

# GOD'S CALL

## Major themes in the Scriptures

### Quality of being (5)

#### Quality of being and spiritual victory

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The Lord willing, today we will consider the subject, “Quality of being”, the fifth message, as we seek to appreciate major themes in the Scriptures.

A short summary of today's message:

Moral quality of being is at the heart of what God seeks to bring about in His creation of moral beings. It is under severe and vicious attack. We must learn how to overcome and become what we ought to be.

We will look to the Lord to appreciate more of what this means.

We know that quality of being is at the heart of what God seeks to bring about in mankind. And we also know that it is a very difficult objective to attain and there are many dangers and problems.

God has placed us in a world where there is a fierce and difficult battle for us to encounter and many of us may often wish that it were not so. We may wonder why it is necessary for God to do it this way.

If God wants to create us with moral quality, can He not just create us, place us in this world and let us make our own choices as to what we want in life?

Why is there a need for Him to give the opportunity for the evil one, who is so very evil, so very cunning and so very vicious, to be at work in this world to tempt us, to pressure us, to threaten us and to draw us away from God and the path of righteousness?

We all know that if we want to train good athletes or sportsmen, if we leave them alone to do their own training, many of them will not develop very great quality. Many of them will develop to a certain degree and they will be quite satisfied unless they are very strongly driven, very, very disciplined.

However, put them together with others who are better than they are, put them in situations where there is challenge and difficulties, and we see them grow and develop.

They develop a higher quality in the midst of challenges and difficulties.

Of course, at such a time, we will also see negative effects.

People who want to compete in the Olympic Games, who want to win a gold medal... we know that many of them resort to improper means, including taking performance-enhancing drugs like steroids and other things in order to boost their performance. They may cheat, they may lie; they may do things in order to gain a reward.

This is also true in the spiritual realm. If God were to leave us alone in a pleasant environment to develop our character, many of us may choose positively up to a certain point. But when tested, we may not be able to stand. The quality that is developed may not be very great.

And so it is, when Satan is present in the scene, the quality of our being is tested. Are we prepared to take our stand in the midst of temptations and pressures? Will we stand together with the Lord? Or, will we compromise, will we fall away?

If we learn to resist the evil one, if we learn to take our stand against him, if we learn to develop our allegiance to God: that is where we will develop quality in our being.

So we need to appreciate the context in which God has created us and placed us in this world. And we need to be very alert and careful because if we are not so, we will be easily destroyed.

So in the last message, we sought to appreciate who the enemy is. Who is our adversary? What is his target? What does he concentrate on? What is his objective?

We see that the devil is like a roaring lion, prowling about seeking someone to devour. He wants to destroy us, he wants to eat us up so that we will not follow God but instead, we will become his victims, we may follow him.

He concentrates on our heart. He may use the things of this world, but his purpose is to destroy our heart.

So, the apostle Paul says: “do not give the devil an opportunity or a place”. And that place, we saw in **Ephesians 4**, is the heart. He is seeking to work in our heart to destroy us. At the same time, the apostle Paul tells us: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit”.

So we see that there are these two very powerful beings at work in our lives: one to destroy us, drawing us to evil; the other, to seek to help us in the path of righteousness, to become what we ought to be.

So while ultimately, we are the ones who are going to make the decision as to what we will do with our lives, what we will pursue and what we will become, let us recognize that we are making these choices in the context of God and Satan working in this world.

Satan is an adversary seeking to destroy what God wants to accomplish. God is seeking, with all that is at His disposal, to help us. What then is our choice? How do we respond to this?

So let us have a closer look at the realm of the warfare.

What is the realm in which this warfare takes place and how can we overcome? How should we fight and overcome?

There are two very helpful passages in the Scriptures which help us to appreciate these issues in depth.

The scope is very big and the issues involved are very deep. But for today, I want to concentrate on some major areas for us to recognize, so that we will learn how to effectively take our stand and overcome the evil one.

The first passage:

**2 Thessalonians 2: 3-14**

- 3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,
- 4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.
- 5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?
- 6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.
- 7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.
- 8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;
- 9 *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,
- 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved.
- 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,
- 12 in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.
- 13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.
- 14 It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As we read through this passage and ponder over it, it may become clear to us that the battle is in the realm of the spiritual and the moral.

