

## Developing & Maintaining a Righteous Strategy (Go To Meeting)

Norbert Bohnert—December 29, 2023

Brethren, we know we live in a world where self-destructive behavior is very rampant, and more so now than it has in the past. Self-destructive behavior, just for definition's sake, is a behavior that would be harmful for the person who engages in that behavior.

It does not have to be acute, immediately dangerous to destroy an individual, but it can be a chronic, less obvious self-destructive behavior slowly leading to a mental and possibly a spiritual death after receiving several small cuts to that of no return.

When the destructive behavior reaches a crisis level, meaning when there are more lives are in jeopardy, then the individual needs intervention. However, no matter the effectiveness or method of intervention, it is useless if the individual rejects that intervention. The individual rejects the intervention when they fail to first accept, admit to, and address the issues or the behavior that is causing the destruction.

As we know with all aspects of life, the physical reflects the spiritual and vice versa. While the spiritual issues and oppositions in our spiritual lives are obvious to the Father and Jesus Christ, we ourselves are oblivious many times to them.

This is a fact that we should always be aware of. We see in part, we know in part, especially when it comes to ourselves. It is imperative that we do see these things. If we do not accept or admit and address the crucial behavioral issues because we are strictly denying them.

I'm going to discuss the reality of our weaknesses and the oppositions, what God has given us to combat these issues that we have, and how we are going to learn to use the information as given to us in the Scriptures.

I think we can safely say that we will all suffer in varying degrees with the self-destructive behavior, if not on the physical or mental level, certainly many times on a spiritual level.

We all have habits and patterns of thought that can be destructive. An example of that would be the issue of anger. Anger is one of those things that can be very destructive to an individual and especially to those around him.

Scripture defines this behavior as sin. It is a thought process that goes deep within all of us to some extent or another. We all understand that we

are to root out sin by repentance. However, we can only change behaviors that:

- we accept
- we admit to
- we begin to address

Interestingly, Christ states that this is not the case, as we can read with the end-time era of God's Church: Laodicea.

Revelation 3:14: "And to the angel of the Church of *the* Laodiceans, write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginner of the creation of God. I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot" (vs 14-15).

Now we've heard these Scriptures many times, but I just want to bring this up as it applies to the message that I'm giving today.

Verse 17: "For you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'; and **you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.** I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich; and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see" (vs 17-18).

These words are specifically directed to a group of people who are unaware, and therefore, unable to accept their sins and address the issues and related to those sins.

Christ's desire is for them to see to their state and to look to God Who is the only Source for help. If we are oblivious to our constant need of intervention, we are "**...wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.**"

Verse 19: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, **be zealous and repent.** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. **If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me**" (vs 19-20).

- **IF** we do not repent
- **IF** we do not accept
- **IF** we do not admit
- **IF** we do not *and address*

*our obvious states, we will be openly rebuked and chastised!*

However, when Christ knocks and we open the door and invite Him:

- to reveal
- to talk
- to show us

*what we need and to show us the state that we're in!*

He promises to all of us that He will do that particular thing and spend the time to sit and share with us. He will not rebuke us, but He will talk to us. He will have a relationship with us. He is waiting for us to comprehend our desperate need for Him so that he can intervene in our lives.

Personally speaking, I know I go through the day—hopefully not all days—and there are things that I'm doing, and I'm not even thinking of bringing in and asking for help and the strength of Jesus Christ. Can you relate to that?

I cannot help but stop and think at times how much faster or more effective or better the fruits of what my labor might be ***if I would include God, the Father, and Jesus Christ in my life!***

It is the same with our anger issues, if we are dealing with that, for instance, with the behavioral issues that we may have. And there's many more, other than anger, that we personally involve Them in those issues.

***Hear the knock on the door and allow Him to come in so that we can be helped!***

Let us look at an example of an individual who was oblivious to his need for God's constant intervention, at least now of the writing of this account. I think you'll probably know who I'm referring to: it's Peter.

Luke 22:33: "And he said to Him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with You both to prison and to death.' But He said, 'I tell you, Peter, *the* cock shall in no wise crow today before you have denied knowing Me three times'" (vs 33-34).

If we would look at this account, and all four accounts in the Gospels, we would see a common theme that Peter thought himself stronger than he actually was. He felt that he was strong enough to take on whatever life that Christ was asking him to take on and that he could do it well.

