

The Whole Armour of God

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Lord's Day Morning, Dec. 22, 1861

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand." Ephesians 6:13

In the verse immediately preceding our text, what a vivid picture does the apostle set before our eyes of the enemies with whom the Christian has to combat in fighting the good fight of faith! "We wrestle not," he says, "against flesh and blood;" that is, not against flesh and blood only, for surely one who has given such a description in Romans 7 of the conflict between flesh and spirit could not mean that there is no opposition between the one and the other worthy of the name of a wrestling match. Have we not daily to wrestle against the opposing or alluring world without; against all the power of corruption within? Does temptation never assail us? Do the lusts of the flesh never strive for mastery? Is sin in us a dead thing which neither lives, nor stirs, nor moves? Every Christian must feel that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, and that these are contrary the one to the other." (Gal. 5:17.) And if the one is contrary to the other, what must their irreconcilable opposition produce but a conflict? That daily, unceasing conflict, then, were enough to task all our strength. Were there no other enemies but those we meet with in an opposing world without or encounter in a corrupt nature within, we must fail and fall unless made more than conquerors over both through him that loved us. But the apostle overlooks, so to speak, for the time the conflict which there is in the new man of grace against flesh and blood to direct our thoughts to a severer combat, to a more arduous and continuous battle,

which is not against flesh and blood, but "against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Observe his language here, and look at it under two different aspects. See *first* the *number* and *nature* of our foes; *secondly*, the *position* which they occupy. By "principalities and powers, the ruler of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness," we are to understand, as is expressed in the margin, "wicked spirits;" and by "high places," we are to understand the air above us, as Satan is called in this epistle "the prince of the power of the air." (Eph. 2:2.) It is, then, as if the apostle would represent the very high and wide atmosphere with which we are surrounded, the very air which we are ever breathing, as tenanted, I might rather say infested with a whole posse of infernal spirits; as if an innumerable company of devils were in the sky watching our every movement; sometimes making deadly thrusts at us by open violence, and at others seeking to entangle our feet in their accursed wiles; but whether by force or fraud, ever plotting with each other our eternal destruction. If you cannot believe or realise this, only look at the way in which he describes them. Do but consider the language which he employs, and bear in mind that they are inspired words, which, as such, are to be received in implicit faith. He describes them, then, as "principalities, as powers, as the rulers of the darkness of this world, as spiritual wickedness," or "wicked spirits" [margin] "in high," or, as the margin reads, "heavenly places." Let us seek, with the Lord's help, to penetrate into the meaning of these words. There is, we have reason to believe, what is sometimes called "a celestial hierarchy;" in other words, the blessed angels themselves are not all of one rank or condition. This seems plain from various parts of Scripture. In this very epistle, for instance, we read of our blessed Lord being exalted "above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and

every name that is named not only in this world but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:21); and again, "To the intent that now unto the principalities, and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:10.) These expressions—principality, power, might, and dominion—seem to show us that there are different ranks in the angelic host. Again, Gabriel speaks of himself as standing in the presence of God (Luke 1:19), which would seem to imply some distinguished privilege, and thus Michael is called in Daniel "one of the chief princes" (Dan. 10:13), and by Jude "the archangel." It is not indeed a decided matter of faith; still we may believe that there is a difference in rank between such angels as Gabriel or Michael and other angelic beings, who are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." I should not, however, have touched upon this point but for the purpose of casting some light upon our text. It would seem then from it that Satan, who was once a pure and bright angelic spirit, has counterfeited this celestial hierarchy by an infernal hierarchy of his own, of which he is the head; for we read of "the devil and his angels who fought against Michael and his angels." (Rev. 12:7.) Thus in imitation of the ranks and orders of angelic beings, there are, we have reason to believe, ranks and orders of infernal spirits; and as these possess all their former angelic power, though now perverted into malice and wickedness, and as they exert this influence over this world, they are styled by the apostle "principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness (or "wicked spirits,") in high (or heavenly) places." But you say, "Who sees them? who feels them? What evidence have we that we are surrounded by these infernal spirits, all plotting our downfall? You tell us so, and you try to prove your point; but what evidence have we that we are surrounded by such infernal foes, or that we have to fight a battle for our life against them?" Well, the

time may come when you may have these infidel doubts resolved in a manner that may prove a day of the deepest distress you may ever pass through; or you may learn it by being entangled in some snare of their laying which may well-nigh break every bone in your skin. But because they are invisible are they less real? Because you may not at present feel their power, is that power less strong? No; just the contrary. It is because they are invisible that, though so little dreaded, they are all the more formidable; it is because they exert apparently so little power over you that they really hold you in an iron, though to you it may seem but a silken, vice. For it is not so much the open violence as the secret stratagems of Satan that we have to dread, the hidden snares which he spreads for our feet, the subtle influence which he exerts over our carnal mind, the crafty suggestions, the infidel thoughts, the sensual imaginations, the rebellious murmurings, the lurking enmity, all which he, as it were, inspires with his infernal breath. James speaks of the tongue as "set on fire of hell." (James 3:6.) This gives us a clue to the way in which Satan acts. When the tongue is speaking "vanity," or "boasting great things:" when it "defileth the whole body, and is full of deadly poison," who sees that Satan is setting it on fire? And if this be the case with the sins of the tongue, why should it not be with every other sin also? So that though we have no visible evidence of these infernal spirits hovering over us as so many unclean birds in the sky; if we hear not their voice or see not their form, yet this is the very reason why we have actually to dread them more, because the less they are seen the more power they exert. We are bidden, therefore, by the apostle to "put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." It is not, you see, his open violence so much as his secret craft that we have to dread. So great is this that but for three circumstances, all men without exception would fall a prey to his wiles.

