

This past baseball season was quite extraordinary, as we watched a record broken that was nearly thirty years old. Normally in this kind of “race” there is only one who can even come close, so it was incredible to have two great sluggers, Sammy Sota and Mark McGuire, pass the old record with several to spare! And the competition between the two men to see who ended up with the most home runs and the new record was an extra bonus.

There were many great moments to remember. These two great sportsmen showed that people can compete against each other and still honor each other. We saw them salute each other and embrace each other. We saw them pound the ball out of the park. We saw them signing the home run balls for posterity. And we remember that the IRS was waiting to pounce on those who were “lucky” enough to get one. I have a signed baseball here in my hand; the inscription is “to Dumplin’ from Honeylump.” But that is a story for another time. Obviously, the IRS is not interested in this one.

Mark McGuire, of course, ended up with the most home runs, and it was awesome to see him crush the ball and send it out of the park. I began to wonder about the stress that these baseballs must go through when they are clobbered in such a manner. How would it feel to be a baseball? Think of travelling at nearly 100 mph, perhaps hoping that the batter misses. But so many times they don’t, and in an incredibly short time the ball’s momentum is totally reversed. In this time the ball is greatly deformed as the tremendous force from the bat is applied to the ball. The strength of the stitches are severely tested as they struggle to hold the ball together and keep the insides from spilling out.

I’m sure that there has been a time in your life that you have felt batted around like this baseball. We also have to have very strong stitching to enable us to hold our lives together. Job mentions in Job 10:11 that God has knit us together with bones and sinews, but spiritually we need much more than that. Fortunately, we are provided with armor, which Paul in Ephesians 6 calls “the full armor of God.” The image of the belt and the breastplate, which must be buckled or laced up tight around us, are particular reminders of God’s protective power. In other places the King James Bible refers to the act of “girding up the loins,” which again is refers to the act of lacing up tightly so that we are ready for battle and the shock of impact. In 1 Peter 1:13 we find, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind,” indicating the need to be in control of our mind so that our faith does not waver. We all need very strong, very tight stitching, which is provided to us by the Spirit of God.

Remember that the devil stands in the batter’s box looking for you to be a fast ball straight down the center of the plate. He won’t miss every time, so we must have God’s strength to hold us together against his power. And he has promised to comfort us in every affliction.

*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.* 1 Corinthians 10:13