



The Sharon Star

A Lesson on the Love of God

By Andy Snoke

Who is the most powerful female in the world it has been asked? Some journalists voted for Condoleezza Rice, others for Oprah Winfrey, and some voted for Hillary Clinton. All of which are well known, and “powerful” in their own right.

But the most powerful female in the world to me is not included in this list.

My candidate of choice is a little three year old, 30 lb bundle of life named Claire. Claire Beverly has blonde hair that falls from her head in little girl curls. Her sparkly sapphire blue eyes remind me of my mother’s eyes. Her bright smile is peppered with teeth jutting out here and there. Her vocabulary of all of three years, is limited, yet always expanding.

Yet this little one can wrap me around her finger! Her very presence can stop my wife and I in our tracks. She is mighty.

As I sit at my computer attempting to crank out some work, she will bounce in hold her arms up in the air (which in universal kid language means “pick me up Papa”.) and in a nanosecond is in my arms. I do not have the heart or strength of will to say: “Sorry, Papa’s busy”.

Nothing can melt my heart quicker than seeing this little one walk into the room, clutching her doll which is half the size of her, her lips glowing with little girl lip gloss, with a purse wrapped around one arm, only too eager to grow up.

Like a lady, she will pick up her toy phone and talk endlessly to her imaginary caller, (most often her daddy), telling him about her day with grunts, words and gestures that only she understands.

This little one knows that she has our undivided attention. When I give her a “snack” she says “tank you”, and when she asks for something it is always preceded with “pease?” (please). Her parents have taught her manners well.

If I pour her a cup of milk in her “tinkerbell” cup, she points at the microwave and utters some noises that means “heat my milk please”? She knows I understand her and that we will take care of her.

How is it possible to love a little one so much? My granddaughter can physically do nothing for me. She is too little.

She cannot “earn” my love. She cannot cook. She cannot pay my bills. She cannot drive me to the store. But I love her, as I do all of my 4 grandchildren, with all of my heart.

I love her, not because of what she can do. Not because of what she has done. But because of “WHO” she is. She is my grand daughter. I love my grandsons with the same overflowing measure.

Is this how God loves us? Does He love us not because of what we have done, but because of WHO we are (His sons and His daughters)? Is His ear al-

Table of Contents	
A lesson in the Love of God.....	1
Time to be Faithful.....	2
Spiritual Battle	4
Important Dates	4
Called Home.....	8

ways attentive to our call? Does He long for us to hold up our arms like my granddaughter, for Him to embrace and fellowship with us? The answer is yes.

God does love us, with an indescribable love. He longs to fellowship with us, and to give us “good things”. He listens when we pray. His eyes are always on us. He has granted forgiveness for all of our sins by the blood of His only begotten Son Jesus.

Because I have experienced the unsearchable love of God, I can love my children and grandchildren with a love beyond myself. Because He first loved and forgave me, I have the capacity to love and forgive others. To be sure, it would be difficult to show love to others, without first knowing the Love of God for us.

If you do not know Jesus as you read these words, remember that you can. You can experience the di-

vine love of God that reaches down from heaven and fills your soul with His presence. Every sin, every transgression can be erased, forgiven, and forgotten. A new beginning can be yours! Your heart can be enlarged with the capacity to be loved by the Savior and to love others as yourself.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16 NKJV)

Just ask Jesus into your heart, right now, as you read this article, take a moment to receive the Lord into your heart. Don't put it off for another minute.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev 3:20 NKJV).

Life is Short, Fish Hard or Time to Be Faithful

By Mike Grief

I was always amused by the way the cartoon, Bullwinkle, always started with two titles. Both of them were separate titles, with two seemingly different messages, but somehow connected. That is how I feel about these two titles, in this hour, considering the events occurring in the world, I think we all agree that we need to make ourselves available to God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as fishers of men, and being faithful to get to work and to be found busily doing what the Master commissioned each one of us to be doing “when He returns”! These are words of advice, to myself, and to each one of us as “Biblical” world events continue to unfold.

