

The Breastplate and the Helmet of the Christian Warrior

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"And let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." 2 Thessalonians 5:8, 9, 10

It seems, in some sense, wrong to have our favourites amongst the Lord's family. Should we not, it might be justly asked, love all the Lord's people alike? Are they not all loved with the same eternal love, redeemed by the same precious blood, and made partakers of the same Spirit? And yet I suppose few gracious people are altogether exempt from favouritism. But is favouritism, as a principle, right or wrong? To clear up this point, I think we should examine the grounds of our preference of some above others, and judge from them how far it is allowable and how far not to have favourites. Some, for instance, of the Lord's family are attractive from natural amiability of temper, or some similar qualification unconnected with grace. Their unvaried kindness and affection; their noble, liberal spirit; their disinterested, unselfish conduct; their gentle, winning manners; the absence in them of pride, haughtiness, and self-conceit; the sincerity and truthfulness; even their personal attractions, and other advantages of a similar kind carry with them a strange power by which almost before we are aware they twine themselves round our natural affections. Others again are naturally disagreeable, sullen, morose, ill-tempered, obstinate, selfish, unwilling to concede, rude in speech and

rough in manners, easily irritated and seemingly unable to forgive, never satisfied but in being first and foremost, and determined to carry out their own will and way with little consideration for the feelings or judgment of others. Now, such persons will repel as much as the others attract; and it is as hard not to dislike the one as it is easy to like the other. And yet were these grounds of like and dislike fairly examined, they might be found scarcely at all connected with grace, and to rest almost wholly upon nature. The naturally disagreeable, though I have drawn the lines strongly to make the contrast greater, may have more real grace than those who are naturally agreeable, and weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and viewed as members of the mystical body of Christ, may have a much stronger claim upon our esteem and affection, for some of the most amiable beings in the world have no grace at all. If then your peculiar favourites even amongst the Lord's family are so upon the ground of mere natural qualifications, that reason of favouritism seems clearly wrong, for we should love the Lord's people because they are his, and because he has made them partakers of his Spirit and grace.

But now I think I can show you a true ground of favouritism as well as a false one—one that is justified by the example of our Lord and his apostles. Is it, then, wrong to love those most who manifest most of the image of Christ, who seem most deeply imbued with the spirit of their master, who walk most tenderly and affectionately in the fear of God, who display most of the grace of the gospel, and bear most fruits to the honour, praise, and glory of God? Was there not one of the disciples whom the Lord specially loved, who lay in his bosom at the last supper, and to whom upon the cross he confided the care of his mother? And does there not seem to have been a peculiar affection entertained by Paul to his "dearly beloved son Timothy?"

But to what do these remarks tend and what connection have they with the subject before us? They tend to this point: It seems to me that as Timothy was one of Paul's favourite disciples, so the church of Thessalonica was one of Paul's favourite churches. If you will carefully read his two epistles to that church, bearing at the same time in mind the remark that I have made, for we do not always see a thing till our attention is called to it, you will find a spirit of peculiar affection breathing through them both. And I think you will find also evident reasons for this peculiarly affectionate spirit manifested by the apostle toward the Thessalonian believers. To show this more clearly, let me for a moment compare the Thessalonian church with some of the other churches of the New Testament. They were, then, much free from that spirit of strife and division which almost rent to pieces the Corinthian church. They had not the legal, Pharisaic spirit which so tarnished the Galatians. They had not the vacillating spirit which brought such discredit upon the Hebrews. Being young in grace they might not have had, it is true, the strong faith of the Romans which was "spoken of throughout the whole world," nor the liberality of the Philippians who, when Paul was even in Thessalonica, sent once and again unto his necessity; nor the knowledge and wisdom of the Ephesians and Colossians which qualified them to receive such deep truths as the apostle unfolds to them in those remarkable epistles. They were a very young church, for the epistle was not only the first which the apostle wrote, but it was sent to them within a year after their call by grace, and when they were yet in their first love. There was, therefore, at this time in them such a spirit of brotherly kindness and affection; their faith grew so exceedingly; their love of every one toward each other so conspicuously abounded that in these points they were a pattern to all the other churches. They were also under very heavy persecutions from their own countrymen; and yet in the midst of these outward trials the

graces of faith and patience shone so eminently forth that the apostle could say, "We ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure." (2 Thess. 1: 4.) There thus appear to have been some good grounds in the case of this church why Paul should write to it in a more loving, tender, and affectionate spirit than to any other of the churches.

Thus there may be wrong and right grounds of favouritism. If, therefore, the apostle had (as I cannot but think he had) a favourite church, let us not condemn him as if he were influenced by natural considerations, or as if he had favourites in the wrong and invidious sense of the word; for if he had a special love to the Thessalonian church, it was because the graces of the Spirit shone forth most conspicuously in them, and because the very persecutions which they were suffering for Christ's sake drew his heart more lovingly and affectionately out towards them.

With a heart, then, overflowing with love and affection, he brings before them the exhortation contained in our text, which you will observe is closely connected with their character and privileges. It is this spirit of tenderness and affection on the part of the exhorter, and this spirit of loving obedience on the part of the exhorted, which make the exhortations of the gospel so powerful and effectual. But let us look at our text in connection with the context.

