

ARMOR OF GOD

WEDNESDAY NIGHTS WITH PASTOR JACK

Knowing our Adversary and the Armor of God (Ephesians 6:14a) Having Girded your Waist with Truth

October 14th, 2015

Introduction

- A. Paul's letter to the Ephesians unfolds our glorious place in Christ as Paul shows us our position in Him (Eph.1:7,11,17-19; 2:6-7; 3:19). From our sitting in Christ (ch.1-3) to our walking with Him (ch.4-6), Paul finally turns to our need to be able to stand in Him as we face the enemy of our souls, the last topic of this important letter.
- B. It is the adversary that we have spent the last 3 weeks studying (Eph.6:10-13). We have looked at everything from his creation and fall, to his methods of operations against both the world that is lost and the saints that know God.
- C. So our sitting in Christ, a positional truth, and our walking with Him, a practical reality, is opposed by the warfare that seeks to keep us from standing in Christ. Thus the armor God provides is found here (Eph.6:14-18) and that will be our study for the next several weeks.
- D. Paul begins this section leading up to the armor (Eph.6:10-13) with some important injunctions:
 - 1. God must be our strength and we must look to Him alone (10).
 - 2. We are obligated to put on this armor God provides if we hope to stand firm against the wiles of the devil (11,13).
 - 3. Our battle is not with man or with a system but with fallen angels in powerful places (12). This battle is serious, strenuous as the word wrestle suggests, and it is daily (13).
 - 4. Even when fully equipped, constant prayer is necessary if we are to walk worthy of our calling (18).

The Armor of God

- A. The very fact that armor is available shows the danger of the battle. Yet God who loves us knows just what we need.
- B. We need to be strong in Him *before* seeking to use this armor He provides. It is His armor, provided by God, and we must know Him first, and only then can we stand in the strength and protection this armor provides (10,11).
- C. To wear this armor is to appropriate God's provisions by faith (Jn.15:5)(Php.4:13). It is an armor that will need to be worn daily in this world (1Co.10:12). This is especially true after great victories when our guard can be let down. Look at the attack on Jesus (Mt.3-4), or the stumble of David (2Sa.24), or Paul's thorn in the flesh and its purpose (2Co.12).
- D. Everything we need God has provided (2Pe.1:3) and it is vital we wear each piece, the whole armor (11). Some folks emphasize one piece over another, strong in one area yet weak in another. We need it all!
- E. So let's dress a soldier in the armor God has given, looking both at the external usage of the pieces and then the spiritual application we learn from it.

Girded with Truth

- A. The armor consists of 6 pieces which fall into two categories. The first category includes those things always worn, introduced by the word having. The second category of items are put on as needed, introduced by the word taking.
- B. This first item is one always worn, the girdle or belt.
- C. The function of the belt was to provide mobility and freedom when needed for running or fighting, as the long tunic often worn was cinched up through the belt freeing the legs and arms.

- D. We read of it at the first Passover (Ex.12:11) and Jesus mentions it in the context of the disciples being ready for Him when He comes again (Lk.12:35-37). The belt that girds us prepares us to move, makes us and keeps us ready. Spiritually, it is truth that girds the saint.

Truth Subjectively Applied

- A. When the word truth is used subjectively, it speaks of truthfulness or sincerity of commitment. In our warfare with the enemy, we are made ready by a sincere commitment to Jesus Christ (Heb.12:1-2).
- B. Despite all cost, we must have a heart and love for the Lord (2Ti.2:3-4). It was the “all in” heart that kept John, Paul, Peter, Moses, David, and many others from falling due to difficulty or hardship. Remember David buying the threshing floor (2Sa.24:24) and the widow in her giving (Mk.12:43-44).
- C. With this piece of armor comes a dedication to win (1Co.9:24-25). In comparison to the athletes of our day who give it all to be the best, what are we doing in terms of sincere diligence to be sure we will find victory in Christ?
- D. A lethargic regiment of spiritual living won't do (Mt.13:20-22). Instead we are called to be living sacrifices (Rom.12:1-2), fully committed, girded with truthfulness of commitment. We should be satisfied with nothing less than excellence (Php.1:9-11) and set large goals for we serve a large God (Act.2:17).

Truth Objectively Applied

- A. When the word truth is used objectively, it speaks of the final authority of the Word of God. And when used in that context, it speaks about having our minds and hearts readied with a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the authority of the Word of God.
- B. Mastered by the truth of God's Word, my responses and actions are governed and I am ready to move forward and stand in battle (1Co.3:18)(1Co.1:21).

Conclusion

- A. Next week we will focus on the breastplate of righteousness.

All right. Shall we open our Bibles this evening to Ephesians 6:10? And you won't have to be bouncing around much tonight.