1. The first is that the spiritual and eternal life of all the saints of God are *secure in the Person of his dear Son*. His own words are, "My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." Yea, he gives if possible a stronger reason still: "My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:28, 29.) All the sheep of Christ are therefore bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord the Lamb; they are all secured in the oath and promise of God which he made to the Son of his love in the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure, when he declared that "his seed should endure for ever and his throne as the days of heaven." (Psalm 89:29.) Satan, therefore, may battle and buffet, bite and bruise, harry and harass, worry and wound, tease and torture, enchant and ensnare the family of God; but he never can pluck out of Christ's hand the least member of his mystical body. Did not the Lord himself thus express to his Father his heavenly will, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me?" (John 17:24.)

2. But there is a second reason why Satan cannot eventually prevail over the least member of the Lord Jesus. Our blessed Lord *has spoiled* him of his dominion over them. Thus we read that "he took part of the flesh and blood of the children, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14); and again, "And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it," that is, his cross. Thus, when he went up to heaven he "led captivity captive," and dragged these infernal spirits bound at his chariot wheels, depriving them of all their power to destroy his people. (Col. 2:15; Eph. 4:8.)

3. But there is a third reason why the saints of God are not to be overcome in this strife; and that is, because *God has provided an armour for them*, clad in which they shall be able to stand against all the wiles of the devil.

This brings us to our text, in approaching which this morning I shall

I.—*First*, show you, as the Lord may enable me, *what this armour is*, called here "*the whole armour of God*;" and what it is "*to take it*," or "*put it on*."

II.—*Secondly*, how by taking the whole armour of God we shall be able "*to withstand in the evil day*."

III.—*Thirdly*, the caution that when "*we have done all*," or, as the margin reads, when we have "*overcome*" all, then in that hour of our greatest danger still "*to stand*."

I.—In opening up and describing the whole armour of God, it will be necessary, with God's help and blessing, to look at the several parts as the Holy Ghost has here brought them to our view by the pen of Paul.

i. I shall therefore, commence with the *girdle*. "Stand, therefore, having your *loins girded about with truth*." Of course you are well aware that Eastern nations are not dressed as we are; that they wear not tight, close-fitting garments, suitable to the industrious, active habits of Northern climes and European nations, but loose flowing robes, which however inconvenient they might be to us, are well adapted to their climate and habits. But as even they sometimes must exert themselves in husbandry, in war, or in the chase, they are obliged to gather and gird them tightly round their loins when they address themselves to anything

which requires active exertion. In their houses, sitting upon their sofas and cushions, these robes are allowed to fall lightly from their persons. But it would not do to work in the field or go to battle in this fashion. The Jews, therefore, and other Eastern nations, always had at hand a broad and strong girdle, by means of which they could fasten their dress firmly round them and yet leave the arms at full liberty to hold a mattock or wield a sword. This will explain the reason why in the Scripture we so often meet with the phrase of "girding up the loins," that is, to take the first step towards active exertion. Taking that idea, then, the apostle bids us as the first step "to stand," that is, to arise from a sitting posture, to get upon our feet, and prepare ourselves for the coming fight, by "having our loins girt about with truth." This is then the first and undermost part of the armour, without putting on which the rest of the pieces could not be properly got on, or be made to fit each in its place. This girdle or belt is spoken of as the "girdle of truth." By the word "truth" here, I understand two things: 1st, *sincerity*, for *that* is the basis of all Christian profession; that is the first piece of armour which we have to take up to make us right and tight, to keep our loose garments together, and to gird up our loins for the coming battle. As Elijah girded up his loins when he ran before Ahab; as Gehazi was bidden to gird up his loins and lay the prophet's staff upon the child's face; as our Lord himself bids his waiting disciples, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;" so must we gird up our loins to fight the good fight of faith, to run with patience the race set before us, to be daily and hourly prepared for the Lord's coming as a thief in the night. But without the girdle of sincerity, honesty, uprightness, and truthfulness, what is our profession worth? If not absolutely armour, the girdle of truth must be put on, or there is no possibility of taking up the other pieces. Mark, then, that the first requisite of a Christian is *sincerity*. But do not mistake