It is in the realm of the spirit, not in the realm of the physical. Our battle is in the realm of the spirit. We are fighting against very powerful spiritual forces and it is not just spiritual in the sense of spirit, but it is moral in the sense of righteousness and wickedness.

As we read through this passage, we see again and again the reference to lawlessness, wickedness and evil. The apostle Paul tells us: “the man of lawlessness ... the son of destruction” – he will be revealed in the last days. He will exert great powers to bring the world to destruction.

That does not mean that Satan will only be at work at that time, but this will be the greatest manifestation in the last days, when he will show forth his power in the best way that he knows how, in order to achieve his purpose.

“Displaying himself as being God” – we have seen that his motive, his objective is to be like God. He wants to be worshipped. He wants power and he wants people to submit to him.

“The mystery of lawlessness is already at work”, but it will increase in intensity. That lawless one will be revealed. So from the context, and if we correlate this with the description in the **book of Revelation**, we will see that Satan in the last days will work through human beings – he will work through the antichrist, he will work through the false prophet, and he will manifest great power in that situation so that people will worship the beast, the antichrist.

Satan is described in the **book of Revelation** as the dragon and he will give his power to the beast and to the false prophet.

The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders – the evil one has been at work throughout all these centuries but we will see in more visible forms in the last days: he will release all his power that he could muster.

And with all the deception of wickedness – deception, we know, is to lead people astray, lead people to the wrong direction; to tell you something that is false so that you may believe and think that it is true.

But we need to specially recognize that this deception is not just for the purpose of drawing you to believe something that is false. It is deception of wickedness.

The purpose of the deception is to draw you into evil, to deceive you into thinking that something that is evil is good so that you may move in that direction. That is one kind of situation and this can apply very powerfully in the lives of Christians: Christians who may want to do what is good, but may be deceived in the wrong direction, thinking it is good but it actually is not good.

The evil one is very cunning and we need to keep close to the Lord in order to understand, to differentiate what is truly good from what is not.

For those who want evil, who are prepared to follow Satan, he may not need to deceive them in the same way, but it is still deception because he will promise them many things that in the end they will not get - ultimately, they will be destroyed.

We see that this principle has been at work from the garden of Eden and will continue to work until Satan is cast into the lake of fire. From the very beginning, Satan sought to deceive mankind. He spoke to Eve and he deceived her into thinking that partaking of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a good thing for her and she ate. And she gave to her husband Adam and he ate. It is the deception of wickedness.

And we are told this takes place because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. There is an underlying basis upon which the evil one has power to work. In the case of Adam and Eve, we know that God gave them instructions. They knew what was the right path. But they did not love the truth that God had shown to them and because of that, because they did not hold on to what God had declared and taught them, their hearts were drawn away by deception.

Satan was able to tell Eve, “No, you ... will not die.” God had said, “If you partake of this, you will ... die”; Satan said, “No, you ... will not die.” And with the attraction that he could bring to her, she was drawn into it, she was deceived.

And so the apostle Paul tells us, in his epistle to Timothy, “woman was deceived”. Eve was deceived, but that was because she did not hold on to the truth that God had shown to her. God told her, “... you will die”. She did not believe that, she did not hold on to that. So she was deceived.

For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false – if our hearts are not fully aligned with God, if we do not love the truth that God had shown to us so fully, we will be open to deception. God allows a deluding influence in this world.

It is not that God Himself will deceive us, but God allows the evil spirits to work. They have great power to work. They can deceive, they can delude us. God allows it. If our hearts are not centred on Him, if we are not prepared to take our stand with Him fully, then we are in grave danger.

In order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness – the relationship between belief in God, in the truth that God has shown to us, and the path of wickedness. If we do not believe in God, then we move in the path of unrighteousness.

And that is why the writer to the Hebrews tells us to beware of an evil heart of unbelief. Unbelief is not just that we do not recognize what is true and what is not true. Unbelief is associated with the wrong direction in our hearts – what we want, what we are inclined towards, what we wish for. Something is wrong with that and when that is the case, we do not believe.



If we truly love what is good, when God comes to us and He speaks to us, we will believe Him, we will recognize because it is a spiritual appreciation. Your spirit will identify with God – the Holy Spirit can witness in our hearts and help us to recognize what is right, what is good. God has given us a conscience to teach us the right path.

So we can recognize, we can know. But if we do not heed the voice of conscience, if we do not listen to God with a sensitive heart, with a desire to obey, then our conscience can become corrupted. We can become deceived and we can be drawn to the path of evil.