Peter was oblivious to his *spiritual weaknesses*. Can we relate to that? *Oblivious to some of our spiritual weaknesses!*

The four accounts exist as a lesson to us to show, just like Peter, ***too often oblivious to our spiritual weaknesses*** that we have. Thus, ***we do not***

***admit to the need we have for God for both strength and guidance***, which is so crucial.

We are, unfortunately, very often blinded by our own perception that we are okay and in need of nothing or very little. It does not have to be a way of life, ***but we all do have those parts in our lives that we do not let God in***, because it does not strike us that we need Him in everything.

It is okay to need God and Jesus Christ in everything. It is okay to need Them. That does not mean that we shy away and that we are weak. Because to do something right, and the way He would have us do it, we need His intervention.

We have to realize that we need his help. In that way, since we think we are okay, we are just like the Laodicean Church.

At some point in our walk with God, we all have had that attitude or approach in different aspects of our lives. I'm sure I can speak for a good number of you. However, this account that we read in Luke is unique from the other three because it adds an additional facet to the lesson.

In this account, Christ says something to Peter just before the short conversation that reveals both to Peter and to us that our obliviousness is only part of our personal struggle. We can be oblivious, but Christ said something just before that.

Verse 31: "Then the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon, listen *well*. Satan has demanded to have all of you, to sift as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and when you are converted, strengthen your brethren'" (vs 31-32).

'When you open the door to Me and know that you need Me,' He is saying, 'you will be strengthened and you can serve.'

Not only did Christ tell Peter *and us* with these scriptures that ***we were oblivious concerning our spiritual state at times, but Christ also revealed how oblivious we are to Satan's presence!***

He is never out of the picture and his desire, as we read, is to 'sift us as wheat.' Satan desires to get his hands on each one of us and grind us into powder and blow us to the wind like chaff. ***We never can underestimate what Satan can do!*** And the unfortunate thing is that sometimes it's just so obvious that we underestimate the strategies of Satan.

That's what this message basically is going to be reviewing. The strategic things that Satan does to get us off our goal that God has set before us.

Ephesians 6:10: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in *the* Lord, and in the might of His strength."

Paul exhorts the members not to be weak and timid, but strong and powerful. *They were to realize that the source of their strength and power was not based on themselves, but in Christ!*

Paul tells them what is necessary and their nature of their daily struggle as children of God. Speaking to them, he is also speaking to us!,

Verse 11: “Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities *and* against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual *power* of wickedness in high *places*” (vs 11-12).

The present world is a threatening, unforgiving world, terrifying world for God’s people. And as we witness what is happening in the news, many things can happen. We realize that this world could change to become much, much worse than it presently is.

But still, even though that could happen, our battle is not against the physical people that we associate with every day. The battle is not against mortal men, *but it is against spiritual beings!* We can be oblivious at times to the presence. Paul goes into more detail describing these beings, these spiritual things that we wrestle against.

Verse 12: “Because we are not wrestling against flesh and blood, but against principalities *and* against powers, against the world rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual *power* of wickedness in high *places*.”

We know that when we go read these scriptures that we are battling a very evil spiritual world out there run by Satan. We battle the evil of the world that’s around us. And these evil forces are not the evil forces that we see depicted in movies. They are real spiritual individuals. They are evil forces, not something created by some human imagination to make money.

These are the beings who are intent on our and all of mankind’s destruction. Yes, they aim directly, very forcibly at all of us at the Church, but their intent and goal are the entirety of mankind.

At first glance, brethren, these four things that are described in v 12, I’m going to go through them one by one and just expound on that. These four items that are listed might appear to be a list of individuals. However, when we look closer, they’re not so much individuals, but more of a description of the spiritual individuals we battle each day.

So we’re going to have a little bit of Greek lessons here and some of the words for the

derivations of these words, just briefly describing what all of these four items that are mentioned in verse 12 are.

1. the Greek word for ‘**principalities**’ means *the highest authorities!*

Yes, there is a ranking within spiritual evil forces, and we know, of course, who the leader is, that being Satan. There are also other angels that are more powerful than others. Those principalities as referred to, those ruling at the highest levels of the spiritual world are all involved. They each have us in their personal sites, aiming at us individually and collectively as the Church, something that we have to be cognizant of. We must not forget, because ***remembering this in itself reminds us of how much we actually need God!*** We need God’s intervention and need His help in the world that we live in today.