Introduction

A. Our glorious place in Christ - sitting, walking and standing

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul focuses on the great truths of being in Christ. It's one of those good doctrinal books that you can spend an awful lot of time in. But he talks to us about what it means to be a believer, to belong to the Lord, to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

And the book outlines itself pretty easily. In the first three chapters, Paul looks at our position or our place that we have been given as we sit in the Lord. In fact, back in chapter 1:3, it says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." And so, from that point forward - through the first three chapters - it is all about the sitting or the place that we hold as believers, finding our lives in Christ. And you will find, especially as you go through chapter 1, a lot of times these words, "in Him," and then there'll be an explanation of what you have in Him; whether it's in verse 7, "in Him we have redemption," or in verse 4, "we have been chosen in Him before the foundation of the world," or in verse 11 of chapter 1, "in Him we have obtained an inheritance." You can just go through the chapters, and it's all about being "in Him," as you sit, and this is just something you're given, you have in Christ.

In chapter 4, Paul then turns the corner. He said, "Therefore walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called." So, three chapters of here's what you have - you can just sit in Christ and have all of these things, and now, chapter 4, begin to walk them out. So he says in chapter 4:1, "We beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all lowliness and gentleness and longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." And chapter 4 and chapter 5 and half of chapter 6 talk about our walk, what you have as you sit in Christ and then, as you begin to walk with Him, the things that the Lord wants to do in your life. So you'll read "put on the new man, be overflowed with the Spirit, be a godly wife and a godly husband, godly kids, good employer." Our position, first three chapters, translates into our living in chapters 4, 5 and part of chapter 6.

But what we are endeavoring to look at in the next seven weeks with this armor of God is Paul will finish his letter by saying even though you have in Christ many things - you sit in Him, and even though he encourages you to walk with Him, knowing all that you have, it's not easy. There's an enemy, there's a battle, there's a difficulty, there's an opponent. And so, if we realize our position in Christ and then seek to walk with Him, we should still know it's going to be difficult. The enemy wants to destroy us in every way possible. We are God's children, but we

also need to be God's soldiers. And so there is this issue of winning the battle with the enemy. So behind every persecution, behind every attack, behind all resistance and difficulty and temptation, sits a domain of evil spirits. It is the devil's will to destroy everything that God has given you to keep you from everything God has made available to you, and it is his will to control the battlefield, to subject you to all kinds of opposition, so that you retreat, you balk, you step away, you don't want to serve the Lord.

B. We studied the adversary for three weeks

We spent three weeks looking at our adversary and learned he's a strong, clever, subtle kind of enemy, isn't he? And if we ever hope to realize the full potential of what our position in Christ is in our daily life, we have to know there's a battle so that we can clearly distinguish who our fight is with.

C. Our sitting in Christ and walking in Him are opposed by spiritual warfare

And so Paul's solution in chapter 6, towards the end here, is to say to us - if we live as close as we can to Jesus every day, when the pressure of these attacks falls upon us, we will instinctively reach for what we are most comfortable with. When the pressure is on, where your real hope lies shows. And that's really what his intention is in speaking to us about doing that. We'll reach for what is familiar to us, in which we have the most confidence.

You remember when David met up with Goliath, there in 1 Samuel 17. Saul instinctively reached for his armor because he figured - well, first of all, Saul wasn't going out to fight at all, but if David was going, the least he could do was take armor. David instinctively reached for his trusty slingshot, and most importantly, he said, "I'm going to go out and fight this guy in the name of the LORD, my God." He immediately reached for what his trust and what his hope was. "Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD's, and He will give you into our hands," 1 Samuel 17:47. That was David's confidence.

If you reach instinctively for something other than what God has provided, you're going to have an extremely difficult time with battling the enemy because it's awfully hard to build your house in a storm. You need the firm foundation, right?

D. Ephesians 6:10-13 contains some important injunctions

1. And that's exactly what Paul begins this section with - beginning here in verse 10 where he says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." Or, in other words, He has to be your strength. For this armor to work, He has to be your strength. He has to be your power. You're strong in the Lord. "Put on" is the Greek word "*enduno*." It means envelop yourself in or dress yourself in.

2. And notice what it says, "Put on the whole armor of God," verse 11, "that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." So we are called to know where we sit in Christ, we are

called to walk worthy of His calling, we are made aware of the enemy we face, and then God gives us armor that requires only that we totally rely upon the Lord for it to work. This armor will not work unless your relationship with God is strong. So you sit, you walk, and now, the last part, you stand. The book of Ephesians - three words - sit, walk, stand. That's really what God gives to us. And the result is in verse 11, "that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." Or in verse 13, "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand." Nowhere does it say attack. It just says stand. Stand fast. Stand firm against the wiles, the methods of attack, of the enemy - many of which we've examined the previous three weeks. We looked at his creation, his fall, his tactics, his strategy against the world, against the church.