So then, the apostle Paul says, “But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. It was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

**Verse 14** tells us: “that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ”. What is at the heart of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ? Yes, we can say He is all-powerful, He is God, He became Man; He created all things. But the primary aspect of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is His moral perfection, the moral quality of His being. And that is what God wants to bring about in us, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ to be formed in us.

The apostle Paul laboured so much for the Galatians. He said he was very concerned for them, that he might have labored ... in vain. Why? Because they were moving away from the path of righteousness, they were moving away from the path of development in Christ. He says, “I am again in labor for you until Christ is formed in you”. It is a formation of the being of Christ, His character, His moral perfection, His moral goodness in us that God is seeking to bring about. And this is what Satan wants to prevent. He wants to bring about lawlessness, wickedness, destruction in our being.

So the apostle Paul tells us that “God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth”. He describes, he tells us certain important areas for us to pay attention to.

We must appreciate the salvation that God is giving to us. There is no other way by which we can find forgiveness and transformation. There is no other name given under heaven ... by which we must be saved. It is only through the Lord Jesus Christ, through the cross: That is the only way by which we can be saved. So we need to recognize and appreciate the basis of salvation, what it means.

The evil one will seek to deceive us, to offer us many other ways by which we can become good, we can become acceptable before God. But that is deception. Without the cross, there is no forgiveness. Without the power of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot be transformed: We have turned to go our own way, we deserve condemnation. Salvation comes through what the Lord Jesus Christ has done and through sanctification. It is a path of being set apart to become holy for God and to be transformed to be like God in His holiness. Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect is the path that God has called us towards.

We must develop that kind of quality of being that will be like who God is. It is by the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God who will help us to be transformed. He will work in our hearts; He will teach us the ways of God, He will lead us if we learn to walk by the Spirit.

But it is so much easier to walk by the flesh than to walk by the Spirit and so it is very difficult to be transformed. Unless we walk by the Spirit, we will not develop the fruit of the Spirit. We will grieve the Holy Spirit and He will not work in us. If we go our own way, if we walk in our own paths, the Holy Spirit will not bring about the sanctification in our hearts.

Sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth – we need to learn to develop the quality of faith. Where do we place our trust? What do we believe in? What do we base our lives upon? Do we have enough confidence in God to trust Him and all that He has said, all that He has declared? Will we walk by that? The truth that God has revealed to us, are we prepared to acknowledge or will we turn away and pretend it is not there?

The problem is God has revealed the truth to us, but we may not want to believe and so we say, “I do not know. I am not aware.” But at the very heart of it, God created us with the ability to recognize the path of righteousness, what is good, how we should live. But we do not want it. Right from the garden of Eden until the end of time, this principle will be at work. It is up to us – do we want the truth or do we not?

It was for this He called you through our gospel – we need to appreciate what is at the heart of the gospel. What is God seeking to communicate to us, what is He saying? And when we seek to bring the gospel to other people, do we know what we are saying? Do we understand what is required, what is God calling us towards? Are we presenting the right gospel or a false gospel? And so this is important, we need to appreciate.

So the realm of warfare is in the realm of the spirit. It is not so much the outward things that we do; but the outward things that we do become very important when first we understand what is the realm of the spirit. When our spirits are right, we are in fellowship with God, we understand His ways, then the expression, the outward expression of it, in the things we do become very important because the outward expressions can transmit the spiritual reality.

The Lord Jesus said: “the words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life. The flesh profits nothing; it is the Spirit that gives life. And the words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life.” So, although the words are uttered by the mouth, produced by the vocal cords, it is a physical expression of sound waves, in that context, the spirit is transmitted.

When we make sure that our hearts are right, our fellowship with God is deep, we depend on Him, then the things that we do, the things that we say, our very being will transmit spiritual life and meaning. And that is what God wants us to do.

**Verse 8** tells us: “that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming”. The Lord Jesus will come again. The first time He came, He came and He died on the cross to save us. The next time He comes, He comes as a conqueror and in the presence of the manifestation of all that Satan could do, the most powerful and evil expressions that he could muster, the Lord Jesus, when He comes again, He will destroy evil expressed in this world. He will destroy that lawless one ... with the breath of His mouth.

And we may wonder: How does His breath destroy the lawless one? The Scriptures tell us that in the spiritual realm, there is spiritual power and weapons involved.