There is no room, there is no room for ‘herd mentality’ so to speak. It’s not just the weak or those on the outside that get attacked. They have the capability of aiming at anyone inside, and there is no safety in numbers. ***There is no safety in numbers!*** We cannot hide from the lion by thinking that we are safe because we are in the middle of the pack. They know each one of us, and they know:

- how God uses us
- what He has in store for us
- how He communicates
- how He relates to us

They may not understand the relationship because their minds are so warped, but know those who have a close relationship, and that is who they aim for.

2. the Greek word for ‘**powers**’ means *the ones given liberty to do as they please*

These are powerful beings who without God’s protection could do anything they please to us and to the world. Have you ever met people who feel that they can do anything they wish? *I have!* History is full of them, but think of raising that to a spiritual level!

Except for God’s intervention and restraint, they will do anything that they wish to do and believe they have the liberty to do so. A good example of this would be to recall the story of Job.

Satan had a free hand to do anything to Job except that which God did not allow. What would make us think that our lives are any different? It is exactly the same. The conversations happen. Job’s experience just happened to be recorded for us, for us to relate to.

3. the word '**rulers**' in Greek means *the lords of the world, the princes of this age*.

We know who the chief one is. These lords and princes rule over the world in which we live. Christ did not deny it when He was challenged by Satan, who said he would give Him the kingdoms of the world. Satan has those. The world is their sovereign territory as it is now.

Christ stated that ***His Kingdom is not of the world!***

We identify with God's Kingdom, not with this world. We talk a lot about that on a physical level. We talk about politics, but it goes much deeper to a spiritual level.

Since we identify with God's Kingdom and reject the kingdom of this world, these lords and princes view us possibly like illegal aliens invading their kingdoms. These lords and princes view us as illegal aliens invading their sovereign territory. That we have no right to walk in it or through it. That is their thinking. They are intent on our eradication and annihilation, not our deportation; they just want to destroy and take us out.

4. '**wickedness**' means *the depraved or the ones whose sole desire and purpose is to do evil*

These beings get their joys and kicks by just watching and causing suffering, failure and death. They are spiritual mass murderers. They do not have to kill somebody physically. The only thing you must do is to visit some of the mental institutions or walk down skid row today. Look among the homeless people. Not that some of them do not have credible stories and have gone through hard times. But often, often their minds are gone and they cannot think clearly.

Paul's intent is to paint Satan as not just the leader of an army of demons that specifically assigned to a specific person:

- he does not give sole charge of the attacks against the Church, for instance, to one of his generals
- he does not give sole charge of the attacks against the ministry, say to colonels
- he does not give sole charge to captains to attack individual members

Satan is personally involved in attacking all members of God's Church, collectively and individually.

The story and the intensity as Satan talked with Christ was recorded so that we would understand that he is in our ear as well, talking to us.

Verse 13: "Therefore, take up the whole

armor of God so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having worked out all things, to stand.

These four verses that we have read, 10-13, are some of the most powerful admonitions we find in Scripture.

Paul's intent is to paint Satan as not just the leader of an army of demons that he specifically signs to a specific purpose. They not only speak to the Ephesians, ***but speak also to our preparedness as the called and chosen people of God who have been given what we need by God to live a righteous life!***

***They confirm that we are in a daily spiritual battle against Satan and his entire army!***

As Christ said to Peter, Satan wants to sift you. I do not think at that level. I need to think at that level. I'm talking about me personally. We need to think at that level. The only way that we can stand in that battle is to have faith in the strength and fidelity of Christ and to put on the whole armor of God.

Verse 11: "Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

The word 'wiles' is an old English word referring to scheming. The Greek word is also used twice in the New Testament. The other place is also found in Ephesians.

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the Body of Christ; until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ; so that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error" (vs 11-14).

So you, brethren, might be asking: What am I leading up to? Well, just bear with me and I will get to the crux of the message here shortly.

The word 'plotting' is the same Greek word—'methodia'—translated ***wiles*** in Eph. 6:11.

The word 'method' that we know comes from the Greek word 'methodia.' Another definition that the word 'methodia' represents is cunning arts, deceitful craft and trickery. Accordingly, these are all traits that Satan uses.

