. They are waiting for that peculiar change that they have been led to believe is connected with conversion. . . . Failing to understand the simplicity of the plan of salvation, they lost many privileges and blessings which they might have claimed had they only believed, when they first turned to God, that He had accepted them.

Others fall into a more dangerous error. They are governed by impulse. Their sympathies are stirred, and they regard this flight of feeling as an evidence that they are accepted by God and are converted. But the principles of their life are not changed. The evidences of a genuine work of grace on the heart are to be found not in feeling, but in the life.” – *My Life Today*, p. 314.

Take the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. v. 17

“The first Adam fell; the second Adam held fast to God and His word under the most trying circumstances, and His faith in His Father’s goodness, mercy, and love did not waver for one moment. **‘It is written’ was His weapon of resistance**, and it is the sword of the Spirit which every human being is to use.”- *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 35

“To the law and the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isa. 8:20. The people of God are directed to the Scriptures as their safeguard against the influences of the false teachers and the delusive power of spirits of darkness. Satan employs every possible device to prevent men from obtaining a knowledge of the Bible; for its plain utterances reveal his deceptions. At every revival of God’s work the prince of evil is aroused to more intense activity; he is now putting forth his utmost efforts for a final struggle against Christ and His followers. The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their [the Scriptures’] every statement and every miracle tested.

Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them.

None but those who have fortified the mind with truths of the Bible will stand through the great last conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: ‘Shall I obey God rather than men?’ The decisive hour is even now at hand. Are our feet planted on the rock of God’s word? Are we prepared firm in defense of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus?”- *Great Controversy*, pp. 593-4.

Commit texts to memory. “We know the dangers and temptations that beset the youth at the present time are not few or small. . . . We live in an age when to resist evil calls for constant watchfulness and prayer. God’s precious Word is the standard for youth who would be loyal to the King of heaven. Let them study the Scriptures. *Let them commit text after text to memory*, and acquire a knowledge of what the Lord has said.

And in trial let the youth spread our the Word of God before them, and with humble hearts, and in faith, seek the Lord for wisdom to find out His way, and for strength to walk in it. . . .

Let our young men institute a warfare against every habit that has the least danger of leading the soul from duty and devotion. Let them have stated seasons for prayer, never

neglecting them if it can possibly be avoided. If they go out to battle with their vicious habits indulged as before they professed fellowship with Christ, they will soon fall an easy prey to Satan's devices. But armed with the Word of God, having it treasured in heart and mind, they will come forth unharmed by all the assaults of the foes of God or man. . .

In the name of God lift your banner for truth and righteousness---the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. You need the perfect armor of truth now, the sword of the Spirit, whose edge will never be blunted, but will cut its way through sin and unrighteousness."- *My Life Today*, p. 315.

Paul says that "the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4: 12. The unvarnished, testing truths of the present time cuts both ways; it cuts to the heart and causes pain but when yielded to, it also cuts away all that needs to be excised from the mind and heart---be it ignorance or sinful practices. It is truth that calls sin by its right name in the love of Christ---who loves the sinner with a perfect love and hates sin with perfect hatred.

David declares: "The entrance of Thy word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple." Ps. 119: 130. And the wise man says, "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly." Prov. 2:6, 7. Christ's prayer for His disciples then and now is "Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth." John 17:17.

"The light and understanding which God's Word imparts is not designed merely, or chiefly, to promote intellectual culture. For an object higher than any earthly or temporal good were the holy oracles committed unto men. We see therein the great plan of human redemption, the means devised to free mankind from the power of Satan. We see Christ the Captain of our salvation, meeting the prince of darkness in open battle, and single-handed, obtaining the victory in our behalf. We learn too by this victory was opened to us a door of hope; a source of strength, and that we may, as faithful soldiers, fight our own battles with the wily foe, and conquer in the name of Jesus. . . ." - *That I May Know Him*, p. 192.

Responsibility for loss of souls.--"The work of the Holy Spirit is to enlighten the darkened understanding, to melt the selfish, stony heart, to subdue the rebellious transgressor, and save him from the corrupting influences of the world. The prayer of Christ for His disciples was: 'Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth.' [John 17:17]. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, pierces the heart of the sinner and cuts it in pieces. *When the theory of the truth is repeated without its sacred influence being felt upon the soul of the speaker*, it has no force upon the hearers, but is rejected as error, *the speaker making himself responsible for the loss of souls*. We must be sure that our ministers are converted men, humble, meek, and lowly of heart." - *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 441.

See Acts 1: 11-26; 2: 1-17. The Source of their Power. -After Christ's ascension, the disciples were gathered in one place to make humble supplication unto God. And after 10 days of heart searching and self-examination, the way was prepared for the Holy Spirit to enter the cleansed, consecrated soul temples. Every heart was filled with the Spirit, as though God desired to show His people that it was His prerogative to bless them with the

choicest of heaven's blessings. . . .The sword of the spirit flashed right and left. Newly edged with power, it pierced even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow. The idolatry that had been mingled with the worship of the people was overthrown. New territory was added to the kingdom of God. Places that had been barren and desolate sounded forth His praises." – *Evangelism*, p. 698.