3. But notice from verse 12 that our battle is not with men, right? Or not with a system. "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Look at all the "against" you find in this verse. But it is demonic powers, and we have to see that the battle is strenuous because the word "wrestle" is strenuous. It is the word for wrestle. You know, like you take somebody to the ground or they take you out. We have to recognize that we have a real enemy, and he's spiritual. Your parents are not your enemy. Your spouse is not your enemy. Your kids are not your enemy. Or the neighbors or the government or rules or laws or Democrats or Republicans or terrorists. They're really not the enemy. Satan's the enemy, isn't he? Rulers in high places. And yet, to have the victory we need, we are told twice (in verse 11 and verse 13) to take up the whole armor of God. Then you're able to stand, to withstand, and having done all to stand. I guess you should get that, right? We're supposed to stand.

Notice it says "in the evil day," and just by the use of the words, "the evil day" is pretty much every day. It's every day where the enemy comes. "In the world, you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). So, when the dust settles, and the smoke clears, and the Lord comes for you, you're still standing. That's what He wants.

4. At the end of what we're going to be studying over the next seven weeks, verse 18 ends with these words, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints." So, even when fully equipped, we need to do a lot of praying. We need to be checking in with headquarters every day. We need to "be strong in the Lord," verse 10, "and in the power of His might." So no wonder we are encouraged in the Word to do a lot of prayer, one for another.

The Armor of God

So tonight we begin the armor of God. Having three weeks looked at our enemy, tonight we begin to look at the armor; and we're going to take one piece of armor every week so that we will thoroughly exhaust it for us. I hope you'll plan to be with us. Tonight, an overview of the armor just to kind of get us started, and we'll look at the first piece of armor, and it's here in verse 14. Look at verse 13, "that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done

all to stand. Stand therefore," (present tense) "having girded your waist with truth." That's going to be our first piece of armor today - "having girded your waist with truth."

A. The availability of the armor shows the danger of the battle

Now just something about the armor of God - the very fact that armor is needed, and the very fact it is available, should tell you that the battle is real and that it's fairly dangerous. I remember playing baseball, and I ended up pitching and playing first base, but they wanted me to catch, and that wasn't fun for me at all. Put on the mask, the chest protector, the mouthpiece, the eyewear, the cup. Yikes! This was not glorious. I go out with the police department quite often, and they issue you this bulletproof vest, and the first time you put it on, you go, "Why do I need this?" Exactly. But the very fact that you would need it would suggest to you that maybe sometimes that'd come in real handy, and it's not as simple as things look. It's the same thing in this battle. There's a real battle! And we should take it seriously. God knows full well what we need, so He's provided everything you need to win. But I want you to notice from these verses, and as we go through them, that you have a part to play in the war. If it was all done for you by the Lord, then you just have to sit back and do nothing. You wouldn't need armor. You'd need a lounge chair and a glass of iced tea. "Thank You, Lord. That was cool." But that's not the way it works.

B. We need to be strong in Him before seeking to use the armor He provides

We are encouraged to take the initiative. Verse 11 - take the full armor of God. Here, verse 13, the same thing - you pick up the armor and put it on. And I want you to notice that verse 10 precedes verse 11. Isn't that quite insightful? "Put on the whole armor of God." But verse 10 says, "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." God enables this armor to be useful to you. A weakling in a suit of armor is not helped by it at all. You remember David tried Saul's armor. It was really big. David was really little. The helmet went down to here, and he couldn't see out. And he couldn't pick up the sword. And he tipped over just trying to lean. He wasn't doing a good job of it. And he said, "I can't use these. I've never even tried to work with these. This is not good at all. But I'll trust the LORD. He's been real good with this slingshot. I am pretty good at throwing that rock." So, God enables us. Even as God clothes us, it is His armor we must wear. He is our strength, right?

C. To wear this armor is to appropriate God's provisions by faith

Now, in wearing the armor, we are called upon by the Lord to appropriate by faith what He has promised to do which is why that relationship with God has to be good and has to be strong. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit. Without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5) So we have to keep that in mind. Paul said to the Philippians, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) But he didn't say, "I can do all things." He said "in Christ, I can do all things." So it's the strength of the armor given that provides our protection that allows us to be able to stand.

As long as we are in this world, we need to be alert of our enemy. He's subtle, and if you become complacent, you'll be dead in the water, spiritually. I think it was Paul who wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 10:12, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall." Stand therefore, but don't think you stand. You've got to rely on the Lord because every day you need His help. You get cocky in this battle, you're going to find out real quickly that you don't have much strength on your own. The minute you think that you can go alone without the armor, you're headed for a great fall.