The chapter begins thus: "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

(1 Thess. 5:1, 2, 3.) Among other subjects of his preaching Paul had laid before the Thessalonians the coming of the Lord, and that the day of his coming would be as sudden and as unexpected by the world as that of a thief in the night. He therefore contrasts the knowledge and faith of believers with the ignorance and unbelief of the world at large. "But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." A day was approaching when sudden destruction would fall upon the ungodly, for the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night; and when that day came upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, they should not escape. But, writing to these warm-hearted, spiritually minded, affectionate converts, he could say, "Ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." What, then? How ought we to act? If we are the children of light, if we are the children of the day, if we are not of the night nor of darkness, what should be our conduct? "Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night." Then come the words of our text: "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."

In opening up these words, I shall endeavour to consider our subject under four leading points:—

I shall set before you four things as constituting and determining a Christian—

I.—*First, his character: he is "of the day."*

II.—*Secondly, his conduct: he is sober.*

III.—*Thirdly, his weapons: he puts on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.*

IV.—*Fourthly, his watchword: that "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him."*

I.—The distinguishing character here given by the apostle of a Christian, of a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, is that he is "*of the day.*"

We shall see more clearly the meaning and force of this expression, by contrasting it with the description of those who are of the night. There are children of light, and there are children of the day. There are children of the night, and there are children of darkness. The saint of God is especially characterised as a child of light and a child of the day, as distinct from those who are children of the night and children of darkness. I do not know that the two terms, light and day, much differ from each other; and yet, as the apostle has distinguished them, we may trace out a difference between them. This difference, I think, at once strikes the mind, the light is before the day and makes it. If there were no light there could be no day; we therefore call that period of time day which consists in the presence and enjoyment of light, as we call that period of time night which is the presence and effect of darkness.

i. In this sense, therefore, we are "children of the *light*" before we are "children of the day." This light is what the Lord calls "the light of life," that light which is produced by

the creative act of God in the new creation, as originally in the old, as the apostle testifies: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6.) Until he that once said: "Let there be light," and there was light, is pleased thus to shine into the soul of man, he is still in darkness. It is, then, the possession of this peculiar and heavenly light which stamps and distinguishes the partaker of heavenly grace, and makes him to be of the day. The apostle therefore says: "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Eph. 5:8.) Peter speaks of it as God's "marvellous light:" "That ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (1 Peter 2:9.) Paul was sent to the Gentiles "to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light." (Acts 26:18.) John also speaks of "walking in the light as God is in the light." (1 John 1:7.)

ii. Now the effect of this light in grace, as in nature, is to give birth to *the day*. He, therefore, that is born of God is a child of day, because he is a child of light. This is his mark. He is one, then, whose eyes have been opened by the power of the Spirit of God; whose mind has been enlightened; on whom the clean water of which I spoke this morning has been sprinkled, so as to cleanse his understanding from the old, inveterate crust of ignorance and prejudice. He is also of the day, because the day-star has risen in his heart; because beams and rays of the Sun of righteousness have shone into his soul; because he is enlightened with the light of the living; because he sees light in God's light; and is brought out of nature's darkness and nature's death into the light of God's countenance.

Now, when day dawns upon the earth, it discovers all the

things that are upon the face of the earth. When night brooded with its sable wings over the face of creation, all was obscure, all was hidden from view. All things were there, just as much as they are in the full light of day; but they were not seen on account of the veil of darkness which was spread over them. As in nature, so in grace. Our state by nature, the wretched condition to which the fall has reduced us, the evil of sin, the holiness of God, the purity of his righteous character, the curse and condemnation of a holy law, the dread realities of eternity, the bar of God before which all must stand,—all these things, though realities, and in one sense, tremendous realities, are hidden from view from the generality of men, because over the heart of man rests the veil of darkness. Is not this the testimony of God? When he speaks to his Zion, telling her to "arise and shine," how he contrasts the glory of her light with the gross, universal darkness which rests generally upon men. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." (Isa. 40:1, 2.) So again: "They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course." (Psa. 82:5.) Our Lord declares: "He that followeth him shall not walk in darkness;" and that "whosoever believeth in him shall not abide in darkness" (John 8:12; 12:46); clearly implying thereby, that those who do not believe in him, and follow him, walk and abide in darkness. He tells us also, why it is that men love darkness, and what is the just cause of their condemnation. "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." (John 3:19.) Now, in this darkness all live and walk until they are enlightened with what Elihu calls, "the light of the living" (Job 33:30); until, "through the tender mercy of

God, the dayspring from on high visits them, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:78, 79.) Then they are "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." (Col.1:13.) It is, then, when divine light enters into the understanding, according to the word, "The entrance of thy words giveth light," that we are brought out of that state of darkness, in which we should have continued until we had sunk into the blackness of darkness for ever.