However, Satan's methods go much, much deeper than that, than the definitions of cunning arts,

deceit, craft and trickery. These are merely the actions he uses in different situations and accordingly to the person he is attacking.

Verse 14: “So that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error.”

Scheming and craftiness is here in the singular. But when speaking of it in the same terms in plural, you find that in Eph. 6:11: We find another definition of the word ‘methodia’ as being *strategies*.

This is a much more modern term than ‘wiles’ and for those that served in the military, this word strategy is very commonly used in achieving goals that they want to reach and fulfill.

Satan’s attacks against God’s people, as well as all mankind, are not simple disjointed jabs of cunning, deceit and trickery. Satan is not going, ‘Oh, I can do this now to this person,’ and he does that. He says, ‘I can do this to this person and I do it now.’

Strategy is a high-level plan. It’s a high-level plan to achieve a mission or a main purpose. It came to use in the 6<sup>th</sup> century in the Eastern Roman Empire. It is interesting that it is the Roman Empire that created this word and then began to be used in the Western vernacular languages in about the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

From then to now, strategy came to denote a comprehensive way to try to pursue one’s political ends, including the threat of an actual use of force in a conflict of wills. Strategy is a well-thought-out plan to obtain the mission that one desires. As an art, strategy includes a subset of skills that include tactics, besieging and logistics.

As you all know, strategy is used extensively in business and many times not in a positive way as business would use their strategies, whatever they developed, in trying to destroy their competitors and annihilate them. That is not always the case, but it is a negative side of developing strategies.

The tactics for strategies as far as besieging and logistics are concerned are those actions implemented to achieve a planned step or task leading to a goal.

For Satan, these are the cunning arts as we mentioned, deceit, craft, craftiness and trickery. These are all actions. Besieging is a form of a low-intensity attack where the attacking party intends to conquer by attrition over the long haul.

If Satan can find a way into us that is subtle and he finds it to be effective, guess what Satan does, and not only once, he does it over and over again. And then later he does it again. It’s about the relentless attacks against the opponent’s foundations. He does not go straight at the person. He starts digging and besieging the foundation, the things they need to continue.

Satan is always looking for the opportunity to weaken us. And as the attacker perceives the nearing of victory, though as he sees the foundation beneath him crumbling, then he comes in full force and intensifies the attack because he knows all the odds are on his side as far as reaching the goal is concerned. That of course *being Satan’s goal!*

Now you may ask, what is *logistics*? *The detailed organization and implementation of a complex operation*, and making sure that one’s army or group is well equipped for attacking our logistics and they are very well armed.

His resources are immense. We only must look at the nations and the leaders that we have in this world to realize that’s part of Satan’s arsenal. That is why we are not fighting them, the battle is not against them. It’s against the leader, *that being Satan!*

So today strategy is used for any plans to attain a goal. It’s not only used by the military but in politics, business management, finance, engineering, and even gaming. Strategy is not limited to those only, but it is spread throughout our lives in many ways.

Strategy is not limited, does not always have to be a complex plan. Strategy is employed whenever someone sets out to attain a goal, even within interpersonal relationships.

So *if* you wish a relationship to be bad, *then* you must have a strategy that makes it bad. It’s that simple.

What strategies are called on a personal level? *Behavior!*

Those are the things that you repeat and besiege and act. As an example, just like a baby, a newborn developing a strategy on how to get fed when they’re hungry. Of course, each child is different; some cry, some whimper, some just open their mouths, and some just scream relentlessly.

The child begins to realize what works for them to get what they want. Food, in this case; of course, it becomes their strategy. As children continue to grow, they develop strategies to obtain what they want. And I’m sure that you’ve all experienced that.

They learn which parent to ask first, according to what it was that they actually want. That is all related to behavior, and that is strategy.

Over time, strategies develop clear patterns and policies that are employed to similar situations. So, a better term on an individual basis is *behavior*.

Statements behavior, his strategies, are what Paul is referring to in 2-Cor., when he encouraged the members to forgive the repentant sinner of 1-Cor.