From the Scriptures, it does appear that it is often after great spiritual victory that we are in the greatest danger of falling; that the time you win is about the time you really need to put the armor on more than any other time. Jesus, after His baptism - the Father's declaration of His Son - we find Him, before His public ministry began, immediately being driven into the wilderness by the enemy. And for nearly six weeks, tempted and tried there in the wilderness (through Matthew chapters 3 & 4) as the enemy came in like a flood. David was tempted to number the people after a series of tremendous spiritual victories. In fact, David had not lost a battle (when you get to 2 Samuel 24), and it says that Satan stood next to him and said, "Number the people," and David tried. Remember? And Joab, the not-very-godly head of his army, tried to dissuade him from doing so. But the temptation was most effective on David's life when he had been doing really good. He'd been doing great. In fact, the whole thing with Bathsheba came at a time when David had always gone to battle, and this year he just decided he'd stay home because he'd seen it all and done it all. And, in his inability to continue to walk with the Lord by faith, he finds himself overtaken by sin. Satan has that plan. Paul was taken to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12), and he saw great things that he said would be a crime to even begin to put into words. And the minute that trip took place, he came back, and a messenger from Satan was sent to him to buffet him lest he would be exalted above measure. At times of great victory comes the enemy to try to discourage and to take from us.

D. God has provided everything we need - it is vital to wear each piece

So, notice it is the armor of God, and every time we read it, it isn't just "take up your armor," it's "take up the armor of God." This is made by the Lord for you to wear. You're not left to your own resources. Everything you need, God has provided, and that's important to know; that you don't, "I don't know if I can make it, I can be strong." Yeah, you can't. But He can. "I don't know if I can do it." No, you can't. But He can. "I don't know if I can survive." Oh, no, you can't. But He can! It takes all the pressure off of you. So, we put on His armor. You don't want to be caught in a gunfight with a peashooter thing, you know? God has provided the best in armor. It's exactly what you need.

I remember when I was playing baseball that they'd always make you wear a helmet at batting practice. But you know, kids are smart. "Dad, I can get out of the way of the ball. It's not going to hurt me." Until you see that first kid get nailed in the head, and, "All right. I'll put the helmet on, I guess."

Don't think you can handle Satan by yourself. "I'm smart. I've been saved a long time. I've insight. I've got experience. I can handle it." Wrong! Satan can handle you without God's help.

I ride a motorcycle, but I'd never ride one without a helmet. And maybe that won't be enough, but at least it'll be a brain catcher. I'm not sure. But you can't go out driving without a seatbelt. You have the gift of being a dummy at that point, don't you? That's not wise. So don't go out in your spiritual life - knowing you have an enemy that's more powerful than you - and not take advantage of what God has made available. We need the armor of God. We need the whole armor of God. If you just wear the helmet, you forget the shoes, you'll get shot in the foot. The enemy'll go, "Yeah, he's got a helmet on, but look at those feet!" Bingo. And down goes your walk. The whole armor....in Christ. We need everything that God has.

When Paul was leaving Ephesus, and he thought he'd never really go back to see the Ephesians again - he knew that in Jerusalem he was going to be arrested, and he knew what was waiting for him - he said to the elders that he had gathered on his way to Jerusalem (besides a lot of other things), "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). One thing he could rest in was he hadn't left anything out. He'd given these guys everything they needed to go on. And that's what God wants for you and me. Spiritually we need to protect our brains, our minds, and the helmet of salvation (when we get to it) will be all about your thought life. You need to protect your heart, which is what the breastplate of righteousness covers. It's the whole armor of God. Now, I'll tell you what. Some people are tremendously overdone in one area to the neglect of the others. You probably know Christians who are really big on protecting their minds. They're all about theology and error finding and heresy testing, and they've got, "Oh, that's not what the original says!" They're heresy hunting, right? They just go nuts over the least thing. It doesn't make any difference. "That's not a comma there!" "Okay, dude. It's a hyphen." "No, no!!!!!" We get letters like that sometimes. And then they neglect the heart. There's no love, there's no dedication, there's no commitment, there's no loyalty. But man, their heads are filled with information. They are right all the time - except they are wrong in the way they come around. You need the whole armor.

E. The armor God has given - the external usage of the pieces and their spiritual application

Paul uses what inevitably was a Roman soldier that he was chained to while he was in Rome, and he was imprisoned. So he finds himself staring at a guy every day that was chained to him, day in and day out; and he looks at the Roman soldier and the way he's dressed and everything he's got on, and Paul starts to put together, "Man, that's kind of what we, as Christians, have. We have the armor to stand and serve the Lord." He began to take every piece of armor, and he used it in the context of a soldier, but then he gave it all spiritual meanings and spiritual portraits and spiritual applications. And so, in the next several weeks as we look at each one of these, we can look at what was used in the armor in terms of what a soldier would wear it for but also what Paul means for us so that we might be fully dressed and have God's armor on.