But what are the effects of this entrance of heavenly light? Its first effect is to show us the being of God, who he is, and, as a necessary consequence, what we are before him. We now see the majesty, purity, holiness, and justice of that great and glorious God in whose presence we feel to stand, and before whose heart-searching eye we lie naked and open. We behold how righteous he is in all his words, in all his works, in all his ways with the sons of men. We see the tremendous evil of sin, and ourselves amenable to the righteous law of God. We view the eye of Justice fixed upon us, and we know we cannot escape that all-seeing glance; we can neither evade it nor shun it, nor get anywhere away from it and we feel ourselves to be within the reach of the everlasting arm which can send us in a moment to a deserved hell. We thus come into the experience of Psalm 139. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether." (Psa. 139:1, 2, 3, 4.) We feel that we cannot flee from his presence, that even "the darkness hideth not from him, and that the darkness and the light to him are both alike." Such thoughts and feelings bring

about a wonderful revolution in the mind, for we have not now to deal with man but with God; not with the things of time, but the solemn realities of eternity.

It is, then, this divine light shining into his heart which manifests the living saint of God to be of the day. He is now truly and emphatically a child of the day. Day has come to him, a day of days, a day whose light is as the light of seven days, for all other days have been with him days of darkness. Having come, then, into the light of day, and being a child of the day, he will have such discoveries made to him as will make it more or less the day of the Lord with his soul. At first, indeed, he has to learn his base original, the depth of the fall, the dreadful evil of sin, and how dreadfully and awfully he has often been entangled therein. He has to learn the holiness of God, the purity of his righteous character, the unbending severity of his holy law, and his special case as amenable thereto in body and soul for time and eternity. A sense of these things will teach him his inability and helplessness to save and deliver himself, and make him feel that if saved, it must be by pure mercy and sovereign grace. Here, perhaps, he may abide for months or even years without any clear assurance of his salvation, though not without hopes and expectations. But having opened his eyes, brought him thus far into light, and made him a child of day, God will not leave him here, but will perfect that which concerneth him. There are blessed truths stored up in the everlasting gospel relating to the Person, work, blood, and righteousness of his dear Son which will in due time be revealed to his faith. The same Spirit who convinced him of sin, will in due time bring peace and consolation into his breast. The same Spirit who opens up the purity of God in a holy law, shows the love and grace of God in the everlasting gospel; and the same divine teaching which makes the child of light believe that he is a sinner condemned by the law

gives him to believe he is a saint saved by the blood of Christ, and has an interest in the perfect obedience of the Son of God. Thus, as the child of light is gradually led along, the day opens more and more with brightness, clearness, and blessedness to his view; the glorious truths of the gospel become more discovered in their beauty and blessedness; the Lord Jesus Christ is more plainly revealed; the work of grace upon the soul is made more manifest, and the teachings of the Spirit become more clear until it may be said: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.)

II.—But now, let me pass on to show what the *conduct* of that man is who is thus of the day. What was he by contrast when he was a child of night, a child of darkness?

i. When a child of night, he did those things which are done in the night. We know that sins of every kind are chiefly transacted under the veil of darkness. Men do not usually come abroad in open day with their evil deeds. They seek to shroud their crimes beneath the veil of night, little thinking that the eye of God is upon them as much by night as by day. Now while we were children of darkness, we might have been in some good measure kept from those gross immoralities and open sins in which so many walk without fear or shame. We might have preserved a consistent character before the world, and not only no gross deviations from moral conduct might have stained us with outward reproach, but we might have been generally esteemed and admired for our uprightness and conscientiousness. But all this time we had no regard to inward sins; we paid no attention to the secret movements of our fallen nature towards evil. Nor indeed did we know that many things were sinful which we now see to be highly so. Pride, ambition,

covetousness, fondness of dress and outward appearance, love of gaiety and amusement, conformity to the fashions, customs, maxims, opinions, and general spirit of the world, seeking our own advantage, despising the family of God, dislike to and contempt of the truths of the gospel, a general habit of prayerlessness and carelessness, and a determined and unceasing living to ourselves and the things of time and sense without regard to the word of God—in these sins which held us fast we saw no evil, nor did we know, or at least feel that they were displeasing in the eyes of God. Nor did we see that secret sin was, in the sight of God, as much sin as open sin; and that the indulgence of evil without check or restraint in the mind was little less criminal before the eyes of infinite purity than the indulgence of actual transgression. I do not by this make all sins equal or that transgressions in thought are to be compared with transgressions in deed, for every man's conscience will tell him the contrary. But as long as we could enjoy the various objects in which our carnal mind delighted, and a decent veil was thrown over our own outward conduct, we were well satisfied; and were little careful about the inside of the cup and platter, if the outside were but decently clean, or at least kept as smooth and as bright as that of our neighbours. And if sometimes conscience sharply rapped us for an occasional breaking out into what was felt to be positively wrong, we thought all might be washed away with a few tears of repentance; and that all we had to do was to confess our sins before God, go a little oftener to church, or receive the sacrament, and then we should easily get remission for sins not of any very grave character. In this smooth, easy, self-deceptive path, not, perhaps, without some occasional desires and attempts to be different and act otherwise, we went on filling up the measure of our iniquities, until but for the all-prevailing grace of God we should have fallen victims to everlasting flame.

ii. But the apostle gives us another mark of the children of darkness: they *sleep*. "Let us not sleep," he says, "as do others, for they that sleep sleep in the night."