2-Corinthians 2:8: “For this reason, I exhort you to confirm *your* love toward him. Now, for this *cause* I wrote *to you*, that I might know by testing you whether you are obedient in everything. But to whom you forgive anything, I also *forgive*; and if I also have forgiven anything, to whomever I have forgiven *it*, for your sakes *I forgave it* in the person of Christ; so that we may not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (vs 8-11).

Brethren, we are not ignorant of Satan’s strategies. We should not be ignorant of those strategies. We are to be aware of Satan’s strategies that lead to:

- his tactics
- his besieging
- the logistics of his behavior

*His attacks are all*

- cunning
- deceitful
- crafty
- trickery

*as was described earlier, by action!*

I keep repeating these terms because I do not want us to forget the way that Satan operates. He besieges us relentlessly. The logistics of supplies and energy far exceed the physical power that you and I have, and especially the world. ***We always must see Satan as an active, formidable foe!***

What I’ve covered thus far is to help us all realize the reality, the purpose, the veracity of Satan’s constant existence and effect on our lives. The undeniable fact is that Satan is an evil strategist who singleness of purpose is to destroy you and me. And when he gets past us, he is going to go after the world.

We are actually just slowing it down for him while we are here. Christ is actually slowing it down because we are here. Thankfully, you and I, and our Father and Jesus Christ, have a counter-strategy that They successfully carry out to thwart Satan, and we are part of that.

It’s a proven strategy when Christ, one used to overcome ‘the prince of the world’ that we can put trust to get us through it.

John 16:33—*Christ speaking*: “These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation. But be courageous! I have overcome the world.”

In overcoming the world, Christ overcame Satan. Christ qualified to remove Satan as ruler of this world. The tools and the strategies Christ used while on the earth were given to Him by His Father. These same tools are also available to us! Paul names these tools as ***the whole armor of God!***

Ephesians 6:11: “Put on the whole armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil,”

Verse 13: “Therefore, take up the whole armor of God so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having worked out all things, to stand.”

Paul refers here to the tools and strategy as armor because we are to be actively engaged in warfare against the evil spiritual powers around us. Paul continues listing the items of the armor available for combating the spiritually evil world that we live in. And we are to wear that to give us that ability to stand against Satan.

While each of these items require numerous messages to fully explore them, we will go through them quickly. One key to remember as we go through these, ***we do not inherently possess them!*** They are supplied to us. They are all given to us by God the Father, through Jesus Christ, overcoming the world.

Verse 14: “Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with Truth, and wearing the breastplate of righteousness.”

This refers to the belt worn by a soldier. The belt is what holds all the other pieces together so that they don’t fall off and that they stay tight against the body to protect it.

Paul defines the belt as being Truth. Satan’s tactics are all lies! Every word there requires a lie. Like a magician, Satan is doing certain things trying to make you believe one thing when he actually is doing something else. He is constantly lying to us. He constantly, internally and externally, uses lies looking for openings in our armor to penetrate us.

God gives us the Truth that illuminates those lies of Satan so that we can clearly see those tactics that Satan uses. When they happen, we know what they are and we know who is doing them so that we are not suddenly taken off track.

Thus we can *grab a hold of Truth and spiritually tighten our belts!*

John 8:44: “You are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father you desire to practice. He was a murderer from *the* beginning, and has not stood in the Truth because there is no Truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he is speaking from his own *self*; **for he is a liar, and the father of it.**”

Verse 47: “The one who is of God hears the words of God. For this reason you do not hear, because you are not of God.”

Verse 31: “Therefore, Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in Him, **‘If you continue in My Word, you are truly My disciples. And you shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall set you free’** (vs 31-32).

How can you fall into a trap if you know it is there, if you recognize it? For instance, someone who is trained as a woodsman does not fall for traps. They actually set them, but they can see by the signs of what is happening around them, and they know what is real and not real in the woods.

The thing about Truth is it shines the Light so we can see the evil. It opens our minds to see the source of something. Instead of wondering if something is from God or not, God has the capability of showing us the Truth of the matter.

***So, the great Truths of the Word of God:***

- the Bible
- the love of God
- the salvation through faith in Jesus Christ
- His second coming
- forgiveness of sin
- grace
- the gift of the Holy Spirit

***all set us free from Satan’s lies!***

Satan would have us believe that we are sinful, lost and without hope. The Truth is that God’s love and salvation has set us free from sin and death. They allow us to tighten our *spiritual belts* each day so that we can see clearly and hold the armor together and recognize the evil.