Girded with Truth

A. The armor consists of six pieces which fall into two categories

We said whole armor of God, and there are six pieces of armor here, and prayer (at the end) which isn't technically a piece of the armor, but it is indeed part of the battle. So we have

included it. But of the six pieces of armor that are listed here, they can easily be divided into two groups of three. The first group is that which is affixed to your body all the time - this girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness and the shoes or the sandals on your feet. They are the first three that are mentioned, there in verses 14 and 15, and those pieces are all modified in our text by the word "having." So notice in verse 14, "Stand therefore having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace." These are three items that a Roman soldier would never take off. These were just a part of your daily life. They were with you all of the time. The other three, which are listed in verses 16 and 17, are modified by the word "taking," and these were parts of their armor that they would take up as they needed them. So the shield, the helmet and the sword of the Spirit (that we read about) would have to be taken up. Notice verse 16, "above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." So the girdle, which we're looking at tonight, was always with you. It's part of the "having." You've got the "having," and you've got the "taking." Right? The "having," you have on; the "taking," you take up as needed. That's the point. Two groups of three.

B. The girdle or belt is always worn

And the girdle was one of those pieces of armor that was always with you. So, verse 14, "Stand therefore having girded your waist with truth." The girdle, for a Roman soldier, was a belt, or sometimes a sash but usually a belt, worn around the individual, and it is really worn for the function that it provided. Most men - and literally every soldier, at least in the Roman army - wore very loose-flowing, long, one-piece tunics. For one reason, it was very hot. It provided lots of cooling, if you will. They'd hang down to the knees. They had holes for the head and holes for the arms. It was comfortable. It provided coverage. It could be warm at night and cool and breezy during the day. It was perfect for that kind of environment. But this girdle was worn loosely around your waist, and it was really only put into use when you wanted to become active. So if, as a soldier, you needed to run into battle, or maybe you got engaged in a sword fight, all of that bulk of bouncing around would have to be dealt with; and this girdle or this belt (might be easier to remember) would be tied around your waist, and you would pull your tunic through it so that you would get rid of all of the excess. You'd free your legs to run. You'd free your arms to fight.

C. The girdle/belt provided mobility and freedom for running/fighting

And the girdle would be one that would free you to move and be active when necessary. You would be ready to go at a moment's notice, if you will. So you wouldn't be hampered by your arms swinging the sword. Your legs wouldn't be hampered. It was always with you. It was utilized in anticipation of action or mobility.

D. The belt during the first Passover and as mentioned by Jesus

You remember what the Lord said to the children of Israel on that first Passover? They needed to be ready to go, didn't they? "This is the day. This is the night. This is your delivery day." And in Exodus 12:11, the Lord talking about the Passover Feast, said, "You shall eat it: with a belt on your waist." That's exactly the same application that's used here. You should be ready to go when God says, "Move." You should get those things on, and we're ready for action immediately. Eat, ready to move.

Jesus used the same terms in giving His apostles some encouraging words about living for Him and waiting for Him to return; and in speaking to them about the readiness of His coming, He said in Luke 12:35, "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning." Be filled with the Spirit, and be ready to go. In other words, when the Lord comes knocking, we've got to go. Verse 36, "And you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them." Same usage of the terms. He will be prepared. But His word to the apostles was - be ready when the Lord comes. That's what this girdle or belt is all about. So, in our warfare we must always be prepared and ready to move at a moment's notice.

Truth Subjectively Applied

A. Subjectively, the word "truth" speaks of truthfulness or sincerity of commitment

Spiritually applied, we are given some further insights because this isn't a girdle to fight. This is a girdle, notice in verse 14, "girding your waist with truth." With truth. Now, whenever this word "truth" is used in the Bible, it always has two applications, and I'll give you both of them; and they both apply. There is an objective truth, and there is a subjective truth. And it just depends on the context in which it is given to us as to which one the Lord is speaking about. Since we can't determine that here, we'll just give you the two definitions. From a subjective standpoint, the word means truthfulness or sincerity in a commitment, and it is always used in the same way. In our warfare with the enemy, we'd better always be ready, and we can be ready by having a sincere commitment of our lives to Christ. You remember verse 10? Don't forget verse 10. "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might." First piece of armor - you've got to be ready to move, and you can be ready by having a sincere commitment of your life to Jesus.