Night is the time for sleep; and this sleep of the body, which is natural and healthful, the apostle transfers to the sleep of the soul, which is its disease, not its needful rest or means of health. By the sleep of the soul he means its insensible state, the idea being taken from the state of the body during sleep. This sleep of the soul is its destruction. Solomon speaks of one who "lieth down in the midst of the sea," and of another that "lieth upon the top of a mast," as an illustration of the man who tarries long at his wine, whose eyes behold strange women, and whose heart utters perverse things. By this forcible illustration he intimates the reckless, insensible, and therefore perilous state of the drunkard. "They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again." (Prov. 23:35.) Now, this illustration we may apply to such a drunken sleep as buries in insensibility the children of darkness. They have no sense of the awful position in which they stand. They do not see there is but a step between them and death; how a moment might plunge them into an awful eternity; how a falling tile, an accident on a railway, a horse running away, an apoplectic fit, might in a moment launch them into an eternal state without repentance of their sins or even a cry for mercy. Their sleep, then, is the sleep of the drunkard, during which he is exposed to a thousand dangers, against which he has neither will nor power to guard himself.

Now, God's people, as distinct from them, are shown in our text to be "*sober*." "Let us watch and be sober." And as if he would, by repeating it, urge it more upon their spiritual attention, he says again, "But let us who are of the day be

sober."

Sobriety is, therefore, a distinguishing mark of a child of grace; by which we are to understand not merely natural sobriety, not merely freedom from the prevalence of those intoxicating habits and customs which are such a foul blot on the face of society, which are England's greatest curse, and have been a cause of death to thousands, and of incalculable ruin to widows and children. Christian sobriety is not merely that sobriety which is becoming to all, and indispensable to every one who names the name of Jesus, but Christian sobriety, spiritual sobriety, soberness of mind as distinct from soberness of body. There is a vast deal of meaning comprehended in the expression "Be ye sober," for it is of very extensive application. It is much the same as that "soundness of mind" which the apostle speaks of as God's special gift, together with the spirit of power and of love. (1 Tim. 1:7.) And it is observable that in bidding Titus "speak the things which become sound doctrine," he urges him to exhort both old and young, male and female, to sobriety of mind and conduct. (Titus 2:1-7.) Men often accuse those who profess the doctrines of grace of enthusiasm, of fanaticism, of embracing wild doctrines, and being led aside by visionary delusions. I do not deny that there are enthusiasts and fanatics, and that Satan can deceive and delude as an angel of light; and I admit that some even of the people of God are inclined to be visionary, both in their experience and their expectations. But fanatics and enthusiasts, in the true sense of the words, are not usually nor often found in the ranks of those who are truly taught of God. Indeed, it would be a libel upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit to assert that his instruction is either fanatical or enthusiastic. Nay, I would rather retort the charge and assert that the real fanatics and enthusiasts are those who dream of serving at the same time sin and God, who are looking for heaven as the reward of

their works, when all those works are evil. And as to true sobriety of mind, and calm collectedness of judgment, I believe, myself, that none are so sober-minded as the real partakers of grace. Before the light of God's teaching illuminated their understanding, before the grace of God in its regenerating influence took possession of their hearts, they were out of their minds. There was no real sanity in them, for, like insane persons, they were madly bent upon their own destruction. They spent their lives in insane hopes, in wild and visionary dreams of happiness, ever stretching forth their hands to grasp what always eluded their reach, and, like madmen, alternately laughed and wept, danced and sang as on the brink of a precipice or the deck of a sinking ship. But when grace came to illuminate their mind, regenerate their soul, and begin that work which should fit and prepare them for eternity, they became sober. They were awakened from that state of intoxication in which they had spent their former life; they were sobered out of that drunkenness, so to speak, in the indulgence of which they had drunk down large draughts of intoxicating pleasure, and became for the first time morally and spiritually sober.

iii. You will observe, that the apostle says: "They that be drunken are drunken in the night;" and contrasting their drunkenness with their Christian sobriety, he adds: "But let us, who are of the day, be sober." We find, then, here drunkenness contrasted with sobriety. There are, therefore, other forms and modes of drunkenness besides that of being intoxicated with strong drink. Let me point out some of these points of contrast, for men may be drunk, mentally and morally, whose brain does not reel with the cups of the drunkard. As the Lord says: "They are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink." And why? Because the "Lord had poured out upon them the spirit of deep sleep," which was as the drunken sleep of those

actually overcome with wine. (Isai. 29:9, 10.) Similarly, the woman in the Revelation is represented, as "drunken with the blood of the saints." So we read of "the drunkards of Ephraim" who are to be "trodden under feet."

Of these drunkards, some are drunk with the love of sin, others with the love of the world, others through having imbibed some pernicious error, others with enmity against the saints of God, others with pride, Pharisaism, and self-righteousness—steeped up to the very lips, as a drunkard is, with vain ideas of their own strength and ability. As strong drink stupefies some and inflames others; as it makes some sleep and others contentious; so it is with these drunkards of Ephraim, who are out of the way through strong drink, who err in vision and stumble in judgment. But all their glorious beauty is a "fading flower," for "the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, will one day cast them down to the earth." (Isa. 28:1-3.)