What “the Bible and the Bible only” means - “The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: ‘The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.’ 2 Tim. 4:3. *That time has fully come.* The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love.

But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. [1] *The opinions of learned men*, [2] *the deductions of science*, [3] *the deeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils*, as numerous, and discordant as are the churches which they represent [4] *the voice of the majority*---not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ in its support.

Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to *bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology*, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves. Then, by controlling the minds of these leaders, he can influence the multitudes according to his will.” – *Ibid*, p. 594-5.

Ministers are not infallible. - “Notwithstanding the Bible is full of warnings against false teachers, many are ready to commit the keeping of their souls to the *clergy*. There are today thousands of professors of religion who can give no reason for points of faith which they hold than that they were so instructed by their religious leaders. They pass by the Savior’s teachings almost unnoticed, and place implicit confidence in the words of the ministers. *But are ministers infallible?* How can we trust our souls to their guidance unless we know from God’s word that are light bearers? A lack of moral courage to step aside from the beaten track of the world leads many to follow in the steps of learned men; and by their reluctance to investigate for themselves, they are becoming hopelessly fastened in the chains of error. They see that the truth for this time is plainly brought to view in the Bible; and they feel the power of the Holy Spirit attending its proclamation; yet they allow the opposition of the clergy to turn them from the light. *Though reason and conscience are convinced, these deluded souls dare not think differently from the ministers*, and their individual judgment, their eternal interests, are sacrificed to the unbelief, the pride, and prejudice, of another.” – *Ibid*, pp. 596-7.

Ignorance not an excuse.- “The truth and the glory of God are inseparable; it is impossible for us, with the Bible within our reach, to honor God by erroneous opinions. Many claim that it matters not what one believes, his life is only right. But the life is molded by the faith. If light and truth is within our reach, and we neglect to improve the privilege of hearing and seeing it, we virtually reject it; we are choosing darkness rather than light. ‘There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.’ Prov. 16:25. Ignorance is no excuse for error or sin, when there is every opportunity to know the will of God. *A man is traveling and comes to a place where there are several roads and a guideboard indicating where each one leads. If he disregards the guideboard, and takes whichever road seems to him to be right, he may ever be so sincere, but will in all probability find himself on the wrong road.*

God has given us His word that we may become acquainted with its teachings and know for ourselves what He requires of us. When the lawyer came to Jesus with the inquiry, 'What shall I do to inherit eternal life?' the Savior referred him to the Scriptures, saying: 'What is written in the law?' How readest thou? Ignorance will not excuse young or old, nor release them from the punishment due for the transgression of God's law; because there is in their hands a faithful presentation of that law and its principles and claims. It is not enough to have good intentions; it is not enough to do what a man thinks is right or what the minister tells him is right. His soul's salvation is at stake, and he should search the Scriptures for himself. However strong may be his convictions, however confident he may be that the minister knows what is truth, this is not his foundation. He has a chart pointing out every waymark on the heavenward journey, and he ought not guess at anything." -*Great Controversy*, pp. 597-8.

"It is the first and highest duty of every rational being to learn from the Scriptures what is truth, and then to walk in its light, and encourage others to follow his example. We should day by day study the Bible diligently, weighing every thought, and comparing scripture with scripture. With divine help we are to form our opinion for ourselves as we are to answer for ourselves before God. . . .

Jesus promised His disciples: '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.' John 14:26. *But the teachings of Christ must be previously stored in the mind, in order for the Spirit of God to bring them to our remembrance in the time of peril. . . .*

When the testing time shall come, those who have made God's word *the rule of their life* will be revealed. . . . Let persecution be kindled, and the half-hearted and hypocritical will waver and yield the faith; but the true Christian will stand firm as a rock, his faith stronger, his hope brighter, than in the days of prosperity." - *Ibid*, pp. 593-602.

***Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit,
being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication
for all the saints. v.18.***

"We must have on the whole armor of God, and be ready at any moment for a conflict with the powers of darkness. When temptations and trials rush in upon us, let us go to God, and agonize with Him in prayer. He will not turn us away empty, but will give us grace and strength to overcome, and to break the power of the enemy. Oh, that all could see these things in their true light, and endure hardness as good soldiers in Jesus! [2 Tim. 2:3]. Then would [spiritual] Israel move forward, strong in God, and in the power of His might." - *My Life Today*, p. 309.

"The temptations of Satan are greater now than ever before, for he knows his time is short [Rev. 12:12], and that very soon every case will be decided, either for life or death. It is no time now to sink down beneath discouragement and trial; we must bear up under all our afflictions, and trust wholly in the Almighty God of Jacob. . . His grace is sufficient for all our trials; and although they are greater than ever before, yet if we trust wholly in God, we can overcome every temptation and through His grace come off victorious. . . . When temptations and trials rush in upon us, let us go to God and agonize with Him in *prayer*. He will not turn us away empty, but will give us grace and strength to overcome, and to break the power of the enemy." - *Early Writings*, p. 46.