my meaning. There is much sincerity which is not "the girdle of truth." When I speak then of sincerity, I understand by it what the apostle calls, "godly sincerity." (2 Cor. 1:12.) There is a sincerity even in religion which at best is but a rotten girdle. Is not the papist sincere? I have seen them in days past at their devotions, and I have seen sincerity, though a blind and superstitious sincerity, stamped upon their every feature and gesture. But this girdle was woven with human fingers in an earthly loom. The girdle of truth is of heavenly manufacture, and in a sense resembles our Lord's garment, that it is "without a seam," of one piece, "woven from the top throughout." There is in it, therefore, no intermixture of lindsey-woolsey, no rotten threads, no part weak whilst the rest is strong. As in a chain the strength of the whole is determined by the tenacity of the weakest link; so the strength of the whole girdle is determined by the weakest part; every part, therefore, throughout must be equally strong or it will break asunder at the rotten place. A girdle that will never break was never woven by human fingers. Nothing else but godly sincerity of which every thread is of divine manufacture can stand the strain which sin and Satan will surely put upon it. Who could be more sincere than Paul when he was persecuting the church of God? He "verily thought within himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth;" but that verily thinking was not sufficient to make him right in the sight of God when "being exceedingly mad against the saints of God, he persecuted them even to strange cities." He needed sincerity of another kind—sincerity of God's own giving, such as was communicated to him at Damascus' gate. No man is really sincere until God makes him so; for there can be no real sincerity without divine light, no real earnestness without divine life. We play with religion until God makes us in earnest; at least I know it was so with me. I had my fits and starts about religion and thought I would be religious some

day or other, having a great respect for it and for religious people. But the world always broke in upon my resolutions, and swept them away. It was like a child at the seaside trying to stop the incoming tide by taking its little wooden shovel and throwing up a heap of wet sand. I never was sincere until God made me so by planting his fear in my heart.

But "truth," as the girdle of a Christian soldier, means not merely sincerity, but an *experimental knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus*. We are to have "our loins girt about with truth," which implies taking truth up with a believing hand and putting it round us so as to strengthen us for action. And as I have just shown you that there must be no rotten threads in the girdle of sincerity, so there must be no mixture of error in the belt of gospel truth. The girdle of truth must be made of pure truth without. If there be in it the least intermixture of error, it will be like a rotten piece in a literal girdle: it will break where it is rotten. How we have lately seen this in the controversy concerning the Sonship of Jesus! How many a girdle of men who were thought "valiant for truth" has broken in this part. They held their error in secret; but when a strain was put upon their girdle it broke where it was rotten. In order then to be firm and strong, it must be throughout pure and perfect, which the truth of God is as revealed in the word. Whatever error a man may hold, *that is* his weak point; and sooner or later he will find as the prophet declares, "instead of a girdle there shall be a rent" (Isai. 3:24); for like the girdle which the prophet hid by Euphrates, it will by means of this error become "marred and profitable for nothing." (Jer. 13:7.) This makes me, then, so zealous against error, for I see its tremendous consequences. I may be called a man of a bitter spirit, because I warmly denounce it. But why do I denounce it but because I see in what a perilous state the souls of men are who are entangled

in it? To be given up to believe a lie is one of the most dreadful judgments of God. No, my friends, if we are to fight the good fight of faith, we must hold the truth experimentally and feelingly in its purity and power; and so far as I am enabled to do this my loins are girded with the girdle of truth. As with our blessed Lord, "truth was the girdle of his loins and faithfulness the girdle of his reins," so truth and faithfulness, the truth as it is in Jesus, and faithfulness to what we believe and know for ourselves, must be the girdle of ours. But you may ask with Pilate, "What is truth?" Truth is that inspired revelation of himself and of his mind and will which God has made known in the Scriptures, and which the blessed Spirit reveals with power to the heart of his people; such as the doctrine of a Three-one God; the true and proper Sonship and Deity of our blessed Lord; the Deity, personality, and divine operations of the Holy Ghost; to this I may add what are usually called the doctrines of grace, and, not to occupy your time and attention unnecessarily, to sum up the whole in one expression, the truth which maketh the soul free. Now in proportion as we know the truth in the sweet experience of it, and have it brought into our heart by the power of God, are our loins girded with this heavenly girdle; for bear in mind it is to be worn, not looked at, clasped and buckled round us, not held loosely in the hand.

2. But look now at the *second* piece of armour of which the apostle speaks and which we have next to put on, "*the breastplate of righteousness.*" The breastplate was one of the most important pieces of armour that in times of old, before the invention of gunpowder, shielded the warrior, for it protected the vital parts. The heart, the lungs, the liver, all these vital organs were protected by the breastplate, which was made sometimes of pieces of iron or steel overlapping each other, and sometimes of a single solid piece of metal. So in grace: the heart, which is the seat of all vital feeling,

whence the streams of healthy blood are propelled through every artery and vein; the lungs, whereby we inspire the vital air, the pure breath of heaven, and breathe forth prayer and supplication to God; and the liver, whereby we obtain a healthy appetite to digest the bread of life, the food on which we live: these inward organs, so to speak, of the new man of grace must be protected by a breastplate. What is that? "*The breastplate of righteousness.*" Our own righteousness? What protection will our own afford? I remember reading many years ago in Lord Macartney's "Embassy to China," that in one part of their voyage they saw upon a Chinese fort, which made a show of averting their progress, a number of men walking on the ramparts in splendid armour. After exchanging a few shots the fort was taken, and what did they find this armour to be? It was all made of glittering paper burnished up to represent steel. These men were set up for show to frighten away our ships. Their armour could scarcely have repelled a child's arrow, much less such weapons as are used in our naval service. So would be a breastplate of our own righteousness; like the Chinese paper armour, it might be shining to the eye, but as weak as water against a hostile thrust from our implacable foe. O we want a better breastplate than one of paper, or even iron, if it be manufactured from nature's mine and welded by human hands. We want a breastplate of Jesus' own righteousness, in which there is no flaw or chink. We read of Ahab, that a man at a venture drew a bow, but the arrow reached his heart, for it pierced the joints of his harness, or, as the word there means, armour. You see there was a joint, or a place where the plates did not fully overlap each other; the arrow found out that joint; and though he had a breastplate on, yet because there was a chink or faulty spot in it, the arrow drank his blood through it, and he sank down in his chariot a dying man. So our breastplate, if it be of human manufacture, will have these faulty places; a piece of