1. Now opposed to these drunkards—drunken, as I have explained, in a spiritual sense, and not necessarily with strong drink, are the sober-minded children of God. By sobriety, in a spiritual sense, we may understand every thought and feeling, word and work, state of soul and experience of the power of truth which is contrary to that spiritual drunkenness which I have described. Grace sobers a man, and it does it in this way. Its first effect is to make him put away the intoxicating draught. This, we know, is the first step, literally and naturally, to make a drunkard a sober man. Nothing can be done until the strong drink is given up. "Put away thy wine from thee," was the exhortation given to Hannah by Eli, when, misjudging her, he thought she had been drunken. So grace, when it visits the heart, beats out of the hand the cup of error. Error suits our carnal mind as

strong drink suits the palate of the drunkard; some it inflames and some it stupefies; some it sets a preaching and some it sets a fighting. The excitement it produces, the wild dreams and delusions to which it gives birth, the scenes of novelty it brings before the mind make error to be the very cup of the spiritual drunkard. The first thing that grace does is to give us a knowledge of the truth, as I explained when I was speaking upon the entrance of divine light. Light and truth go together. "Send forth," says David, "thy light and thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles." (Psa. 43:3.) Wherever, then, light and truth come, they detect error and make it hateful; and there is no longer seeking "mixed wine," no longer "looking upon it when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moves itself aright;" for it is found "at the last, to bite like a serpent and sting like an adder." Having, therefore, once tasted the power and sweetness of the truth which he has drawn from the pure word of God, if error come before him, the child of the light and of the day regards it with abhorrence.

2. In a similar way, he can no longer be drunk with the love of *sin*. If he sin it is contrary to his will, to his inclination, to his prayers, his groans, and his honest and sincere confessions. He may be entangled in it, but he does not love it as the ungodly do, with all his heart and soul. He is not like the drunkard who seeks his cup because he loves it; and though stricken and beaten in his drunken sleep, yet says: "They have beaten me and I felt it not, when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again!" If he is entangled in the snares of sin and Satan, he is overcome by them contrary to a thousand cries and struggles of his labouring breast.

3. Nor is he drunk with *enmity* to God's *will and way*, though it may cross his own, for he desires God's will to be his will;

and his greatest grief is, that he cannot do the will of God through the weakness and opposition of the flesh.

4. Nor is he drunk with *enmity to the Lord's people*, with that intoxicating spirit, which, at its greatest height, is called being "drunken with the blood of the saints," because he loves the people of God, and would almost sooner shed his blood for them than shed theirs.

5. Nor is he drunk with the spirit of the *world*, because he knows how it is opposed to everything good and godly; and what he has felt, both of the severity and goodness of God, has made him see and feel the difference between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of Christ.

6. Nor is he drunk with worldly *ambition*, worldly pride, worldly projects, or worldly prospects, for he sees how opposed all these things are to the mind of Christ, and though they may be sweet to the carnal mind, yet he knows that there is poison in the draught, and death in the cup.

iv. Again, he is sober as respects *watchfulness*. We find the apostle uniting sobriety and watchfulness as both equally necessary to the child of day. Sobriety, therefore, includes not merely abstaining from everything which intoxicates, but also that alertness and watchfulness of mind, and that spirit of carefulness which are opposed to the carelessness of the sleepy, slumbering drunkard. The Christian is a soldier who must not sleep upon his post; a sentinel who must not fall asleep in the sentry box. He is in an enemy's country, is placed in an advanced post that he may be alert and on the watch, listening to every noise and every movement, and keeping his eyes well open, so as at once to give an alarm and not suffer the camp to be surprised. A Christian who is not watchful is sure to be surprised and overcome; and as the past experience of the evils of drunkenness will

sometimes make a drunkard sober, so his past experience of the dangers of carelessness will make a believer watchful. He knows how often he has been entangled by some evil of his heart through want of due care, and what an advantage Satan has gained over him through a want of watchfulness. He is almost like a sentinel who has charge over a powder magazine and has to watch every comer. He knows what combustible material he carries in his own bosom, and how soon this material is set on fire by the fiery darts of hell; and he sees what consequences might be produced by his giving way to the first inclinations to evil. Grace also has made him tender of the cause of God, and jealous of his honour and glory. He sees what a dreadful thing it would be to bring an open reproach upon the truth of God and the people with whom he is connected; and that he himself might go with broken bones all his days, might darken and becloud all his evidences, and make every body suspect him of hypocrisy, and none more so than himself. It is the union of these various motives and feelings working together in his breast, which, under the good hand of God, makes and keeps him sober and watchful, and to stand daily and continually upon his watch tower, lest any enemy unwarily surprise him.

III.—But I pass on to show the Christian's *armour*. The Lord, who has bidden him watch and be sober, has not left him without equipping him with suitable armour against every foe. It would not be sufficient for a sentry to be merely watchful, merely sober. He must be armed as well as watchful; he must carry his rifle, and well know the use of it,—to shoot down the approaching enemy if he meditate attack as well as see him in the distance and give the alarm. So it is in grace. The Lord does not send his people forth to fight the good fight and give them no weapons wherewith to approve themselves as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

But you will observe, that in our text *defensive*, and not offensive, weapons are mentioned. In the corresponding list of spiritual armour given, Eph. 6, "the sword of the Spirit," an offensive weapon, is mentioned. But as here none but defensive are named, we will confine our attention to them. "Putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation." Let us examine these weapons severally.