In **Revelation 1: 16**, we are told that “out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword”. This is a reference to the Lord Jesus Christ when He was revealed in the context of giving revelation to the apostle John about the last days. And the apostle John saw the Lord Jesus Christ in His resurrection glory and he says: “out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword”. The sword will destroy and it comes from the Lord Jesus.

In **John 20: 22**, we are told: “He breathed on them and \*said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”” The Lord Jesus, after having risen from the dead, met His disciples and He breathed on them and He \*said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” This tells us that the Lord Jesus was communicating that as He breathed on them, there was the release of the Holy Spirit – the sword that comes out of His mouth in spiritual warfare that will destroy the works of the enemy.

And if we are to understand how to fight this battle, we need to learn how to exercise ourselves in the context of what God has provided for us, so that we can overcome the evil one. It is a spiritual battle.

How then should we fight? Let us go on to the next passage to see how God has made provision for us so that we can fight and overcome. And you will see that this passage corresponds very closely with the passage that we have just read in **2 Thessalonians 2**.

#### **Ephesians 6: 10-20**

- 10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.
- 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
- 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.
- 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.
- 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,
- 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;
- 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil *one*.
- 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
- 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,
- 19 and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,
- 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We have seen the battle: The warfare is in the realm of the spirit; it is in the realm of the moral. We can say, ultimately, it is a battle between the good and the evil. We need to understand this: If we do not appreciate this deeply enough, we can easily go astray and concentrate on the wrong things.

It is a battle between the good and the evil, between righteousness and wickedness, between self-giving love and self-seeking greed, pleasure and pride.

We see the battle between what the evil one is seeking to do – through the antichrist, through the man of lawlessness and through the false prophet, through all the evil spirits – and we see in contrast what the Lord Jesus Christ is seeking to do: They are in opposite directions.

The Lord Jesus is the incarnation of God and He brings life and salvation to the world, while the man of lawlessness empowered by Satan brings death and destruction to the world. These are the opposite directions. It is between the good and the evil.

Where do we take our stand? Do we take our stand with the Lord or do we take our stand with the evil one?

If we are half-hearted, we will not be effective; we will be manipulated by the evil one.

Our stand must be complete, absolute and total. Often, we may advise people, “Do not take sides” and in many situations, that is good advice because very often, people take sides based on natural inclinations, emotional attachments, selfish gain: It is wrong to take sides on these grounds.

But there is a place and a time to take sides and this is one instance. Not only must you take sides, you must go all the way.

Are you going to take your side with the Lord Jesus, with God? Or are you going to take your side with Satan? Or are you going to be half-hearted, neither here nor there?

The Lord Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon". And mammon is a representation not just of wealth but of all the things that are not what God intends for us. We SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD our GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY. That is the context of victory.

So that is the battle. Ultimately, what do we want in our lives? Do we want to be truly righteous – fully righteous, pure in heart? Or are we satisfied just to have some quality – we have our sins forgiven, we are going to heaven; we just do some good works, we help some people – we are satisfied with that? Are we?

Beware, because the evil one is constantly seeking for a place to work in our hearts. If we are not prepared to give up all to the Lord, if our hearts are not fully given to the Lord, then there will be room for the evil one to operate.

And so the answer to the attacks of the evil one is to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. This you can say summarizes the whole issue. Be strong in the Lord – but what does that mean? And so the apostle Paul elaborates, he explains to us how we can be strong in the Lord.

We have seen in **2 Thessalonians** that God wants us to gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. That in essence is the same as being strong in the Lord. When we gain the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be strong in the Lord.

Because the meaning of being strong in the Lord is not just that we say, “The Lord is almighty, I trust Him. He will fight the battle; He will overcome the evil one.” That is not what the apostle Paul is referring to here in **Ephesians 6**. Yes, of course, there is a place, where we recognize the Lord Jesus having overcome Satan at the cross, we trust in His victory. That is true.

But here, the apostle Paul is helping us to understand that if we want to be really effective in spiritual warfare, then the being of the Lord, His character, His ways, His values must become ours. It must become part of us in our being.

The quality of our being must include this transformation so that Christ is formed in us – His character, His values, His ways become ours. It is in that state we will be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

Otherwise, we may experience God’s power from time to time, here and there; and when people pray for us, when we exercise some faith, we see God at work. But that is not consistent, long term, sustained victory in this battle. So we are to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

So he says, “Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.” What the apostle Paul presents here is to tell us it is a very serious matter. The schemes of the devil are very, very cunning and very powerful. We have to stand firm against that, but how to do that?