goodness here and a patch of righteousness there, like a bed quilt, a tiling of shreds and patches. What sort of protection will this be when the enemy against whom we fight urges his deadly thrust? But there is a breastplate which he never can pierce, the breastplate of *Christ's righteousness*. As Hart well says—

"Righteousness within thee rooted
May appear to take thy part;
But let righteousness imputed
Be the breastplate of thine heart."

But as other parts of the armour are to be considered, I must dismiss this piece with one solemn admonition. Christ's righteousness, not your own, must guard your bosom as your breastplate in battle, as well as be your wedding dress when the battle is done.

3. *"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."* The ancients generally wore sandals—a kind of sole loosely fastened on by ties; but when they went into battle they wore greaves, a kind of strong leather boot reaching a good way up the leg, which, being covered over with small brass or steel plates, protected their lower limbs from blows. The apostle alludes to these military greaves where he speaks of our feet being "*shod* with the preparation of the gospel of peace." We have to stand firmly and strongly on our legs if we contend with our enemy. A loose fitting sandal may do for peace, but we want something stronger and better for war. This strong, firm, iron-bound shoe is the gospel of peace, that well fits the foot: it is a firm shoe which will not come off in the mud, nor allow Satan to cut at our feet so as to overthrow us in our goings. It is called here "*the preparation of the gospel of peace,*" but the word "*preparation*" also means the *readiness*, the alacrity which

this gospel shoe gives us; for as the military shoe gave the warrior alacrity to move forward, lent him firm standing, which he could not have had with his naked foot or by his shifting sandal, so that he could maintain his hold upon the soil, even though the ground were slippery with blood; so if once we have the gospel shoe well fitted on, have the gospel of peace put on, as it were, by the Blessed Spirit, so as to be closely wrapped round our feet and legs, and can stand firmly in it by the renewings and revivings of his grace, we shall then maintain our standing in the very teeth of hell, in the very face and under the hottest fire of Satan. But if we stand upon a broken law; upon the ever-shifting soil of creature merit; upon the quicksand of our own resolutions, or our own present or future exertions; or upon ground made slippery through the commission of secret or open sin, and the blood and gore of a guilty conscience all spilt upon it, we shall certainly fall in the day of battle. Nothing but the gospel, the precious gospel, called here "the gospel of peace," as revealing and bringing peace to the conscience, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding," can secure a firm standing for our feet, if we are to fight against Satan and all his embattled hosts. And as there was a fitness, and what we may call a suitability in the armed shoe to the warrior's foot, as not only protecting the flesh, but bracing and strengthening the muscles, so when the gospel comes in sweetness and power as a message of mercy, a revelation of peace to the conscience, it not only protects from hostile blows but binds up; not only guards but braces the Christian warrior's foot, and gives him a firm and solid standing in the field of battle. To be well established in the truth is an inestimable mercy; and indeed without it there is no power to resist temptation, overcome the world, fight against Satan, or triumph over death and hell.

4. But now comes a very important piece of armour. We have

seen the girdle of truth; we have looked at the breastplate of righteousness, and we have examined the greaves of the gospel of peace. But the warrior is not yet complete: there are still unprotected parts in which he may receive a dangerous thrust. He must have a *shield*, then, that he may ward off every blow from whatever quarter it may come. And what is the shield of the Christian soldier? What is called here the "shield of faith." This shield then will require a little examination. Observe, then, that it is not faith itself which is the shield, but the Object of faith. This seems plain from what God said to Abram, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15:1.) What is the happiness of Israel but that the Lord is her salvation, her shield, and her sword? "Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people, saved by the Lord, the *shield* of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency?" (Deut. 33:29.) And is not "the Lord God a sun and *shield*?" (Psl. 84:11.) It is not then our faith, much less any natural goodness, strength, or wisdom of our own that will avail us in this terrible conflict. But it is having Christ between us and Satan, interposing his Person and work, blood and righteousness; and thus, by faith, taking and making him our shield and buckler, we shall "quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." It is called the shield of faith, because faith alone takes hold of Christ as our buckler. The expression "fiery darts" is an allusion to a customary mode of warfare in ancient times. They used to wrap arrows round with tow, or some other inflammable material, which they set on fire, and then shot them over the walls into the besieged city, which, if they alighted upon any wooden building or other combustible surface, either set the town in flames or produced such confusion as to distract the combatants while the enemy stormed the place. Thus they were to the ancients what shells are now.