So, when Paul wrote to the Hebrews in chapter 12 - after spending a whole chapter talking about faith and how it delivered some, and some "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off," but these "all died in faith" - to a Hebrew church that is under tremendous persecution and is contemplating going back to their Judaistic roots because it was safe for them where they were, Paul spends nine and a half chapters convincing them that the Jewish ways were just a finger to point to Jesus. How can you go back when you've arrived at where it was pointed? But he said in Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking

unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." So, hey, look saints. Commit yourself to Jesus. Give Him the full commitment of your life. Can you imagine running a race in combat boots and an overcoat? You don't do well, right? You're better off running the race with being ready to go, having been trained. So, this is what spiritual warfare is like for someone not sincerely committed to Jesus - like running a race in combat boots. Okay. Put on the whole armor of God. How? Well, gird yourself with truth. Be ready to move - that's what the girdle is - and do so with truth.

B. Despite the cost, we must have a heart and a love for the Lord

The word "truthfulness," in the subjective sense, means that we have to have a heart and a love for the Lord despite the cost. When Paul wrote his last letter to Timothy, in 2 Timothy 2:3, he said, "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier." So that's, I think, what Paul is saying here to us as well - that this truthful, sincere commitment will keep us solid when persecution from the enemy seeks to sideline us. Think about Stephen. He hung in there till the end, didn't he? Even when they were stoning him, "God, don't put this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60). John, old guy, exiled to Patmos on the island, made it through. Peter, crucified upside down, but he didn't give up on his belief in Christ. Paul did the same thing. So must we. Sometimes there's a cost to pay, but that's the sacrifice that we make. If you have a real commitment to Jesus, you're going to be able to stand in the battle. If you have a commitment to Christ like this, there're a lot of things that can take you out. "I was going to walk with the Lord until that happened...I was all in with Jesus until He let that happen in my life." And somehow my commitment is only as long as my willingness to put up with stuff. But if you have a sincere commitment to Him - the truthfulness, the diligence that says, "I'm all in, Lord" - then you're in a place to begin to stand in the battles because it doesn't matter what the enemy throws; you're not leaving. "Where can I go from your presence?" wrote David in Psalm 139:7. "Though He slay me, yet I will trust Him," wrote Job (13:15). There's no way to give up if you're all in. But if you're not all in, the enemy will find that place that'll get you all out. And we see it happen to people, unfortunately, sometimes.

Remember when David sinned by some of the dumb things he did there in 2 Samuel 24 - the numbering of the folks and all? And God brought a plague, and people began to die, and he was finally told that he needed to buy a threshing floor and build an altar and offer it to the Lord in the hopes that God would stay the plague. And he went to Araunah the Jebusite (called Ornan the Jebusite in 1 Chronicles 21) who owned a property, and he said, "I'd like to buy it," and Araunah said, "Man, if everybody's dying, just take it. Just make this stop!" And David said, "I can't offer God something which costs me nothing." He was all about the commitment to the Lord, and God honored it. Or that widow that Jesus pointed out, there in Mark 12, who brought her two pennies, really. Right? It was not much in terms of adding it up, but the Lord said, "She out of her poverty has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury." Her whole livelihood is the way that He describes it there in Mark 12. "She's given everything she has." If you have two coins in your hand, it seems to me you could put one in; that'd be like 50%.

She just went, "Here, Lord, it's all yours." We might, economically, go, "That's a dumb move, lady!" But Jesus didn't feel that way about her because it was that commitment, right? That commitment.

We will do a lot of things for what we like. We will sacrifice sleep (well some of you will) to go fishing early. I won't, but you might. You'll spend money to go out to dinner at your favorite place or a vacation just for fun. That's good. What about Jesus and His kingdom? Our first step is being ready with sincerity. We've got to be all in. There're a lot of people who want victory without commitment. You know that? They want God's blessings without a dedication to Him. That's not a girdle that's going to hold you up in terms of battle. And I think because we have that mindset, it's why these phony commercials "Lose 50 pounds in 50 days without dieting" ads appeal to people. Just take a little pill, you lose 50 pounds in three days. You'll be great. You'll look great by the weekend. "I'll buy me one of them. Anything quick that doesn't cost me anything and I get what I want." That's why so many people, I think, play the lottery. Good luck with winning that, but, "If I could win....just one time!"

C. With this piece of armor comes a dedication to win

In spiritual battles, we must begin by making a commitment to live for Jesus in sincerity, and that commitment is symbolized here in the Roman armor by putting on this belt that's ready for action, that's committed to the battle, that wants to win. I want to win! Right? We have to have a desire to win. What did Paul say in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25? He said, "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize?" And so he says this, "Run in such a way that you may obtain it." That makes sense. And then he says, "And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown," something that doesn't last; you are committed to win "but we for an imperishable crown." So Paul said, "Run. Run to win." It's almost a sarcastic statement. They run for this little wreath. They put it on your head. "Oh, you are something special." (clapping) And he said, "You're running for eternity! You've got much more reason to really commit yourself to win."