We have to put on the full armor of God. We must understand what are the essential aspects – what are important and how we are to overcome him.



So he says, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” The apostle Paul wants us to recognize clearly that we must concentrate our battle in the spiritual realm.

“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood” – that does not mean that other human beings, referred to as flesh and blood, cannot cause us harm. Certainly, they can. We have seen before: the enemies include human beings. But the way in which they harm us is not physical.

The way they harm us is spiritual – it is in the heart – by drawing us into the ways of the world, by drawing us into seeking for what the world can offer us. They are harming us in the realm of the spirit. The battle is in the heart. So likewise, the evil one makes use of the things of this world. It can be pain, it can be sickness, it can be enjoyment; it can be fame and power. He makes use of these things, but the purpose is to reach our heart.

Our struggle is against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. People who are evil, they are often encouraged, energized by the powers of darkness. The powers of darkness are very, very evil and so they exert a lot of influence in this world. So we can say our primary concentration must be on what the evil one is seeking to do, and there we will see how the people who are wicked are basically following his direction.

“The rulers ... the powers ... the world forces of this darkness ... the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*” – notice that these are world forces. They are powerful, extensive, they work throughout the world. They are spiritual *forces* of wickedness and it is in the heavenly *places*.

Darkness here is used to describe evil and wickedness. In contrast, the Lord Jesus is the Light of the world. He brings the Light of life to us. So we can say it is a battle between darkness and light; it is a battle between good and evil; it is a battle between righteousness and wickedness. Do we follow the light or do we walk in the dark?

So the apostle Paul tells us how we are to do it: "Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm."

Why does he say again "to stand firm"? Standing firm is so difficult. When we live in this world, when the evil one is so powerful and cunning, it is very easy to waver; it is very easy to consider: "Maybe I should not do this. Maybe I should not be so serious in my faith. Maybe I can just give in a little bit."

Stand firm means we do not budge, we do not give an inch, we do not allow the evil one any opportunity to work. But to do that, we must put on the full armor of God.

And here, the apostle Paul gives us a pictorial representation of the armour. Ultimately, the armour is our being and our fellowship with God and our relationship with God. In the spiritual realm, ultimately that is our armour. But here, he gives us a portrayal in the physical realm, so that we can see a picture.

People in the past, they wore armour when they went to battle. So therefore, he gives a representation: this part of the armour can be used to represent this aspect. But ultimately, it is the moral and spiritual quality of our being and our relationship with God that is the real armour in the spiritual battle.

So therefore, if we look at the list, we can see that the apostle Paul is saying something like this: He says, “You must be properly attired. You must put on the full armor and these are the elements that you should take care... The belt of truth...” The belt of truth: so here, the belt represents truth. He does not use the word “belt” here but the description of it. He says, “HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH”, that means, having put on the belt. So the belt here is to represent truth.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS – the breastplate is to represent righteousness.

Having shod YOUR FEET – that means: wearing the shoes of THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. Here, the word translated as “PREPARATION” can also be translated as “preparedness” or “readiness”. It can be used in terms of preparing for something; it can be used as “being prepared”: so the preparedness or the readiness OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. And from what I can see in the context, it would be more helpful, appropriate to translate it as “THE readiness OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE”.

The shield of faith – the shield represents faith; THE HELMET: SALVATION and the sword: the Spirit. So we see here, the apostle Paul is telling us various elements in terms of what God has provided for us and how we are to be transformed.

Here – the sword of the Spirit – I need to elaborate a bit because there are various ones who interpret differently and we need to look at the context to appreciate.

If we follow the analogy here, it is reasonably clear to say HELMET OF SALVATION, salvation is represented by the helmet; sword of the Spirit, the Spirit is represented by the sword.

But some people may interpret as the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: So they think that the sword is the word of God. And so, it is the sword that the Spirit takes and that sword is the word of God; and to them, the word of God is the Bible: So you have to take the sword of the Bible.

But here, the apostle Paul is talking about the sword that is the Spirit and this is confirmed from the way it is written – the apostle Paul says: “And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION”. And the word “take” here can also be translated as “take up”. Take up with your hand, you hold it, you take it. Take what? Take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and take the sword of the Spirit.