By these "fiery darts," or, as the word literally means, darts

which have been set on fire, we may understand Satan's infernal suggestions, his diabolical insinuations, his infidel reasonings, the hard thoughts which he raises up in the minds of God's people, the rebellion, peevishness, fretfulness, and despair that he is permitted to hurl against them as so many flaming arrows. But why are they so much to be dreaded? Because we carry within us a whole magazine of combustible material. Lying deeply hidden in our carnal mind, almost like the barrels of gunpowder once concealed under the Houses of Parliament, there is a countless store of the most inflammable matter, which these fiery darts, if they reach it, can in a moment explode. Had we no such corrupt nature, no such inflammable material, Satan might shoot his fiery darts against us without doing us any more injury than the literal arrow would injure a wall of stone. But we carry about such a mass of inflammable material that it only needs one fiery dart to set the whole on fire. Have you not sometimes felt such rebellion working in your mind, such hard thoughts of God, such enmity, such dregs of filth, such horrid thoughts and fearful blasphemy, that it seemed almost as if you were possessed of the devil? And at other times such swarms of infidelity have swept over your mind that you seemed to have scarcely a grain of faith left. There has been and still is much talk about the "*Essays and Reviews*;" but I have long had the substance of the *Essays and Reviews* in my carnal mind. I need not read *Essays and Reviews* to stir up infidelity: I have had enough of that working in my own heart for many a toilsome year, and even now scarcely a day passes without one or more of these fiery darts being hurled at my soul. I have neither read them nor do I mean to read them; but I believe there is scarcely an objection which these *Essays* contain that I have not had previously in the depths of my reasoning mind. I do not mean that they have been worked out as these enemies of the cross of Christ have set them off with argument and erudition; but perhaps some

may have occurred to my mind which they have not glanced at; for I have often felt the truth of a remark made by Halyburton, that the Lord hides from such men the greatest difficulties that lie against religion; for being in nature's blindness they have not light to see them; and also in tenderness to the faith of the weak, does not permit all their subtleties to be published. We know, therefore, what these men mean and the awful end to which they are driving, which they themselves cannot see, as being shut up in unbelief, because we have the counterpart in our own bosom. But the snares in which they are trapped to their own destruction are our temptations; as their glory is our shame, and their rejoicing our misery. But how distressing it is to the believing soul to find such infidel reasonings in his wicked heart, and how when this furious storm blows he seems almost driven from his anchorage!

But again, what *desponding* thoughts often rush into the breasts of many a poor child of God, who is not subject perhaps to, and may never once have experienced those infidel temptations to which I have alluded. Satan can work according to our natural constitution, education, habits of thought, and in any other circumstances in which we may widely differ from one another. If I have a reasoning mind, he can adapt his fiery darts to stir up in me infidel thoughts. If I am of a desponding turn, he can fill me with the most gloomy, melancholy feelings so as to make me almost despair of salvation. If I am naturally peevish or fretful, he can work upon those fretful feelings, and raise up most awful rebellion, self pity, and hard thoughts of God. He knows exactly our constitution, and wherever he sees a weak point there will he shoot in a fiery dart.

But how shall we meet these fiery darts of Satan? There is only one way. By taking the shield of faith, holding up Jesus

presenting as it were against these darts the Person, the work, the blood, and the love of the Lord the Lamb. But how can we do this? By an act of faith, by believing in the Son of God with all our heart, let Satan say what he will. Satan may say that he is not the true and real Son of God. "Yes, but I say," the soul answers, "he is: God has revealed him to my soul as such; and besides this inward testimony I see it shining as with a ray of divine light in the Scriptures. In spite, then, Satan, of all your suggestions and all the reasons and arguments of unenlightened, uninspired men, I still hold by this truth; for it has been ratified in my inmost heart; He is, he is the Son of God." There you take the shield of faith, for by faith you hold up Jesus, as the Son of God, against the fiery dart. Or again, if Satan say that the Scriptures are not true, or not inspired; that they are only like other books, written by the pen of man; "O, but," you say, "I know they are true and inspired by the Holy Spirit, for I have felt their power; they have been applied to my soul; I have been comforted by them. They are true; they are inspired of God, let Satan say what he will." This is taking the shield of faith, receiving into it the fiery dart, and thus quenching its flames. The ancients were accustomed to protect wooden buildings against fiery arrows by covering them with wet hides, which quenched the fire. To this there is an allusion in the expression, "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Or Satan may rouse up in your mind a storm of rebellion against God, and represent him as your angry Judge or vindictive enemy. But you say, "Can I rebel against so merciful a God, who has done so much for me in body and soul? Shall I contend against him who has blessed me and held me up in the paths of truth and righteousness so many years?" Here is again a taking of the shield of faith to quench the fiery dart which of itself would be enough to set all your carnal mind on fire. Or if Satan shoot a burning arrow of despair into your desponding mind, which seems for a time to penetrate

deeply, and to be kindling the most gloomy feelings within; in the strength of faith once more you take the shield with, "Did not the Lord once appear on my behalf? Did he not visit and bless my soul on this or on that occasion? Yes; I have felt his presence, seen his glory, tasted his love, and enjoyed the superaboundings of his grace. Satan, avaunt! You cannot reason me out of this, nor make me believe that the Lord has never blessed my soul." Here again is the shield of faith; and by this shield as thus held up against it the fiery dart is quenched and falls harmless to the ground. But I would not have you to think that I mean we can always or indeed often do this. My object is merely to point out what the shield of faith is, and how the Christian warrior uses it; but I by no means intend that he has any strength to do so except as enabled by the power of God.