i. The first is "the *breastplate* of faith and love." This seems to be the same breastplate as the apostle speaks of in Eph. 6, though he calls it there "the breastplate of righteousness," that is, Christ's righteousness, for it is *his* not *ours* which can alone protect us. As Hart justly says:

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

But, why should the apostle call it here "the breastplate of faith and love?" I think we may explain it by considering that the breastplate of righteousness is put on by faith, and firmly fastened to the breast by love. Scripture figures must not be interpreted too rigidly. They are intended more as illustrations than positive declarations of the truth; and thus the blessed Spirit may use different figures to unfold and explain the same truth, holding it up, as it were, in different lights, and presenting it to us under different aspects. Bearing this in mind, let us now take a view of the Christian soldier. He stands sober and watchful at his post, stands upon his tower looking watchfully around; he knows that he is surrounded by enemies; and as he casts his eyes here and there with keen, scrutinising looks, that he may not be surprised unawares, how soon he sees one bending a bow

here, another holding a spear there, and a third ready to spring upon him with a drawn sword. Now, how is he to be preserved from their attacks when he knows that they are all thirsting for his life? God has provided for him in his dear Son a breastplate, the breastplate of righteousness; and as he views this imputed righteousness of the Son of God to all who believe as a part of the spiritual armour provided for them he sees what a suitable protection it is for himself. Faith, therefore, as acting in the strength and by the power of God, embraces and puts this breastplate on; and as faith works by love, this grace of the Spirit binds it closely round his bosom with the strongest clasps.

Now, observe, what the breastplate is to guard. There are two important organs in the human body, each of which has its seat in what we now call the chest, but what was formerly spoken of as the breast. These are the heart and the lungs. These are two vital organs, two of the most important of the whole system. From our heart issues the blood which feeds every member of our body. How important, how vital is this organ! So, spiritually, by our heart we live, by our heart we believe, and by our heart we love. Every tender sensation, every gracious movement, every inward experience of the goodness and mercy of God which prompts the falling tear, and heaving sigh, may all be traced to the heart. The heart of man, naturally and spiritually, is the very seat and centre of life; and when it beats strongly and firmly in the breast, every movement is felt to the remotest extremities. We may feel it even now in the pulse of our wrist, if you put your finger upon it, for as our heart beats strongly or weakly, so does that beat in unison with it. A strong, vigorous heart sends blood to every part of the body, and is the strength of every muscle and of every limb. So, when the heart beats strongly and firmly in faith and love to the Lord Jesus, when he dwells in the heart by faith, and occupying the seat of our

affections, makes himself near, dear and precious, it sends a vigorous tide of healthy blood to every part of our spiritual frame. Do you not feel at times as if animated with fresh warmth and spirit to fight the good fight of faith, that you, by his grace, may come off more than conqueror through him who hath loved you? But the heart, spiritually, as well as literally, wants protection. Satan aims at the heart his most fiery darts. O, if he can but quench our faith; if he can but overcome our love; if he can but strike a dart through the very seat and centre of our religion; if he can but succeed in aiming a deadly blow against that vital organ, that heart whereby we believe unto righteousness, how he would triumph in our destruction. Here is the need and value of the breastplate. When, then, we are enabled by faith to take hold of Christ's righteousness, apply it to our breast, and gird it round with bands of love, how this breastplate meets and repels every fiery dart. Satan will sometimes urge: "Your sins are too great to be forgiven; no one who truly fears God ever sinned like you," There is a fiery dart; how can it be met but by the breastplate of imputed righteousness? At another time he will say: "Your backslidings are too great to be healed; indeed they are not backslidings, but the sins of a hypocrite and a reprobate." How can this fiery dart be repelled but by the breastplate of Christ's righteousness? Is not that sufficient to justify us before the throne of God? Do we not read, that "by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses?" And does not the blood of Jesus Christ cleanse from all sin? Is not this enough? Can any fiery dart of the wicked pierce this corslet, find its way through this breastplate? Was not this breastplate wrought out by the sufferings and obedience of the Son of God? And is it not given to protect the breast of God's people, and to shield them from every fiery dart of the enemy?

Sometimes, again, Satan stirs up every wicked thought of your heart, inflames every dormant lust, stirs up every vile imagination, nay, will invent crimes if he cannot find them ready made to his hand. Has he never tried to persuade you that you have said what you have never said, and done what you have never done; or troubled you with dreams in which you have committed all manner of sins, and taken advantage of the night season, when you have awoke, trembling and distressed out of them, to bring every gloomy thought before your eyes, as if you had actually committed what you have but dreamed of? How can you meet this foe when he is thus aiming his darts at your heart, by night as well as by day, in dreaming hours as well as wakeful moments? Only by putting on the breastplate of righteousness by the hand of faith, and girding it on by the bands of love.

ii. Then our *lungs*. How important, how vital an organ naturally are they. By them we inhale and exhale the vital air. By them is our blood purified and life preserved in our frame. This may represent spiritually, prayer, which is the very life of the soul; for by prayer we draw in the vital breath of heaven, and again give out what is thus drawn in. This Satan well knows. He, therefore, aims his darts against the spirit of prayer in a believer's breast. How, sometimes, when upon our bended knees, Satan will throw in a fiery dart. How he will stir up some vile lust or raise up some foul imagination, seeking to distract our attention and fill our minds with horror. Sometimes he will bring worldly things into the mind to carry our thoughts away, we know not where. How he will suggest all manner of things as taking place that never have occurred and never will occur, or that something of the greatest importance must be attended to immediately. In these, and various ways, he will seek to bring into a state of confusion, in which not a single prayer seems to rise out of our heart or any true worship of God.