The word “sword” here in the Greek is *machaira*, which is feminine as a noun. And just as we have in English feminine gender, masculine and neuter gender, in the Greek, it is also so. But feminine in this context refers to the “sword”, which is not male or female as a being, but this will correspond in terms of the language used as to what it is referring to. So the word “sword” here is feminine.

But the word “spirit” here is neuter and the reason why it is neuter, neuter gender, is that the word translated as “spirit”, that is *pneuma*, can also be translated as “wind”. So “wind”, as we know, generally we regard as neuter.

But in the context where it is translated as the “spirit”, we know it is referring to the being, the Holy Spirit. So, that, in one sense, you can say, is masculine if you were to use the English word for it. But because the word is *pneuma*, so the pronoun which follows it – “which” – will tell you whether it is referring to *machaira* or it is referring to *pneuma*.

If it were to refer to *machaira*, which is “sword”, then it should be feminine pronoun, which will be “*he*”. But in this instance, it is not “*he*”, it is “*ho*”. And “*ho*” is neuter. And so this corresponds with “Spirit”.

So that means, he is saying, “take ... the sword of the Spirit, who is the word of God”. If we translate it to bring out the meaning, it should be “take ... the sword of the Spirit, who is the word of God”.

And here, “the word of God”, the word translated as “word” is the word “*rhema*” which expresses what God is saying, what God is speaking. God says it and it comes to pass, the expression of it. So “take ... the sword of the Spirit, who is the word of God”. So when God says, it shall be done – the power that comes from the Holy Spirit when He utters, when He declares, when He executes.

And this is very appropriate – “the sword who is the Spirit ... the sword which is the Spirit”.

And so we see now, if we correlate this with the Lord Jesus having a two-edged sword that comes out of His mouth, and when He breathes and He says, “Receive the Holy Spirit”, we appreciate that in the realm of spiritual warfare, the Holy Spirit is very powerfully actively at work.

And so, we have these opposing forces: the evil one at work in the spiritual realm, the Holy Spirit at work, and we are in the context to choose: Where do we align ourselves? Do we follow the Lord and trust in the Holy Spirit or we go our own way?

And so he says, “... take THE HELMET OF SALVATION with your hand”. Or “take ... the sword of the Spirit with your hand”. So the sword is held by the hand; the hand moves the sword. So how does the hand move the sword? This is very important.

If you want to move the sword who is the Holy Spirit, the hand must be exercised. And what is the hand?

**Verse 18** explains to us: With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit. "With" – the word "With" here, is the word "*dia*" in the Greek, which can be translated as "through" or "by means of".

So, if we were to translate it continuously, then we will say, "And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, who is the word of God ... by means of all prayer and petition..." "By means of" – that means you take the sword of the Spirit by means of all prayer and petition.

So it is not that we can command God, we wield the sword as we wish; we just take the sword and we can do whatever we want. It is not so.

It is a very interesting way of presentation. We take ... the sword by means of all prayer. And the prayer that we are talking about here is an expression of our submission to God. It is not that we exercise control over God, but we submit to God. And by trusting in God, offering to Him our lives, we can then in prayer look to Him to move the sword of the Spirit.

And that is why we see in spiritual warfare, prayer is very, very important. Meaningful prayer, powerful prayer, prayer that is united with God is very powerful in spiritual warfare.

Many things are done in the realm of prayer that nobody knows. What people see is the outward expression of things. But how much is accomplished because of those who really pray in identification with God, many people do not know.

But here, the apostle Paul is revealing to us something very important. In the realm of spiritual warfare, if we are to overcome, we need to learn how to move the sword of the Spirit.

And the sword of the Spirit can also be expressed when in a heart of prayer, in a spirit of dependence on God, we speak and we proclaim. Then the sword will also move in that context.

That is why the Lord Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life." So out of our being, if our hearts are identified with God, in a spirit of dependence on God, in a prayerful spirit, what we say and what we do can transmit spiritual life. The Holy Spirit can go forth in spiritual battle.

And the sword is used for defence as well as for attack. When the evil one attacks us, when we learn to pray, the Holy Spirit surrounds us and protects us. When we want to help others, deliver others from oppression and from the work of the evil one, we pray and the Holy Spirit works to set free the captives.