Knowledge and belief in the Truths of God creates a commitment to live upright, transparent and sincere lives, as well as seeing Satan and his tactics clearly, and it readies us for battle. It makes us true, committed soldiers.

Why would we want to follow the one who lies to us? We only want to follow the One Who is true and sincere, and His love is sincere.

Ephesians 6:14—I can’t emphasize this

**enough: “Stand, therefore, having your loins girded about with Truth, and wearing the breastplate of righteousness.”**

Paul labels *righteousness* as the breastplate, a soldier’s breastplate attached over his shoulders and to his belt, so it protects his heart and vital organs as he faces the enemy.

Solomon tells us in Proverbs 4:23: “Above all guard the door of your mind with diligence, for out of it *are* the issues of life.”

It’s where the life is, and that’s where Satan is aiming. Striving to live a life of righteousness protects us, our spiritual hearts, against Satan’s accusations and charges. His attacks do not allow us to lose heart, because we know that it is not our righteousness, but it is that of Christ which lives in us and through us.

If I am doing something wrong, it weakens me when Satan exposes it. But when I know that I am working on that sin and that Jesus Christ is living through me to help kill that sin:

- I can have heart
- I can have the strength
- I can move forward

We can move forward with strength in the Truth of what the Father in Jesus Christ gave and give us and also promise us. Christ’s righteousness is the source of that protection.

Ephesians 6:15: “And having your feet shod with *the* preparation of the Gospel of Peace.”

Paul labels the Gospel as the stable footing for a soldier who needs to be able to properly stand with the necessary traction from actually marching into a battle. A soldier cannot fight without something protecting his feet.

The Gospel clearly points to the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth with Christ as King.

A soldier loyally follows his King and when the King is out front and moving and He’s going forward, or toward that Gospel that we know as our faith and our expectation, ***we will follow! We will have the traction to move forward no matter how hard it may be!***

1-John 2:5: “On the other hand, *if* anyone is keeping His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected. By this *means* we know that we are in Him. Anyone who claims to dwell in Him is obligating himself also to walk even as He Himself walked” (vs 5-6).

*Striving to walk in the same direction for the same goal as Jesus Christ, the Gospel points the way!*

John 10:27: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”

The Champion of our Salvation—Jesus Christ—the One Who embodies the Gospel, strong loyalty to Him and faith in Christ Who is the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega of our faith and salvation. That’s the Source of our following Him. Paul labels our faith as our shield which we use to protect us from everything that Satan throws at us.

A Roman soldier would use a shield out from his breastplate so that if swords came in, spears came in, whatever and he is watching and is seeing what is happening he’s just holding out the shield and knocking them away. Knocking them low to keep his legs protected, up to protect his head and his shoulders.

Our faith is what protects us from those darts, those fiery things that are constantly coming at us. Paul places extra importance on faith with the phrase ‘above all,’ above all. Satan constantly attacks us with the fiery darts. Faith is the means by which we can deflect or recover from them if they happen to flesh wound us.

When tests and tribulations come, faith is what keeps us strong and unmovable as we follow Christ and willingly walk in the same path as He does and did. We believe Him, He is the Truth and He does not lie and He does not use cunning trickery that we see so clearly with Satan.

2-Timothy 3:12: “And indeed, everyone who desires to live Godly in Christ Jesus shall be persecuted.”

As we walk with Christ facing the tribulation and witnessing the power of the shield we become better soldiers. So, as we exercise that faith we learn how to deflect doubt created by Satan.

Ephesians 6:17: “And put on the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.”

Paul labels the promise of salvation as our helmet. A helmet protects the head, which is the seat of our thoughts and mind. When we have salvation at the center of our mind and thoughts we have a different perspective don’t we? *We think differently!*

It doesn’t take long after baptism as you work with God’s Spirit in you that as you step out in the world you find out that your thoughts are no longer like the world’s. And every day we begin to realize how different we actually think. That is the

helmet. Realizing that salvation is there. ***Salvation leads us to eternity!***

The world thinks temporarily; ***we think eternally!*** Satan’s lies are based in temporal physical existence. Satan is the ruler of this world. The world is temporal, and Satan’s rulership is temporal.