Here, then, we need the breastplate of righteousness to cover and shield that vital organ by which we draw in the breath of heaven, and from which the same breath, as being of his own inspiration, mounts upward and enters the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

iii. But we have another piece of armour provided, and that, you will observe, is to guard *our head*, another vital part, not less so than heart and lungs. No part of the body is naturally more unprotected or more needs protection. This cover is provided for us by a spiritual helmet, as our text speaks: "And for a helmet, the hope of salvation."

The head is the seat of all our knowledge, as the heart is the seat of all our faith and feeling. Does not life eternal consist in a knowledge of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent? This knowledge, therefore, may be said to be our salvation, and a good hope through grace, which the Lord kindles in a believer's breast assures him that a true knowledge of the Lord in which is eternal life is therefore connected with his salvation. But whence arises this good hope through grace? Does it not spring out of some discovery of the Lord's goodness and love, some whisper of his favour, or intimation of his kindness, some gracious token, some sips, tastes, and drops of his abundant mercy and grace? Here, then, we see the advantage of the helmet. Satan aims a deadly blow at your religion. He tells you that you were never called by grace, that what you thought was a work of grace, had no reality in it, that your experience is not genuine or saving, and that it was merely something which nature furnished you with. He intimates that your joys were visionary, and your delight in the Lord was only natural excitement; that in your convictions there was no depth, no reality, no genuineness, and for your consolations no solid foundation; for if they had been of God, he tells you, they

would have been continued, and you would not have lost them; they would have been permanent and you would not be where you now are, so cold, dead, stupid, and indifferent. Thus Satan comes in with his suggestions, aiming a deadly blow at your head—the very seat of all our understanding and knowledge of the truth—the very centre of our spiritual senses, of the eyes we see with, the ears we hear with, the nose we smell with, the lips we speak with, and almost every other guiding, directing sense. Against these deadly blows is provided the helmet of a good hope through grace.

But let us now see how it is put on, and how it wards off these deadly thrusts. Does not a good hope enable you to meet Satan sometimes thus? "Aye, but God has told me, and so made me to believe that he has done something for my soul! Have I not had that sweet promise, that gracious manifestation, that token for good, that faith in the Lord which I am sure nature never could have given me, which I am sure must have been from the Lord, from the effects it produced?" This is a putting on of the helmet, and as thus put on, it shields the head in the day of battle.

IV.—Now the *watchword*. The Christian sentinel does not stand upon the watch without a watchword given him by his great commander, the Lord of hosts. But what is the watchword? I call it the watchword, though it consists of several words, and yet all breathing the same language and expressing the same idea. Let us, then, listen to it, and see whether we can find it suitable for ourselves, as having reason to hope that we have been called to fight this great battle, and as such, to stand diligently upon the watch. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

i. The first portion of this watchword we may divide into two

parts; one *negative*, the other *positive*,—one what God has not done, the other what God has done. Hear, then, the first notes.

1. "God hath not appointed us to wrath." This is meant for our encouragement, to strengthen our faith and hope, and keep us sober and vigilant. How different might it have been with us. How just and righteous would God have been if his thoughts towards us had not been thoughts of peace, but of evil. And O, where might we even now have been if God had appointed us to wrath? Even now, instead of being in the house of prayer and still upon hoping, praying ground, we might have been lifting up our eyes in hell, being in torment. Thus a child of God sometimes gathers up a good hope by his being spared in life and being. He sees what a mercy it is that he is still on praying ground; that God did not cut him down, as he deserved, when he was an open foe, and daily adding to the catalogue of his sins; nor abandoned him to utter impenitence, unbelief, and carelessness. From this *longsuffering* and tender forbearance of God, hope is sometimes gathered up, that God has not appointed him to wrath.

2. But again, if God had appointed him to wrath, he feels that he would have been left unconcerned as before, in darkness as before, in death as before; he would never have known or experienced any *inclination* toward the good way; never had a sigh or cry put into his heart; that the Lord would never have convinced him of sin, brought him upon his knees, given him a place or name among the sons and daughters of the Most High, if he were altogether a vessel of wrath filling up the measure of his iniquities. Thence he gathers a good hope that he is not appointed to wrath. You will remember how the wife of Manoah encouraged him on these grounds: "If the Lord were pleased to kill us he would not have

received a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands; neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these." (Judges 13:23.)

3. So also the various interpositions of *Providence*, the various instances in which God has signally appeared for him, the many answers to prayer when under very distressing circumstances, will sometimes raise up in a Christian's breast a hope that God has not appointed him to wrath, or else he would have not been so kind to him in the mingled events of life. He looks at his past life, sees how he has been raised up time after time from beds of sickness, when others have fallen and, perhaps, died without hope. Thus he stands and marvels at the goodness of God in sparing him and removing others, and gathers up a good hope that these are marks of the Lord's favour to him.