Have you ever watched when they run these little stories about Olympic athletes and how much they train, how many sacrifices they make, how many hours they put in, how parents drive them back and forth. "We all moved to the training grounds, and this has been their will since they were 3" (which leads me to believe it was their parents' will at 3). But in any event, they're at it 400 hours a day, and they watch what they eat, they get lots of sleep, they can be the fastest, the strongest and the best in the hopes that one day it'll translate to millions of dollars for them in this life. But then that's like a little wreath, isn't it? And then you get on the Cheerios box and then on Esquire magazine in a dress. It doesn't work. Sorry.

So the point is, what kind of effort are we putting in to win the battle that God has put us in? What are we willing to pay? How much is too much? Are we resisting sin with all that we have? Praying with fervor? Sharing the Word? Ministering in the body? Are we regularly in church? Are we obedient to His Word? Are we relying on His help? Do we have the girdle on of a full commitment to Christ? You want to win the battles? Do that first. Do that first.

D. A lethargic regimen of spiritual living won't do

You can't expect to win with a lethargic training regimen. "I'm going to run the marathon." But you're eating hamburgers at McDonald's every day. "I know, but I'm praying God'll bless me on that day." (Laughing) Doesn't work. I had a sentence written in my notes from years ago, and I don't know where I got it - I'm sure it didn't come from me - but it said, "Only the primary desire of your heart will be assured of being fulfilled because it will dominate everything else." I think that's true. How ready are we to fight if measured in terms of sincere commitment to Christ? Do you have a goal to be more committed, or are you easily moved? I always think about that seed that falls on stony ground. It says (Matthew 13:20-21), "it hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;" (Yahoo! I'm a Christian!) "yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution" (or hardship) "arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles." He goes away. "Nah, I can't do this." Not very committed.

Can't run a mile? Try running an eighth of a mile. I know you can run to the bathroom. "I should've gone hours ago." It's like that in walking with Jesus. In the battle with the enemy, our first piece of armor is the girdle of truth; sincerity of devotion. Wrap that around yourself. It'll make you ready to go whatever comes your way. Paul said to the Romans in chapter 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Same line. Truthful commitment, sincere commitment to Christ. Living sacrifice - that's fully committed. Mind being renewed, decisions made with an eye on eternity, goals in line with God's will for my life. That's the girdle of truth. I won't be satisfied with anything less than excellence. Right? When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was real proud of them. That was a pretty good church. He didn't spend much time with them, three weeks I think, and so he left them with God's Word, and, man, did the church grow and blossom. And when he finally wrote them a letter several months later, he said, "This I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11). He was real happy with them. He said, "I'm just praying for more love and more power and more life to be found in you." That's the idea, right? Don't settle for less. Don't settle for mediocre. Set large goals. You serve a large God. I've readied myself for the battle with a belt of truthful dedication to the Lord. So that's the subjective definition of the word "truth."

Truth Objectively Applied

A. Objectively, the word "truth" speaks of the final authority of God's Word

From an objective standpoint, whenever the word "truth" is used objectively, it is always a word that uses the Scriptures as the final reference point for truth. So objectively, whenever you read the word "truth," it speaks about God's Word being the final word. Whenever it is used

subjectively, it speaks of a sincerity of commitment to the things of God. So, gird yourself with a truthful commitment to the Lord, and also gird yourself for the battle by having a clear understanding of God's Word; or having confidence that His Word means what it says. You will always stand fast and stand and withstand the attacks of the enemy when you stand upon God's Word as being the final word for you. So, we read there in Peter, where it says, "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

B. We are to be mastered by the truth of God's Word

We are girded in truth objectively when, in our thinking, we are mastered by the Word of God. The enemy comes to accuse, but if you have a deeply-settled conviction about the Scriptures, you're not easily moved. There're a lot of false teachers. You know that, right? And if you hear it, and you go, "Yeah, that's not in the Bible," you're not easily misled. You're governed by the Scriptures. So people can't fool you, they can't mislead you. You just believe God. You're ready for the battle. Bring it on, man! I have all these people that come to me and go, "Hey, I want to minister to the Mormons. Which book should I read?" I say, "Read the Bible." "Yeah, but I don't know anything about Mormons." "It doesn't make any difference. Know the Bible. Everything else is clear. Turn the light on, man. You can see anything in the dark." People say, "I'm going to read the Book of Mormon for the next year." "Yeah, okay. Great. Do you break all the lights in your neighborhood or just in your own home?" Why turn off the light? Just read the Bible! Get to know the Lord's Word. You'll be much better prepared.