***God’s promise of salvation is eternal*** and goes far beyond even the temporal world in the universe which is much older than man. This clear understanding and faith in the gift of our God’s salvation allows us to discern between Satan’s deceptive strategy and God’s promises.

In v 17 Paul lastly mentions the labels the Word of God as being the sword. This analogy differs greatly from the previous five. The previous five were defensive in nature, while the sword is offensive for attacking.

Yes it is used to shield away other swords coming at you much like a shield, but it is an offensive piece of equipment for a soldier.

Hebrews 4:12: “For the Word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of both soul and spirit, *and* of both *the* joints and *the* marrow, and *is* able to discern *the* thoughts and intents of *the* heart.”

The Word of God is a powerful tool that shines light on the heart and spirit behind every action and reveals the real intents of the heart. This power allows us brethren to offensively and strategically move forward.

In Matt. 4 Christ thwarted every temptation of Satan using Scripture. All authority is in Scripture and gives us the capability and the authority to move forward if it is done in the light of the Spirit of Scripture.

So while the five previous points protect us from what Satan throws at us, God’s Scripture allows us to throw back at Satan in his world. Satan cannot stand before Truth. Not only does the Word of God reveal Satan, but it also lights the way for us to move forward.

Psalm 119:105: “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

Thus far we have discussed how Satan is a great strategist and his intent is to thwart God’s purpose and destroy us. We have discussed the strategies and tools God gives us to combat Satan along with each item and its purpose.

Given these two aspects we need to ask ourselves:



- What personal strategy do each one of us have to combat Satan and employ the tools that God has given us?
- Do we have a plan defined and actively followed to effectively use the tools that we have just reviewed?

*They are all available to us!*

If Satan is so set on our destruction and Christ died to give us the tools:

- Shouldn't we all have a plan, have a strategy and do it consistently?

*At times, many times, we fail at that! We don't have a plan. We really don't. Some of us do better than others, but it should cause us to sit back and pause and think because the world around us is getting much worse. Self destructive behavior is growing all around us.*

God not only gives us the tools defined by Paul in Eph. 6, but he has also defined the tactics of ***study, prayer, meditation and fasting!***

I will not go into any detail on any of these as we're running already over time. They're not new items to us either that we walk with God after our initial calling.

- Are we using those tactics to better our strategy to fight Satan?
- Are we using them as we should be?

A personal strategy, a plan goes beyond the use of tactics, but requires goal setting and planning, which directs those tactics to achieve successful battling in aiming at certain tasks for not only handling Satan but also handling our own nature.

It is our responsibility to focus and identify certain things. Whether we are addressing personal anger issues or any other flaw in our character, do we first of all ***see*** it? Then we have to accept it and then we have to address it using the tools that God has given to us to use.

As God said to Cain, 'Why are you so angry?' This is just one aspect. There are many others and I know that there are many other issues that we all personally must deal with and conquer.

As we begin to close here, I would like to propose a strategy or approach to help each one of us accomplish our commanded purpose in this physical life of a successful soldier, as Paul expresses in:

2-Timothy 4:6: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."

Here is a five-step strategy I would like to bring to you to consider. If followed it will help each

one of us become adept in using the parts of the armor that God provides and has given us.

### 1) **we need to always be aware and admit our complete need for God**

Whether morning or night this is necessary for us all. If we profess it enough we will actually believe it. The reminder is so important, because we tend to forget very easily because we are totally incapable of saving ourselves by our own righteousness because we have none.

If we have any righteousness at all it is self-righteousness. God imputes righteousness because of Christ living in us. It is Christ's righteousness. That is the humility. It is part of the awareness and admission that we must have Jesus Christ living in us to have life.

***We are totally incapable of fighting Satan without God!***

James 4:7: "Therefore, submit yourselves to God. **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.**"

*To submit to God we must, v 8: "Draw near to God..."*

Why does Satan flee from us? *He flees because God, who he fears, is very close to us!* It is not a fear of us, it is a fear of God and the exposure. Satan cannot conquer our Father or Christ.

So, awareness and admission represent our recognition for our continual need for repentance, and our need for God's help in changing.

As we are more aware we admit more. We also grow to have patience and love toward those who struggle just as we struggle.

### 2) **using prayer, study, meditation, and fasting**

with God to reveal not only what we must do or think to change, but also admit to those things that we do not see.