I have a saying in my classroom (I'm a school teacher) written on the wall which says, “Life is Short, Fish Hard!”. Underneath the saying is typed the scripture reference, Matthew 4:19. That verse says, “I will make you fishers of men if you follow Me”. I have a fanatic fisherman friend of mine who just retired and he treats himself to fishing on a very regular basis. He bought himself a boat as a retirement gift. He is a fisher of fish. Christ wants us to be fishers of men, being led by His Spirit, as we go about our daily business exercising our gifts and ministries while we work, raise our families, interact with friends, or whatever we are doing that day. The main requirement stated in the above scrip-

ture is “if you follow Me”. He wants us to follow His leading in all that we do. We are to go about our daily life in a spirit of prayer, or awareness of His presence. Speaking in tongues, singing hymns or psalms, or spiritual songs, continually living in a spirit of prayer, etc., are good ways to keep that presence. I ask God at the beginning of my workday, as I am approaching my school in my car, to love my students through me and to help me to show forth His character of mercy, grace, and the fruits of the Spirit, and to lead me by His Spirit throughout that particular day. My sons and I sing songs to God as we travel to school, and that spirit of song begins my day in the right frame of mind. The neat thing is Jesus does love my students through me that day. He helps me to be much more understanding, gives me wisdom to deal with problems, and inspires my teaching, as I go, with examples, humor, and enjoyment of my topic and kids I am teaching. Kids very rarely misbehave because they know I care for them and besides, we are having way too much fun discussing and learning our topic for the day. As I said, God inspires my teaching because I have put Him first in my life and first during my day. If I don't put Him first my teaching and my day suffers. He helps me to “Fish Hard” that day and to do my job in a way that is pleasing in His sight. Because He is put first

on the throne of my heart and included in my day, all that I do, my teaching, coaching, responsibility as a father, and husband, and leading my Fellowship of Christian Athletes group, is blessed. This slogan, “Life is Short, Fish Hard”, is taken from a Nike slogan, “Life is Short, Play Hard”. I once had a shirt that said, “Life is Short, Pray Hard”. That is a good thing to ask God to help you to do, also. I recently developed Plantar’s Fasciitis in my right heel. After suffering with this for about six months I took this problem to my elders in church, was anointed with oil, and had them pray for me. The problem seems to be the worst during the night when I get up during my sleep. Every time this happens, which is every time I get up, I speak in tongues and pray for others that God brings to my mind. I feel that God wants me to pray more for other’s needs, so this is a great time for me to do this. I think He is using this problem of mine as a reminder for me to bring the needs of others before Him first, and He will take care of my problem in due time. Meanwhile, I am developing the habit of praying for others more, which I know He wants me to do. As I am going back to sleep I just clear my mind and speak in tongues and continue to allow Him to pray through me according to His Will. There is a line from A Christmas Carol that I believe the Ghost of Christmas present says that I have always loved. He says, “mankind is my business”. That is true; “mankind is our business.” As I am praying for others I am taking care of His and my business. This is another way that I am “Fishing Hard”. (By the way, it has been several months since I first wrote this article and my Plantar’s Fasciitis is now pretty much gone.)

Incidentally, over the past many years, whenever I have been prayed for and anointed with oil, I try to write it down in my Bible what the problem is and when I was prayed for. Usually the answer doesn’t come immediately, for me anyway, so I just continue to claim the faithfulness of God and His Word, and to believe for the healing. Usually, sometime at a later date, I just notice that I don’t have the problem anymore. Then I write down in my Bible the date when I noticed the healing. This has built my faith to realize that God and His Word are trustworthy and faithful. This might be a good idea for you to try.

A couple of weeks ago I just opened up my Bible because I didn’t know where to read. I’m sure you have done this before. It opened to Luke chapter 12. I’ll quote beginning at verse 30 and highlight the scriptures that really jumped out at me. “These things dominate the thoughts of most people, but

your Father already knows your needs. 31 He will give you all you need from day to day if you make the Kingdom of God your primary concern. (This is what I referred to above. If we put God first, and pray for others first, then God will take care of our need, as well.) 32 “So don’t be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the kingdom. 35 “ Be dressed for service and well prepared, 36 as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks. 37 There will be special favor for those who are ready and waiting for his return. I tell you, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! 38 He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn. But whenever he comes, there will be special favor for his servants who are ready! 39 “Know this: A homeowner who knew exactly when a burglar was coming would not permit the house to be broken into. 40 You must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected.” 41 Peter asked, “Lord, is this illustration just for us or for everyone?” 42 And the Lord replied, “I’m talking to any faithful, sensible servant to whom the master gives the responsibility of managing his household and feeding his family. 43 If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. 44 I assure you, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. 45 But if the servant thinks, ‘My master won’t be back for a while,’ and begins oppressing the other servants, partying, and getting drunk -- 46 well, the master will return unannounced and unexpected. He will tear the servant apart and banish him with the unfaithful. 47 The servant will be severely punished, for though he knew his duty, he refused to do it. 48 “But people who are not aware that they are doing wrong will be punished only lightly. Much is required from those to whom much is given, and much more is required from those to whom much more is given” (Luke 12: 32-48 Living Bible Paraphrased). As you read this again really meditate on the highlighted parts and think about your own life and how you are living it. Are you ready and waiting? Are you doing what He wants you to do on a daily basis? Are you exercising the gifts He gave you? Are you fulfilling His purpose for your life? These are some tough questions that hurt when we think about them.