So the apostle Paul says, "by means of all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit". Here, "in the Spirit" can refer to "in the Holy Spirit" or "in our spirit", and it is appropriate to interpret as both. We pray in our spirit, we pray in dependence on the Holy Spirit. We pray as the Holy Spirit leads us and guides us. So pray at all times in the Spirit.

Again, this is a very major aspect in spiritual warfare. If we do not learn to pray ... in the Spirit, our prayers are not effective.

Many of our prayers are in the mind, in the brain. It is just words that we form because we think it is a good thing to say.

But praying in the Spirit has to do with the heart. It has to do with our motive, our values; it has to do with our identification with God, what we believe in, what we are committed to, what we are working at, what we give our lives for. To pray ... in the Spirit, your heart must be in it. There must be the reality of your identification with the Lord.

So praying ... in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. We are meant to contribute in spiritual warfare not just for ourselves, for our own lives, but for the lives of all the saints – to pray for all who love the Lord, so that we can fight the battle together.

That is why prayer is a very, very important aspect and the prayer meeting in church life is a very, very important aspect which is very much neglected.

So, we may do many things but if we do not sufficiently pray, our hearts are not fully with God, then what we do will be lacking in spiritual life and power and reality.

And Paul says, “and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel”. The apostle Paul is preaching, but he knows that the effectiveness of his ministry would be affected by the degree and the quality and intensity of prayer support: To what degree the people would pray for his work would affect how effectively it would go forth.

Of course, the primary aspect of the effectiveness of Paul’s ministry would be dependent upon the quality of his being. The more he was identified with God, the more powerful his ministry would be.

But the fellowship of believers, the support of those who love God, the prayer behind it, would make a great deal of difference.



We must not underestimate this. Just because we cannot see it, it does not mean it is not there. The reality is there.

It is a very big subject, but I am only highlighting some major areas for us to appreciate. How we are to overcome: We have to develop the quality of our being so that the righteousness, the glory, the holiness, the moral perfection of God becomes our own, and our relationship with God is so deep, our hearts are fully belonging to Him that when we pray, the Lord hears us and the Lord will move because we delight in His will. And therefore, God would be pleased to work as we pray.

So, earlier on we saw in **2 Thessalonians** how the people did not love the truth so as to be saved.

Here, we are told we must be girded with truth; we must put on the belt of truth. So, do we really believe what God had said? And here, we are not talking about belief in truths about many things in this world, such as "The chair is made of metal". These are not important things to us in the moral and spiritual realm. We are to believe the truth in terms of what God has declared about the moral and spiritual realm: The soul that sins shall die – do we believe that? We must repent and believe the gospel. We must give our lives to God, then we can be transformed.

The evil one is very powerful. God has shown us many truths – do we believe them? Are we girded with truth? Are we living our lives on the basis of that?

The belt puts the attire together in the proper place. If we do not do that, we will not be properly attired to fight. So we need to know the truth, we need to know what God had said, we need to understand the primary aspects involved in the moral and spiritual realm.

It is not that they are very, very complicated. It is just that we need to see sufficiently deeply what is really important and to live by that, to be true to what we believe. We need to ponder over this. When we believe these things, are we living by this?

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS – righteousness, breastplate. The breastplate, you can say, is a very major aspect: It protects our heart, our lungs. When people shoot the arrow, they often aim at the heart. But when we have a breastplate that is good enough, it does not pierce through.

Righteousness is primary. The Lord Jesus Christ is called the LORD our righteousness. It is through Him that we obtain righteousness. He is our righteousness when we first repent of our sins and we receive Him as our Saviour in a spirit of repentance and faith. So God forgives us.

But God is not interested in just forgiving us our sins. He wants us to develop righteousness in our being. And so the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ must become part of our being. When that becomes so, we have this BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS in our being.

THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE, or THE readiness OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE is our shoes – our shoes that we wear, that we travel about, we move about. And one aspect of wearing our shoes is so that we can move about more effectively in the course of service and battle.

Many people want to bring the gospel to other people. We want to help others to know what God has said; we want to save them.

But are we properly equipped? Are we properly shod ... WITH THE readiness OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE?

Here, I see THE readiness OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE has the emphasis of readiness in our being; that is to say, we know what the gospel is in our lives.

We know what God has done, we know what it means to be saved, we know what it means to follow the Lord; we know what it means to call Him "Lord". It is real; it is true in our lives: That is THE readiness OF THE GOSPEL – we know what the message of the gospel is as it applies to us – "what we have seen, what we have heard, we say to you". We know as a witness, a reality in our lives.