David said, 'Show me my heart but do it in mercy.' We must have a desire to change, to see, to know that we are not like Christ, yet. But it is imperative that we become and learn Who Christ is and see what we must put to death. Often, often we struggle with:

- how we study
- how we pray
- how we meditate
- fasting

But if we are actively striving with God to overcome, we will never lack the vision and opportunity to use those things.

Developing & Maintaining a Righteous Strategy  
(Go To Meeting)

You are recognizing the danger. You do not know how to battle it, but you see it, so you say to God:

Please be involved, God, Please be here for us. Please be here for me. I need this removed. Or if I must go through this, that I learn what I need to learn.

*He can make that work, He really can! **God can make that work!***

**3) to trust**

If we use tactics of step 2, God makes it clear what we should do. However many times we can fail to act due to fear or repercussions.

Trust involves focusing on one or more promises of God and fixing our minds on them and stepping out once again in faith and doing the hard thing.

In faith, the hard things are possible (Mark 9:23).

**4) to act**

You trust and then you act. Do what God has revealed to you to do, but do it in wisdom. Acting on the faith and trust we have been given is living and walking by faith.

The practice of this, brethren, teaches us over time to immediately trust, to immediately act and not be hesitant.

I find myself more hesitant than I should be many times in my life and doing things that I see need to be done in my life. I think this might be quite a common occurrence.

Not on everything, of course. There are some personalities that are ready to take on the world, but sometimes we are ready to take on the world and the wisdom is not there.

We have not stopped long enough to ask God what we should be doing.

**5) to be thankful**

When we actively involve our Father and Jesus Christ in our lives, we will clearly see what they do for us.

- we will clearly define an awareness
- we will clearly admit
- we will pray
- we will study
- we will meditate, fast, trust and act
- we will see our Father's active involvement in our lives ***that will move us to be thankful***

- we will be able to see circumstances that come up and we went to our Father in Christ for answers and reacted accordingly, addressing the issue at hand

I maybe used certain words, but the important thing was I looked to You and You stopped any negative reaction and/or action from occurring.

We need to see it, brethren, as it is important for us, and as we must thank God for everything, for His involvement. This leads to thankfulness because we can look back and clearly see His intervention in our lives in whatever it may have been.

How many things happen in our lives that God is involved in that we are just oblivious to? Like our children, we do a lot for them. For us that are older, that is way in the past.

But as we raise the children, we did a lot for our children. We don't want to be patted on the back for that. Unfortunately, many times the children did not realize what we had done as loving parents, protecting them and guiding them as they grew up.

We need to be the same with our Father. Praising His name sincerely will come from our hearts. When you go down on your knees in prayer, brethren, we will have praise in our thankfulness.

Never underestimate or forget the strategies of Satan, which are all around us. Let us never forget the armor of God, the tools that God has equipped us with. Actively pursue a relationship with our Father that enables us to more fully use those tools, so that we can be soldiers who act.

Follow and praise always working with the righteous strategy as we move forward. Our righteous strategy ***as lived through us by Christ*** will defeat our enemy with God the Father and Jesus Christ at our side.

Let us take these words to heart, brethren, and strategically develop that righteousness, which God has allowed us to use through our initial calling by the Father and the Word of God that was provided for us.

Let us maintain this strategy throughout our physical lives. Through our conversion process, always rightfully seeking to achieve the formidable goal to be accomplished. ***The ultimate reward waiting for us all with the arrival of the wonderful Kingdom of God and all eternity!***

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 3:14-15, 17-20
- 2) Luke 22:33-34, 31-32
- 3) Ephesians 6:10-13, 11

- 4) Ephesians 4:11-14
- 5) 2 Corinthians 2:8-11
- 6) John 16:33
- 7) Ephesians 6:11,13-14
- 8) John 8:44, 47, 31-32
- 9) Ephesians 6:14
- 10) Proverbs 4:23
- 11) Ephesians 6:15-16
- 12) I John 2:5-6
- 13) John 10:27
- 14) 2 Timothy 3:12
- 15) Ephesians 6:17
- 16) Hebrews 4:12
- 17) Psalm 119:105
- 18) 2 Timothy 4:6
- 19) James 4:7-8

Scripture referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 4
- Mark 9:23

NB:bo  
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