God wants us to be responsible to the calling He has called each of us to do, according to our gifts and ministries, and to be faithful to be doing them each

day until the day that He returns. Our duty is to be found doing what He calls each of us to do, and let us not refuse to do it. If you have been prayed for and prophesied over then you should have a pretty good idea what it is God wants you to do. If you have not been prayed for and prophesied over as to your gifts then you need to pray about it and very seriously look to God to have that experience. You can't play ostrich and hide your head in the sand and get away from the responsibilities God has designed for you!

Matthew 24:42-51 is a similar passage of scripture about how we need to be faithfully doing what God is calling each of us to be doing right now at this present time. I quote: 42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. 45 "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the Master has put in charge of the servants in His household to give them their food at the proper time? 46 It will be good for that servant whose master finds him do-

ing so when he returns. 47 I tell you the truth, He will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' 49 and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. 50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Time is short and I hope we all desire to be found faithful! When Jesus returns be found doing what He has called you to do. Be that 'light of the world' where all in your field of influence can see on a daily basis the Christ living in you. Be that "salt of the earth' that preserves and flavors those round about you.

God wants us to be faithful and wise, being His servants, administering food at the proper time to His other servants in His household. Mankind is our business. We are our brother's keeper. Read chapter 24 of Matthew and you will see all around us the signs of the times suggesting that His return could be soon. We need to realize that time is short, and we need to Fish Hard!

Fish on. Reel him in for Jesus!

Spiritual Battle

By PJ Mathew

"For our fight is not against any physical enemy: it is against organizations and powers that are spiritual. We are up against the unseen power that controls this dark world, and spiritual agents from the very headquarters of evil" (Ephesians 6:11-12, J.B. Phillips). It is true that believers are engaged in a daily warfare with the forces that are invisible to the eyes

and incomprehensible to the human mind. It is not uncommon that we go through trials and temptations in this physical realm. The physical realm of affairs is dominated and controlled by an enemy who is not seen yet its presence is obviously felt in our Christian walk. Our fight is not just against our carnal nature which is "flesh and blood" (KJV), but against a government established by the enemy in high places. It is a wicked spirit intercepting our prayers that ascend up to the throne of God. The prophet Daniel encountered such an experience. Archangel Michael had to help the other angel to bring the answer to Daniel's prayer because the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted the angel for twenty one days. The angel was detained there with the king of Persia (Daniel 10: 13). The Prince of the Persian kingdom was apparently a demonic power influencing the Persian realm in the interests of Satan. Here the prince of Persia represents the unseen force that controls the dark world. Daniel had to wait in the presence of the Lord for twenty

IMPORTANT DATES

- Park Valley Labour Day.....Aug. 31st - Sept. 3rd, 2012
- Winkler Family CampAug. 31st - Sept. 3rd, 2012
- Hidden Acres Family Camp.....Aug. 31st - Sept. 3rd 2012
- Omaha, NE Sept. 21st - 23rd, 2012
- North Battleford Young Peoples..... Nov. 8th - 11th, 2012
- Indiana Young Peoples..... Dec. 27th - 31st, 2012

three days, counting the day he began praying, to get help from God. His power was finally overcome with the help of Archangel Michael, “the great prince who protects” the people of God (Daniel 12: 1).