4. He finds sometimes also his heart *broken* and *dissolved* under a sense of God's unmerited mercy, and says, "Surely, these are not marks of an alien and an enemy; surely these are not signs of one who is dead in sin, of one who is a stranger to God and godliness." Enemies to God do not want to be friends with him; foes do not long for reconciliation; lovers of the world do not seek to be lovers of God, and those that love sin do not want to walk in holiness.

5. He gathers up also a good hope through grace if he finds in himself marks and evidences of a clearer and more positive nature than those which I have just named, such as *breakings* into his soul of the goodness and mercy of God; and when he hears those evidences traced out by men of God, when he plainly sees them marked down also in the word as intimations of grace possessed, he gathers up a good hope, if no further, that the Lord has been merciful to

him, and has not appointed him to wrath.

ii. But let me now come to the *positive* portion of our watchword. God has appointed us to *obtain salvation*.

Let us see, then, how this part of the watchword encourages and consoles the Christian soldier. A view is given to him of salvation, and he sees plainly and clearly that it is a full and free salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, by his blood and righteousness, by his meritorious work upon the cross, by his blood-shedding and sacrifice there. He has a view by faith of salvation in all its fulness, freeness, suitability, and blessedness. He despairs of salvation in and by himself; he knows he is lost if he has no other righteousness but his own. He has no dependence upon the works of the law, no confidence in the flesh; but he does see a glorious salvation wrought out by the Son of God. He does view the atoning blood: he does see a righteousness wrought out by the obedience of the Son of God; and he knows there is an obtaining of this salvation as a personal, enjoyed, and felt reality when freely given by the hand of God. As, then, he stretches forth the trembling hand of his faith to lay hold of this salvation, and finds a measure of sweetness, blessedness, calm and peace, tranquility and happiness, distilling over the secret chambers of his soul as he lays hold of and embraces it, it confirms him still more in the blessed persuasion that God has not appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. He is thus strengthened with strength in his soul to press more and more after salvation, that he may have its sweets distilled more and more fully, more and more abundantly into his breast, the joys of salvation more powerfully opened up in his soul, the blessedness of salvation more clearly sealed upon his heart. He views it all in Christ, stored up there; and he puts forth the hand of faith to obtain that salvation as a

personal reality sealed upon his heart by the witnessing power of God the Holy Spirit. As, then, the power of these things is made manifest in his heart, he feels a sweet persuasion that God has not given him up nor abandoned him to sin and self, nor appointed him to wrath, but to obtain salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ. He now sees who it was that made him a child of day; who it was that brought him out of night and darkness; who it was that made him sober and watchful in prayer; who it was that gave him a breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. Thus gathering up strength and consolation in his soul from viewing these marks and tokens of a gracious God, he presses on more and more to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; and every opening view of salvation renews his strength, encourages his faith, enlarges his hope, and swells his affection, until he obtains as a precious boon in his own bosom a full, free salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

iii. But now for the second portion of the watchword—not less encouraging: who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Here is the second part of the watchword: the certainty of the death of Christ, and of our living together with him because he died and now lives for us. But, observe how tenderly the apostle speaks here. Sometimes we wake, and alas, we often sleep; sometimes we are sober, and alas, often we are unwatchful. The apostle meets this case, which seems to be so against us as sentinels and watchmen. "Well," he would say, as if speaking for the Lord, "thou hast not been so watchful as thou shouldst have been; thou hast been sleeping on thy post; thou hast not now that measure of godly sobriety which thou hadst in days past; thou hast wandered a little from thy first love. Shalt thou, then, perish? Must this be for thy destruction? Does it prove thee a

deserter, and that thou art a traitor? As a slumbering sentinel, thou deservest to die the death. But thou didst not surrender thy arms, and thou art still faithful to thy post, yet wert overcome by nodding when thou shouldst have been wakeful. Shalt thou be carried off and exposed to the murderous shot according to the articles of war? No, I will spare thee; because though thou didst deserve death, thou still art not a traitor to me. Thou wert sleeping when thou shouldst have been watchful; thou wert not so sober as thou shouldst have been; but I will not take advantage of thee, cut thee off and send thee to hell, nor adjudge thee to die the traitor's death, nor hang thee up as a deserter for an example to others. Christ died for thee, and therefore thou art spared. But let this be a lesson for the time to come. Be more sober; look more to the enemy. I will not take advantage of thy sleeping, but be thou more cautious for the future."

Thus whether we sleep or wake, we equally shall live together with him, because he died for us. Now, to live together with him, is to live in this life a life of faith, and to live in the life to come a life of enjoyment; to live whilst here below a life of grace, Christ being, our life, that we may live a life of glory and happiness above.

Thus have I shown you the Christian's character, the Christian's conduct, the Christian's weapons, and the Christian's watchword. Can I say of you, can you say of yourself, you are a Christian in character, a Christian in conduct, a Christian by your weapons, and a Christian by your watchword? Look at these things: they are the solemn truth of God; and if the Lord is pleased to seal his word with any measure of power upon your soul; if from my description this afternoon you can read your character as a Christian, your conduct as a Christian, your warfare as a Christian, and

your watchword as a Christian, make it manifest you are what you profess to be, a Christian indeed, and then you will have no cause to fear when Christ appears a second time without sin unto salvation, when he shall come to be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe.