

## A GOOD WARFARE

God's people are engaged in a warfare here. Some, like the apostle Paul, "fight a good fight" (II Tim. 4:7), while others do not get along so well with the struggle. But all are enlisted in the battle, and are exhorted to "war a good warfare" (I Tim. 1:18), and to *be good soldiers* (II Tim. 2:3). In order to do this it is necessary to put on, and wear, the whole armor that God has provided, which consists of *the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer* (Eph. 6:13-18). If we are properly clothed with this, and make a proper use of it, we will be able to withstand in the evil day, when faced with trials, afflictions, persecutions and temptations. It will be noted that every piece of this armor is intended for those who are moving or facing forward in the battle. There is no protection for those who turn their backs to the enemy.

The primary part of a child of God's warfare is internal, between the flesh and the Spirit. Before the new birth there is no such warfare, because prior to regeneration they are void of the Spirit of God. In that corrupt state they only have a carnal mind, and that carnal mind only desires carnal things. While in this condition they "walk according to the course of this world," and have their conversation (*their regular course of behavior*) in the lusts of the flesh (Eph. 2:2-3). They have no conflict between a desire to please the Lord and a desire to please their flesh, because "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7), and there is no desire for that which is good in His sight.

They that are in the flesh not only *cannot please God* (Rom. 8:8), but they have no *desire* to please Him either. But when the Holy Spirit takes up His abode within their hearts and makes new creatures of them, a warfare then begins within them between the desires that the presence of the Holy Spirit produces and those of their old nature or flesh. Paul spoke of this warfare in Galatians 5:17 in very explicit terms, saying, "*The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*"

He also deals at some length with this conflict in Romans 7:14-24. Every born again child of God is more or less acquainted with it, for they often find within themselves a vast difference between what they *desire* to do and what they *actually* do. They *hate* sin, yet they find themselves often doing things of which their "inner man" does not approve. So, like Paul, they may say, "That which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I," and, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good (*as perfectly as I desire, Ed.*) I find not" (Romans 7:15-19). In a word, this is "the law of sin which is in our members, *warring against, the law of our mind*" (*the spiritual part of us*).

Besides this internal conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, there are many external foes with which the child of God has to do constant battle. Satan and the world will employ every means within their power to try to draw regenerate souls into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members (Romans 7:23). And when this occurs it causes them to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (*this body of death, or this mass of corruption that dwells within them*)?

How thankful we should be that the Lord has not left us to fight the battle alone; and how good it is to know that ultimate and final victory will be ours through Jesus Christ our Lord. May He help us to be good and courageous soldiers, always wearing the Christian armor, and always holding up the banner of our beloved Captain—our glorious conquering King, knowing that though we will all lose some skirmishes along the way, He will not allow us to totally and finally fail, but will be an ever present help in time of trouble, and will give a complete and impartial deliverance to all the heirs of promise after awhile. —Elder Ralph Harris