5. But let us pass on to another piece of the armour. There is "*the helmet of salvation.*" The head is a vital organ; therefore needs well protecting, for a blow there might be instantly fatal. The Lord, therefore, has provided a piece of protective armour for it, called here "the helmet of salvation." This is more fully explained by the apostle in another epistle, "And for a helmet the hope of salvation." (1 Thess. 5:8.) But what does the head, spiritually and experimentally viewed, represent? What is it naturally? Is it not the directing organ of the whole body? All our senses are in our head—the eyes by which we see; the ears by which we hear; the nose by which we smell; the palate by which we taste. May not then the head, spiritually viewed, represent the active senses of the living soul, whereby it sees Christ by the eye of faith, hears Christ by the ear of faith, tastes Christ by the palate of faith, smells the sweet savour of his name as the ointment poured forth by the nose of faith, and may I not add, praises and blesses him by the tongue and lips of faith? The head, then, is the representation, so to speak, of that united

assemblage of living organs whereby Christ is apprehended as all our salvation and all our desire. But if the head be spiritually all this, it will need some protection. View then, the protective armour provided for it, here called "the helmet of salvation," and see whether you have not already found it able to cover your head in the day of battle. Have you not already had some deadly thrust against it? Satan, if he could, would have put out your eyes, so that you could no longer see Christ by the eye of faith; would have stopped your ears, so that you never more could hear a word of consolation from his lips; would have stuffed your nose with dirt and mud, that you never could have smelt again those garments of his which smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia; would have vitiated your palate by his poisonous drugs, so that never again could you have tasted that he is gracious; would have tied your tongue and muzzled your lips to prevent you from pouring out your soul in prayer and supplication, or in praising and blessing his holy name. A good hope through grace is called "the helmet of salvation," as being "the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins." (Luke 1:77.) Does not Satan often seem to cut at your very hope of eternal life, just as if, with all the strength and malice of a French cuirassier at Waterloo, he would cut you down at a stroke by cleaving your head in twain? Now, how could our poor, unprotected head stand against such a deadly blow? but there is a *taking* of the helmet of salvation. How so? By receiving salvation into the heart as the free gift of God; so that if salvation by grace has reached your heart, the helmet is already put upon your head to shield it in the day of battle.

We have looked thus far at the *defensive* weapons provided for the Christian warrior in the armoury of God. But he has given us something more than defensive armour. It would not have been enough for the ancient warrior to go into battle with only defensive armour, however strong or well

put on. He needed a sword as well as a shield. The Lord, therefore, has not kept this weapon back from the spiritual warrior. Here it is, *"The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."* But you may perhaps ask, Why should the sword be needed by a Christian soldier? Is he not to submit to every injury, and when smitten on the one cheek meekly turn the other? Yes, as regards his fellow man, but not as regards his infernal foe. Are we to let him shoot his fiery arrows and deal us all manner of sword-thrusts, and we not return as good as he gives? Surely not; for of course it is spiritual, not natural fighting; blows upon the soul, not blows upon the face, that we are now talking of; for the sword of the Spirit is not the sword of Gideon or a Damascus' blade, but the word of God. To understand how this is wielded, see how our blessed Lord dealt with Satan in the wilderness. Satan came to him with all his infernal subtlety, actually tempting him to doubt, or at least visibly prove by a miracle, that he was the Son of God. But how calmly, how blessedly our Lord met his suggestion. With what weapon? "It is written." This was the sword of the Spirit. But see its effect. At once Satan gave back, and pressed that temptation no more. He could not overcome "It is written." *That* thrust from the hand of the Lord pierced him through, for he well knew that what God had written must be fulfilled. He knew not only the omnipotence of Jehovah, but that he was a God that could not lie, and that God would cease to be God if his word could fall to the ground unaccomplished. He trembled, therefore, at God's word in the hands of his dear Son. His own pangs convinced him that what God said must be fulfilled, for he was carrying in his own bosom the penalty of his ancient disobedience to the revealed will of Jehovah, when God said, "Let all the angels of God worship him," and he refused from pride to do so. So it is now. No other sword but that of the Spirit, which is the word of God, can beat him back. Creature arguments, logical reasonings, good works and good resolutions, vows, tears,