It is quite antithetical to agree that there is a fight on the spiritual plane, yet it is true that we have a battle to wage against the enemy who tries to destroy our relationship with God. The subtlety of the enemy (Satan) can be traced back to the beginning of creation when Eve was tempted by the serpent which led to the downfall of man from the grace of God. When Adam was created, he was created in the very image of God. Later on Eve was created as a helpmeet for Adam. As Adam and Eve continued to live there in the Garden of Eden, God came down from heaven to the place of their inhabitation and fellowshiped with them. Not long after that man fell from such an intimate divine communion as a result of disobedience, which occurred as result of the insinuation of the serpent Satan. It is a strong reminder to the body of Christ not to be self-complacent and at ease in the comfort of our Garden of Eden experience but rather to press on to greater heights in the realm of the spirit. We shouldn't be ignorant of the fact that the attack of the enemy is to distract and disconnect our relationship with God and in the end to destroy our peace and joy. “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10: 10, NIV).

The body of Christ on earth today is compared to the Israelites who were in the wilderness experience for forty years. The people had to be ready according to the moving of the cloud. When the cloud lifted it was an indication that they had to break off their comfortable stay. For example, at Elim where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees and plenty of water (Exodus 15: 27), people were quite content when they were there. Throughout the sojourn the Israelites were led by the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. The pillar of cloud protected them from the heat of the sun and the pillar of fire provided them with light in the night. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is led by His Spirit. As God gave instructions to his people in the wilderness, today the Holy Spirit is available to us to press on in our spiritual journey.

In the chapter of the heroes of faith in Heb. 11, we notice a walk of faith and a constant fight between the chosen ones and the organizations and powers that control the dark forces. Those men and women fought the fight with the weapon of faith as martyrs. Unlike in the natural realm, the weapons used in this spiritual

fight are rather unconventional. The weapons that are used to subdue the enemy are the word of God and faith in God. “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb. 4: 12, New International Version).

Although there is a battle, the method of our fight is not in the natural but spiritual. “The truth is that, although we lead normal human lives, the battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level. The very weapons we use are not human but powerful in God's warfare for the destruction of the enemy's strongholds. Our battle is to break down every deceptive argument and every imposing defense that men erect against the knowledge of God. We fight to capture every thought until it acknowledges the authority of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3-5 J.B. Phillips).

The weapons that are used in modern warfare are lethal and the effects are hugely destructive. Over the centuries, we have read and witnessed wars, and its colossal damages on humanity in terms of human and economic losses. An enormous amount of blood has been spilled on the earth as a result of these wars. But the day is at hand when the Lord will establish His kingdom and He will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths. “He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore” (Micah 4: 3, New International Version).

However, we are able to understand that as the citizens of the kingdom of God, which is spiritual, our fight has any similarity to the wars that are mentioned above. (Note: This statement is unclear. I think he means ... our fight has similarity to the wars...) Our destiny is to ascend to the heavenly places that have been usurped by the enemy. Satan's kingdom is situated in “the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12). It is from there that he rules and reigns over the world, (and over the Church.) (Note: I think this phrase should be removed. Christ is the head of the Church, the body of Christ) as the “prince of the power of the air” and “god of this world.” But the “heavenly realms” are also the heritage of the children of God; God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. “But even though we were dead in our sins, God who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, gave us life together with Christ- it is, remember, by grace that you are saved- and has

lifted us to take our place with him in Christ Jesus in the Heavens” (Ephesians 2: 5-8, J.B. Phillips). The child of God is therefore called upon to war against these evil hosts of wickedness who have usurped the authority of Christ and His Church. It is imperative to understand that our battle is spiritual and not natural. We fight not with the weapons of this world but with the weapons of God which are not seen by the human eyes. These weapons are spiritual attributes that God has given us as gifts not to use for personal gains but for the building of the body of Christ. Going back to the Old Testament time line, we read that by the word of God they won victory, many times. Just by praising and worshipping God, the camp of the enemy was terrified and fled away. Jericho was conquered by shouting the name of the Lord. Joshua and the priests had to submit to the command of God to take over the city of Jericho. “When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city” (Joshua 6: 20, New International Version).

Similarly, Gideon overcame the enemies in a rather peculiar way. First of all, he obeyed the Lord in his mission of defeating the Midianites. He separated three hundred men who lapped with hands to their mouths from those who knelt to drink the water. God sifted 300 people from 32,000 people who had originally gathered to battle against the Midianites. “Gideon and the hundred men with him reached the edge of the camp at the beginning of the middle watch, just after they had changed guard. They blew their trumpets and broke the jars that were in their hands. The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, ‘A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!’ While each man held his position around the camp, all the Midianites ran, crying out as they fled” (Judges 7: 19- 21, (New International Version). Strategies and the weapons used in this war against the enemy appear to be quite remote and unappealing to any war commander of the modern times. Ironically, that was the plan of God and it was enough to drive the enemy away from the Israelites. We read that the Midianites, the Amalekites and all the eastern peoples had settled in the valley, thick as locusts. Their camels could no more be counted than the sand on the seashore (Judges, 7:12). The Lord fights our battles and gives victories. It is not how Gideon conducted the campaign against the enemies but it is important to note how he contained himself in the plan of God.

