

A Fair Fight



AFTER ALMOST TWENTY YEARS LIVING HERE, I still have not found the one best place to park my toolbox. If I leave it in the workshop, I will need it next in the barn to repair the mower or tractor. If I leave it out in the barn, I will need it next in the garage to work on the Jeep, or all the way upstairs in the house to fix a leaking faucet.

I have tried splitting up my tools, placing what I believe to be the essentials in my main toolbox, while relegating those tools deemed less essential in a secondary toolbox.

Sure enough, the next time I am anywhere with the main toolbox, I will invariably need something left behind in the second one.

No matter what system I devise, the right tools for the job are rarely where I need them next. It would seem that the only solution left is to fashion a leather belt that will hold every tool I own, and wear it at all times. As far as I can tell, this is the only way to ensure that the right tool is always in the right place when it is needed.



In Ephesians, the apostle Paul describes another toolkit—with one critical difference: this toolkit is not for repairing household items, but is to be used by us in our daily struggles against evil. The toolkit is called “the full armor of God”:

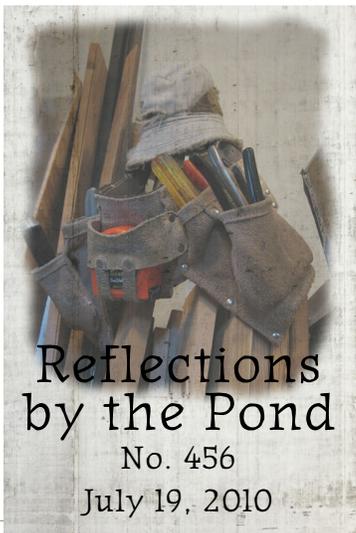
Finally, be strong in the Lord and

in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm

against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Ephesians 6:10-17

Our spiritual toolkit consists of items readily available to us—we don’t even have to run out to the hardware store to buy them. In



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fact, as Christians, these tools are *part* of us—actually grafted into us. They were included in the package of grace we received at our moment of regeneration. All we have to do is remember to use them.

God never promised any of us a rose garden. He daily hones and tests us, scouring and polishing us for His service. He sets difficult things in our path, and waits to see what we do about it. He puts us through struggles of seemingly eternal duration to teach us dependency and maturity.

But God believes in a fair fight. He never leaves us standing before the enemy without our trusty toolkit. Even Jesus had His, and He put it to good use during His trial in the wilderness. Jesus had all the tools he needed in just two items.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness.

Luke 4:1

Many years ago, when we were in Kenya and came upon a thoroughly gorged cheetah that had just finished consuming its kill, one of our traveling companions referred to the sated feline with the rounded belly as the “replete cheetah.”

The Lord Jesus was “replete” with the Holy Spirit.

The second tool Jesus had at His disposal was holy Scripture. This

he wielded not like a screwdriver, but like a two-edged sword.

God the Father was putting His only Son up against evil incarnate, the one and only Satan. The real thing. Not one of his despicable minions, but the big cheese himself. Jesus would need all the arsenal He could carry. The problem was, He didn’t have the strength to carry much of anything. After forty days without food—forty days, by the way, of constant badgering by Satan—Jesus was in a physically weakened state.



He couldn’t have swung a pair of pliers, much less a sword.

No matter. He needed nothing more than those two things He had carried from the beginning: the sustaining power of the Holy Spirit, and memorized Scripture.

Here was the timeless Son of God, who could have chosen any weapon from a limitless arsenal. As very God, surely He could have selected something a bit more flashy than quotations from an ancient parchment.

Jesus could have used myriad items from His vast toolkit, but what did He pull out? Three quotations from that old dusty tome

entitled “Deuteronomy”:

“He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.”

Deuteronomy 8:3

“You shall fear *only* the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.”

“You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah.”

Deuteronomy 6:13,16

One of the more encouraging, yet sobering aspects of this encounter between Jesus and Satan, is that Jesus does battle—and wins!—with precisely the same weapons available to us. Every believer comes with the indwelling Spirit, and just about everyone has access to God’s word and the capacity to “hide it in their heart.”

We don’t have to worry about where it was we left our toolbox. These two tools—these two weapons: the Spirit and memorized Scripture—can always be with us, no matter where we are.