and promises, are of no avail against Satan. There is only one weapon whereby we can fight him to any purpose, and that is the word of God. But observe, that it must not be merely the *letter* of the word. It must be the "sword of *the Spirit*," and therefore a spiritual sword, which can only be taken in hand when the word of God is applied with a divine power to your heart, and you have a living faith in it as made "life and spirit" to your soul. It is of no use my bringing forward a text to resist a temptation of Satan, unless I can make that text my own; in other words, unless I can handle that sword as one who knows how to wield it. To take up a text and not know the sweetness and power of it, would be like a child taking up a warrior's sword without having the warrior's hand. He might play with the sword, but what is the sword of a giant in the hands of a child? The sword of Scander-Beg, a famous Albanian warrior against the Turks, used to be shown at Vienna. A man who once looked at and handled it said, "Is this the sword which won so many victories? I see nothing in it; it is but a common sword." The answer was, "You should have seen the hand that wielded it." So it is not merely taking a text, adopting scripture language, and quoting passages, which will beat back the fiery assaults of Satan. This is having Scander-Beg's sword without having Scander-Beg's arm. But it is having the word of truth brought into our heart by the power of God, faith raised up to believe that God himself speaks it to our heart, being thus enabled to wield it in the strength of the Spirit and by the power of faith in living exercise, to resist every hellish thrust. In this battle we must not give way. To flee is to be conquered, for, as Bunyan well says, there is no armour for the back. We must fight, even if we die fighting; resist even unto blood, striving against sin. I tell you again and again that we must never give way; even if we fall we must get up again and fight on; for "a just" (that is a righteous) "man falleth seven times and riseth up again: but

the wicked," that is those abandoned to their wickedness, "shall fall into mischief;" that is, open wickedness under the power and condemnation of which they shall ever lie. (Prov. 24:16.) Do we not read, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall, I shall arise" (Micah 7:8); and again, "Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down." (Psalm 37:24.) Thus even if in this conflict you should slip and fall, lie not still as a conquered captive, but get up again and fight. "Resist Satan, and he will flee from you." He is a conquered enemy; he cannot destroy you if you are the Lord's. The word of truth, therefore, is full of most gracious promises, and sweet encouragements "to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ," and never in heart or hand submit to be conquered by sin or Satan.

6. But now comes another weapon of no less importance than the preceding, which is "*all prayer.*" Unless we have this last addition to all the rest of our armour, it may prove like a coat of mail upon a footman at the Lord Mayor's show. The Lord Mayor's footman might wear the armour which an ancient knight wore, retained as a memorial of the days of chivalry in the Tower; but how would he acquit himself if he had to stand against a knight of old, to meet Richard Coeur de Lion or Saladin in the tented field? How would he acquit himself in real combat without knowing by long exercise the use of his weapons? So unless we have this blessed grace and gift of "all prayer" to exercise us well in the use of our weapons, to keep them all clean and ready for active service, we might appear to be dressed up in knightly armour, but could we stand the least thrust of a hostile blade? Does not the apostle say, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit?" Observe the words "Praying *always* with all prayer and supplication." Then it is not praying *sometimes* but "always," that is, at all times as the Lord enables; and that with "*all prayer,*" that is all manner of

prayer, public, private, mental, vocal; and "all *supplication*," which is something more earnest, more importunate, more fervent, more beseeching, more wrestling than prayer, having in it more of Jacob's spirit and petition, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." And observe also, it must be "*in the Spirit*," not in the mere utterance of words; not in the mere form and custom, not lip labour, and tongue service, but as Jude speaks "praying *in the Holy Ghost*" (Jude 20); and as the apostle speaks of himself "I will pray with the Spirit and with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14:15); for it is not we that pray but "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. 8:26.) Without this Spirit of grace and of supplications poured out upon us from on high (Zech. 12:10), we cannot even see the pieces of armour which God has provided. We cannot see the girdle, or the breastplate, or the greaves, or the shield, or the sword, or the helmet; still less can we put them on. But when the Lord is pleased to bless us with the Spirit of prayer, then we see the girdle of truth and put it round our loins; then we see the breastplate of righteousness and clasp it firmly over the chest; then we see the shoes and put our feet into the Gospel as the Gospel of peace; then we take up the helmet of salvation and place it on the head; then we draw the sword of the Spirit out of the sheath and flash it in the very face of Satan.

7. But now comes one more qualification still for the Christian warrior, which is to "*watch thereunto with all perseverance*." The direction for the Christian warrior is to be ever upon the look out; never to be off his guard; never to take his armour off nor lay his sword aside. When have saints fallen? In unguarded moments. How did David fall? By walking on the house-top instead of being with his army, and not guarding his eyes from wandering. He fell from want of watchfulness. You perhaps have found the same. You have

been entangled in a snare of Satan. What you then did was not done wilfully, presumptuously; but you were off your guard, and Satan took advantage of your defenceless state to overcome you with his wiles. We need therefore, watchfulness, so as to suspect everything and everybody, and none so much as ourselves, and that "with all perseverance," so as never to drop asleep. You know the penalty of a sentry being found asleep at his post. It is death by the articles of war. We are sentries; the enemy is watching us and we must watch him. We must watch eyes, ears, tongue, hands, feet, hearts—yea, we must live in a constant attitude of holy watchfulness or Satan will surely gain the advantage of us. But you will say, "What hard work this is!" Yes, it is hard work, very hard work; not a work for sluggards and cowards; but remember this, that there is salvation at the end of it, and, I may also add, there is no salvation without it, for only "he that endureth to the end shall be saved." It would be hard work for you to be in a military or naval engagement, fighting perhaps up to your ankles in blood; but if you were there in the Queen's service, you must fight. You must not run away from the field; you must not dive into the hold. So it is hard work to be ever struggling against sin and Satan, putting on the armour and keeping it bright; but what is the consequence if we don't do so? Defeat. And what is defeat in this battle? Death and woe for ever. Satan is never so well pleased as when we are careless and thoughtless and without our armour on. So it comes to this: I must either put on the armour of God by faith, or else perish entangled in the wiles of Satan. It is not as though it were with us a matter of indifference, as I might eat a meal or not; put on a coat or not; sleep a certain time or not. Salvation is not, like these bodily acts and a thousand others, a mere matter of indifference. It is whether my soul is to be for ever in the enjoyment of bliss or for ever under the wrath of God. The apostle, therefore, says, "Take unto