The prophet Zechariah had to step in to help win the spiritual battle when the exiles rebuilt the second temple. Zerubbabel, the governor who was in charge of the building of the second temple, and the remnant were very discouraged at the great opposition they were facing while building the temple. Zechariah prophesied words of encouragement. “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘Not by might nor by power, but my Spirit,’ says the Lord Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6, NIV). It is significant to note that the Spirit of the Lord Almighty will go before and foil the attempts of the enemy. We are not able to defeat the power of the enemy with our strength or might but through Christ. The apostle Paul apparently was fighting with a dark force and he asked God for deliverance. But God said to him, “ My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9, NIV). Most assuredly that grace, which is the unmerited favor of God, is more than enough for us to overcome our struggles victoriously. The power of God works the best in us when we are weak.

In Romans 8:37, NIV we read, “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” All these things refer to trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword (Romans 8:35). We may include more in this list, such as discouragement, disappointment, hopelessness and many more as each individual’s situation is. However, we have this promise that we are made conquerors of all these through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a triumph of the believers in Christ’s way. True Christians do not lose anything during their tribulation, but rather gain a lot like the gold that loses the dross in the furnace. When gold goes through the refiner’s fire it becomes pure gold. In the process of being melted gold is purified as it loses the dross. True Christians go through the furnace stage only to become a brighter and purer precious metal. That is the gain of going through the refiner’s fire as we read in Malachi 3:2. When the refining process is finished the gold smith or silver smith can see his image in the metal which was impure before. Jesus Christ died on the cross, which is the furnace experience, and rose again on the third day to declare to the world that he defeated death. This is how we believers are able to win the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15: 57). We win by yielding, gain by losing, and live by dying to the world.

“Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good” (Eccl.9: 18). God gives us the gift of wisdom to give appropriate answers to those who try to find fault in us. Jesus used the gift

of wisdom on many occasions when the religious and political leaders such as Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians (political group connected to Herod) tried to accuse him. One such occasion was when Jesus healed a man with a shriveled hand. The Pharisees asked him, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” He said to them, ‘If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath’” (Matthew 12: 10-12, NIV). Further we read that the Pharisees went away unable to make him guilty of healing the sick on a Sabbath day. Thus Jesus was able to overcome a situation exercising the gift of wisdom. Jesus depended on the Father while he was ministering on the earth. He obeyed Him in all things even to the point of dying on the cross. Our complete obedience to the Spirit of God is of great strength in thwarting certain unwarranted situations in our life.

In Matthew, 21:23-27, we read how the chief priests and elders of the people came to Him and questioned His authority. Jesus answered by a word of wisdom asking them a question. In verse 24, “I will also ask you one thing, which of ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.” Then he asked them whether John’s ministry came from heaven or of men, whether it was divine or merely human in its origin? Were those who went out to be baptized at the Jordan responding to a merely human impulse, or were they in fact answering a divine challenge? The dilemma of the Jewish authorities was this. If they said that the ministry of John was from God, then they had no alternative to admitting that Jesus was the Messiah, for John had borne definite and unmistakable witness to that fact. On the other hand, if they denied that John’s ministry came from God, then they would have to bear the anger of the people, who were convinced that he was the messenger of God. For a moment the Jewish chief priests and elders were silent. Then they gave the lamest of all lame answers. They said: “We do not know.” We understand here that the word of wisdom exercised by Jesus stopped the mouths of gainsayers.

Another example of exercising the gift of the word of wisdom to end a dispute is found when the apostle Paul was brought before the Sanhedrin Council by the Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 23:6-10). The apostle Paul had realized that he was in the midst of Pharisees and Sadducees who had differences of thoughts regarding the resurrection of the dead. Knowing that, he called out to his accusers “I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead

I am called into question” (verse 6). Such a timely utterance had its effect and the accusers were divided and began quarreling among themselves and Paul was rescued out of their hands.