Spreading the gospel is not just saying, "Christ died on the cross. Believe in Him, you will be saved." That can be done by non-Christians; that can be done just by posters everywhere.

But the real witness, the power of witness comes from our lives. If we can transmit the reality to other people, the message of the gospel by the way we live, by what we say, by how we view life, then we are equipped to bring the gospel.

The shield of faith – many people think faith is just simply, "I believe what God has said". That is one aspect of it but it is much, much more than that.

A very important aspect of faith has to do with trusting God with our whole being. Whatever God has said, whatever God has called upon us, we have full confidence in Him.

But it is not just trusting God, it is also entrusting ourselves to God. We are prepared to hand our lives over to Him, for Him to deal with us, to work through us in whatever way He sees fit. He is our Master, He is our Lord, we entrust ourselves to Him, we trust Him.

When we learn to do that, we are holding the shield of faith. The evil one has many flaming arrows. We can extinguish them if we have this shield of faith. We know how to trust God and entrust ourselves to Him in each situation of life.

We learn to take THE HELMET OF SALVATION. The apostle Paul says, in the past, he knew a lot of things; he was very knowledgeable. But now, as he sought to preach the gospel, he says, "I determine to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" – the message of the gospel of salvation.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION protects our head. It is so easy for us to be deceived by so many things that the evil one can bring to us: false gospels, false teachings, compromises, alternatives. If you want to be protected from all these deceptions, concentrate on the message of salvation in Christ: Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

What does it mean? What is the meaning of the cross? What does God require of us? What is God seeking to do, bring about? If we understand this, we hold on to this, we are clear about this, we will be protected. We will not be so easily deceived by all the various cults, heresies, false teachings that can come our way.

False teachings come about because we want an easier way, we want a more pleasant way; we want something that we like. THE HELMET OF SALVATION from God tells us what is right, what is good, and we must choose it.

And then the sword of the Spirit – we must learn, learn to depend on God, learn to see God at work, learn to trust Him, that the Holy Spirit will have the freedom to move in our lives and in whatever we do. And that can only come about when we learn to pray.

We learn to look to God, we learn to trust Him, we learn to identify with Him, understand what is in His heart, be united with Him... move together with Him. That is when the sword of the Spirit will move rapidly and effectively.

So, the message of the gospel can effectively come forth when we develop these qualities in our being.

So, if we want to fight, we want to overcome, then, the moral perfection of God and His ways, His values, His provisions must become so much a part of our being, our lives, that that is how we live each day. We walk with God, we love Him, we concentrate on what is important to Him, we discard the things of this world – they no longer matter to us – we fulfil our responsibilities in the way that God desires of us, we conduct ourselves in the way that is pleasing to Him.

And the Lord Jesus says, “I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” The apostle Paul says, “I make it my ambition to do what is pleasing to Him.”

So this whole approach to life is central if we want to fight against the wiles of the evil one, all the schemes of the devil.

I will have to stop here for today. But the main thing I want to communicate is to bring to your consciousness that quality of being is central in what God wants to accomplish and it is a very difficult objective to attain. It is under very severe and vicious attack.

The evil one wants to destroy us so that when we become evil, we will follow him; he will have a greater following. He wants to be God, he wants to be worshipped; he wants followers. It is a battle between good and evil.

Are we going to take our stand to be on the Lord's side always and forever, or are we half-hearted? Will we give room for the evil one to work? Will the pleasures of this world still attract us – will we give in to these things? When we give in to these things, the evil one will have a place to work.

So, are we prepared to follow God's ways that are higher than our ways, His thoughts that are higher than our thoughts? Live by them – by EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS from THE MOUTH OF GOD – then our being will be transformed and we will be able to overcome the evil one.

Let us then come before the Lord and ask Him to help us understand these issues more deeply.

Let us ask Him to search our hearts and help us to appreciate the path that we ought to take, and if there is any aspect that is not right, that He will help us to acknowledge, to seek His forgiveness, His help.

And where He is calling us in the path of righteousness, let us ask Him to show us what we need to do, what steps we need to take to intensify our pursuit of what is good and what is pleasing to Him.

Let us ask Him to help us appreciate what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us on the cross.

Let us seek to appreciate the victory that is ours through Him and how we can each day live in a manner that is pleasing to God and that will destroy the works of the evil one.