you the whole armour of God, that"—

II.—To come to our next point, "*you may be able to stand in the evil day.*" There is "an evil day" that comes upon each and all. And what is the evil day? The day of Satan's power; the day of temptation; that day which indeed is and ever will be an evil day unless that armour is put on to enable us to stand. Whatever day that may be, which is to you a day of temptation, *that* for you is an evil day. The sun may shine brightly in the sky and nature wear its most smiling aspect; all may seem pleasant without and within, but it will be an evil day for you if Satan lay a snare and you fall into it. It will then be our wisdom and mercy to see beforehand the approach of this evil day—and there are always symptoms of the evil day coming. Rain does not fall without clouds; night does not come on until the sun has sensibly left the sky; so the evil day does not come upon the Christian without warning from above. Look out and see; even now perhaps there is a gradual diminution of the light; clouds begin to gather; heavy drops fall upon the pavement; the storm is coming; the evil day approaching. What unclean bird is that in the sky, like the fabled roe, or condor of the Andes, spreading his dark wings and whetting his beak and claws? I see, I see; I hear, I hear the rushing of his wings; Satan is at hand; I must put on my armour. Where is my girdle—where my breastplate—where my shoes—where my shield—where my helmet? The enemy is at the gates; the battle-trumpet is sounding. I shall be overcome unless I put on my armour. Where, too, is my sword, my Jerusalem blade, that I may fight with Satan and give him blow for blow and thrust for thrust? Here, then, is the soul in "the evil day," praying and watching, taking the shield of faith and putting the armour on. It is by doing this, and only by doing this, that it "*stands*" in the evil day. But where are we if there is no armour on, no girdle of truth round the loins, no sincerity before God or

man; no breastplate of Christ's righteousness to guard our heart; no hope of salvation to cover our head; no gospel of peace in which our feet may stand, no shield of faith to hold up against the fiery darts of the wicked one, no sword of the Spirit wherewith we may return blow for blow? Why, we must be overcome. Like a naked man in the midst of armed warriors, we must surrender before the uplifted sword cleaves our skull. You see then the necessity there is that the Christian should not only know there are these pieces of heavenly armour, but should put them on as God has bidden him. And he does put them on when the Lord is pleased to put them on for him, for he alone "teacheth our hands to war and our fingers to fight." He does equip himself when the Spirit calls to arms and gives him power and strength to put on the various pieces. Only so can he withstand. But is he safe *then*? Some of the greatest victories have followed the most seeming defeats; it was so at Marengo, where Buonaparte defeated the Austrians just as they had gained the day; and some of the most disastrous defeats have followed in the very train of victory, as Ben-hadad found to his sorrow. (1 Kings 20:29.) When an army has gained a battle, it reposes upon its arms, wearied with the conflict. If a fresh attack be then made, how soon a victory may be changed into a defeat. But some of you may not understand and others object to my natural figures and historical allusions; I will give you, therefore, Scriptural examples. Look at Lot, Gideon, and Jephthah. Hezekiah fell by pride after the Lord had cast all his sins behind his back; Peter denied Jesus after a glorious revelation of him as the Son of God. How suitable, therefore, the exhortation of

III.—Our third point, "*having done*," or, it is in the margin, "*overcome all to stand*." Now suppose you have overcome all your foes and fears. You have put on the girdle of truth and the breastplate of righteousness. Well shod have been your

feet; well protected has been your head; able to quench the fiery darts has been your shield; sharp and trenchant has been your sword. As soon as this has been the case with you, well what next? Now pride begins to work,—vain-glory and self-confidence. You congratulate yourself on the victory gained; you get off your guard; stand at ease; and think you shall see war no more. Surely now you may take a little rest; surely now you need not be quite so prayerful, so watchful, or so persevering as before. Now this is the very time for Satan to make a fresh assault. David did not fall into sin when fighting against Saul: he was upon his guard then, and we see how nobly he twice acted when his enemy was in his grasp. But when he had defeated his enemies he remained idle at home, and then overcome by temptations he slipped and fell, most awfully fell, and left a name covered in some respects with disgrace, and a most solemn warning to the saints of God to take heed to their feet. May we learn wisdom from such examples! We may have fought, we may have conquered, and then exulting in the victory fall a prey to the next temptation. We are never really secure until we exchange time for eternity. But meanwhile there is no security for any, be he young or old, except in the grace of God, and that mighty power whereby he keepeth those that are his by faith unto salvation. The Lord enable us to put this armour on: he has provided it for us; he can equip us with it; and by the power of his grace can bring us off more than conquerors through him who loved us.