It is essential to give our lives and all our situations in to the hands of God, so that He can take up our cause and settle for us. It is so easy sometimes to get angry and blame others for the things that we go through in our lives. By doing so we may temporarily shift the burden to a third person and get some satisfaction, yet it does not lift burdens away from us. The apostle Paul encourages us in (Ephesians 6: 10) to put on the full armor of God to stand against the adversary. While writing this, apparently Paul sees a picture of a Roman soldier staring him in the face. All this time, he was chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier. Night and day, a soldier was there to ensure that he would not escape. Paul was literally an ambassador in chains. As he writes, the soldier’s armor suggests a picture to him. Christians, too, have armor and item by item Paul takes the armor of the Roman soldier and translates it into Christian terms.

We read in Ephesians 6: 14-18, a list of spiritual weapons to be put on by a Christian to stand his/her ground against the enemy. First of all, it is the belt of truth that is buckled around our waist. Truth is our girdle. This is the strength of our loins; and it girds all other pieces of our armor, and therefore is first mentioned. Jesus who is the Truth says that Truth will set you free (John 8:32). When we are girdled with the truth we are free indeed and not succumbed to the guilt and the shame of the past that the enemy wants us to dwell on. Secondly, righteousness must be our breast-plate. The breast-plate secures the vitals and shelters the heart. The righteousness of Christ implanted in us is our breast-plate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us. In Psalm 103: 17, we read, “ But from everlasting to everlasting, the Lord’s love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children’s children - with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts” (NIV). Thirdly, feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. Shoes or greaves of brass were formerly part of the military armor to defend the feet against the traps and sharp sticks while marching into the enemy territory and those who fell in to those traps were unfit to march. The readiness of the gospel of peace signifies a resolved frame of heart which will enable us to walk in steady pace in the way of our faith in God. Fourthly, faith is a mighty weapon to bring down all trials and temptations like a shield that protected the soldier from the fiery darts. One of

the most dangerous weapons in ancient warfare was the fiery dart. It was a dart tipped with fibers of rope dipped in pitch. The pitch-soaked rope was set alight and the dart was thrown. The great oblong shield was made of two sections of wood, glued together. When the shield was presented to the dart, the dart sank into the wood and the flame was put out. So also our shield of faith can deal with the darts of temptation. When we walk closely with Christ, wearing the shield of faith, we are safe from temptation. Fifthly, salvation is our helmet of our Christian walk. The salvation which is in Christ gives us forgiveness for the sins of the past and strength to conquer sin in the days to come. We do not have to worry about the sins that we committed in the past. When we have made him our Savior, he came into our lives and gave us a new heart. Do not become a victim of your past life and let it not haunt you because of the redemption we have received through the blood of the lamb. Sixthly, we read about the sword which is the word of God. The word of God is both our weapon of defense against sin and our weapon of attack against the sins of the world. During the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell's Ironsides (godly puritans) fought on one hand with the sword and the Bible on the other. Our battle against the carnality of sin cannot be won without the word of God.

Finally, Paul mentions the greatest weapon of all, and that is prayer. Paul reminds us that we should pray in the Spirit on all occasions. It must be constant and not just in times of great crises of life. We draw our strength from daily prayers. Prayer must be intense, meaning completely focused, and our prayer demands the concentration of every faculty upon God. Our prayers must be unselfish. Often, our prayers are too much for ourselves and too little for others. We must learn to pray as much for others and with others as for ourselves. "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for

you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thess. 5:16-18, NIV).

"No weapon forged against you will prevail, and you will refute every tongue that accuses you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me," declares the Lord" (Isaiah 54:17, NIV). In reality, we do have a battle against the enemy. At the same time, we are also given seven spiritual weapons explained above as our full armor against the attacks of the enemy. Isaiah clearly declares that no weapon of the enemy will prevail against the people of God and it is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. The heavenly realm is our heritage and no strategy of the enemy can subdue the true believers from reaching that place in the Spirit. We are equipped with the "whole armor," a complete battle-dress, with nothing lacking. As we learn to put on and use the whole armor of God, we will be better prepared to penetrate the walls of principalities and powers that are erected to hinder us in the conquest of our heavenly heritage.

CALLED HOME

Andrew Simmons, Elder - High Point, NC
August 19, 2012

Isabelle Hine - Charlotte, NC
August 19, 2012

*For a listing of other dates and contact information
visit www.globalmissionsinc.org*

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