So, when the enemy comes along to pervert the truth, if we're ready with our minds stuck in the Scriptures, we have a heart to learn, we're not moved by the externals, our feelings don't really drive us away, our traditions or even our worldly reasoning don't upset God's Word. For if He says it, that settles it. I'm girded. I'm ready to move. Right? First piece of the armor. I need to gird my waist, always ready to action, ready to move forward, with a sincere commitment and with a complete confidence in God's Word. That'll keep you, won't it? But it'll only keep you if you've made, verse 10, that commitment to Christ that you're supposed to make so that you might be strong in the Lord.

How often does God's Word get set aside when people get in trouble? And they'll come in for counseling, and you'll tell them what the Scriptures say, or sometimes they're wise to you, and they know you're going to tell them that, so they'll come in and they'll say, "Look, I know you want to talk to me about the Bible, but this is a real problem." (Laughing) We've had people say that! "Don't preach to me, man. I'm in trouble here." "All right. So, in the Bible" and they get really mad. Or you'll tell them what the Bible says, and then they'll go home, and they'll call back in and ask to see somebody else. "Yeah, I saw him last time. I don't want to see him anymore." And we don't let them do that because we know what that's all about; then they can go through the whole staff, I guess. So when the enemy comes in, so often people neglect God's Word, and the thoughts of men begin to take place.

For us believers, His Word is the sole authority for life, isn't it? I mean, that's all that we know. For every matter of faith and practice, we've got to go back to the Scriptures. We're

girded with the truth. It keeps us and frees us to run the race and to fight the battle. So are we girded in the truth? Do you trust God's Word as the final word? Do you learn it? Are you memorizing it? Do you know where it is? Are you good with it? We'll get to the sword of the Spirit here in a month and a half or so, and it's the only offensive weapon that we have - the Scriptures. It's the one that you can fight back with. Everything else is defensive. The only thing that you're not given to cover yourself is something on your back. You turn and run, you get nailed, man. You can't turn and run. You've got to face the enemy and go through it.

So if we lean towards human speculation or human reasoning - unfortunately Christians are not all that well-educated in the Scriptures so often. They'll quote stuff that isn't in the Bible. They'll tell you stuff that they thought was in there. They have no clue. Paul said to the Corinthians, "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise" (1 Corinthians 3:18). So I think you just have to know God's Word. You should know it better this year than last year, and if the Lord tarries, next year than this year. Right? Maybe I'm singing to the choir. You guys are here in the middle of the week, and I wish the whole church was. But we don't have to have three services on Wednesday nights; just on Sunday mornings. And that should tell you something, and it's not a good something; it's a sad something. And we'll give half of them a break because they've got to work, and they're asleep, and they're sick, they can't make it. Great. But what's the other half doing? I don't know. But I pray for them every day because man, without the girdle of truth, you're going to lose a lot of battles. You're going to be bought into stuff, people are going to tell you junk, and oh my. I'm forever watching people go ballistic on politics. And I have no concern about that whatsoever. We pray, we vote, we get involved locally, but when Jesus comes, we'll have a good system. Until then, it'll just be the next corrupt guy to lead us astray. I just know this. Like in the book of Judges - if you can get the people praying, God'll send you good leaders. And if the church doesn't pray - it doesn't say anything about picketing or yelling or screaming - we may very well be getting what we deserve rather than what God would have us to have. And if He can bring us to our knees to get us to look up, I guess that's a good thing.

So, we need to be wrapped in truthful commitment and the confidence in God's Word. And it'll allow us to move and not be knocked over because, remember, we read here: having done all, we get to stand; stand therefore having this around your waist - the truthfulness of commitment and the truth of God's Word. So the first piece of armor, without which we will not be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, is this belt of truth. It'll prepare us for the enemy. It'll leave us unhindered by the lies of the enemy. Full-hearted devotion and a heart for the Lord - you've got to have that. If you're sort of in - you can take Him or leave Him, and it doesn't really matter to you - you're a sitting duck. I guarantee you, you'll be chopped in pieces before you ever get up off the chair. If you have a desire to win, you're a living sacrifice, you want to grow towards excellence, and you love God's Word, and you're learning more of it and standing fast upon it, you'll be in good shape. You won't be easily moved, right? Oh, the battle will still be there. "God doesn't love you." "Oh, no. He loves me." "No. I talked to Him earlier today. He doesn't love you. He loves everyone else but you." "Well, that's a lie. He knows me better than you do, and you're the devil, and you lie all the time, and I ain't buying into that." "Well, and I'm useless." "Well, yeah, you're useless. But God is choosing to make you useful." I mean,

you'll see yourself as you should be, and that's a good thing. So here's the first piece of armor. Hope you're all running around this week with a belt on, okay? Ready for the battle.

Conclusion

Next week, we will look at the breastplate of righteousness. I can't wait to see what that's going to do for our spiritual wellbeing. I'll wait with you to figure out what that means.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson

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