

The Warrior, the armor – part #1

Ephesians 6:10-18 ESV

(10) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

(11) Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

(12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

(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 firm.

(14) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

(15) And, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

(16) In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;

(17) And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

(18) Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,

Introduction

We come now to the next stage of looking at the whole issue of Spiritual warfare.

We have been diligently progressing through Paul's exhortation to the Christian Warrior.

We have looked at the "Banner of the Christian Warrior" – "Christ Alone"

And last week we looked at "The Call to Arms".

Prior to that we have discussed the nature of our enemy.

The nature of our warfare

The myths and superstitions that are prevalent in the modern church, because people deal with these passages not from a doctrinal point of view, but from a humanistic and soulish point of view.

We looked closely at the term *to wrestle* and the term *to stand*.

And last week we set up our discussion on the armor of God by briefly looking at the sort of person who wears it.

We made mention of the Chocolate Christian Soldier versus the Mature Christian Soldier

Today we start looking at the armor of God in detail, here are some initial thoughts

Why do we have to fight?

I am sure some people even wonder why all this talk of armor is necessary

Surely all we have to do is be 'strong in the Lord'

The idea being that if you are strong in the Lord, you will have no need for armor, because the enemy will just run when he sees you

They believe and preach nothing but the power

They don't think that the armor is necessary, they have some sort of magic formula which will keep them out of harms way

They say 'just get more power' pray more, believe more- you just need the power.

Just pretend, every morning when you get up, imagine yourself putting on the invisible, mythical armor of God

In a sense they are disconnected with the rest of the world and the majority of the bible

The reason we are told to put on protection, is because strength is not sufficient.

In other words as long as we are in this world we will always be facing the subtle attacks of the enemy.

We see evidence of the fact that power isn't enough to make you a victor all through world history

In Vietnam, the USA had the power, but the enemy remained undefeated.

In Afghanistan, what was known as the USSR field the greatest army it ever had. It lost the war, lost the occupation and went bankrupt as a nation doing it, because power was not enough to ensure victory

The Bible is full of illustrations and examples of powerful people who fell.

Powerful people who relied on their strength and not on their character.

Powerful people who thought that their position, their authority was enough.

Paul talks about this very thing in Corinthians:

In his own life we read in the 2nd letter to Corinth that Paul

2 Corinthians 12:3 ESV
(3) And I know that this man was caught up into paradise—

He had this incredible spiritual encounter yet immediately after that he found that

2 Corinthians 12:7 ESV
A messenger of Satan (was sent) to harass me,

He told the Corinthians in an earlier letter

1 Corinthians 10:12 ESV
(12) Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.

Take heed:

To perceive with your eye,
To discern mentally,
To turn the thoughts over in your mind.
To sense, to discover, to understand

Now think about the life of Samson

One of the greatest judges and warriors for God in the Old Testament, the same thing happened to him.

He thought that his physical power did not have to be supported by sound Biblical lifestyle.

That some how his calling or his giftedness excused him or gave him a special dispensation on the demands to honor and obey God.

He died blinded by the enemies of God, reputation in ruins trying to bring a sense of honor back to his life

Now the best known example of this is the life of David

He had conquered all his enemies,
The kingdom was established,
He was entering the best and most peaceful and prosperous years of his life,
He relaxed,
Let his guard down....stopped taking heed and destroyed his credibility and testimony.

Again, he had all the power he could need, would need, should need, yet power wasn't enough.

When you think you are strong,
When you think you are invincible,
When you have had some great victory

The danger is feeling that nothing else needs to be done, that you have it all together

Think again, lest you fall...is what Paul cautions us

The Christian armor is to be worn.

Christianity is not like other belief or value systems, like other religions.

It is not a system of thought that is preference or situational based
It is a commitment to living and being all we are called to be.

Wearing all of the armor that God has furnished for us.

You can not put off the Christian armor until we have run our course and finished our race.

What is interesting to note when we look at the whole armor is that there is no protection for the back

The Christian is always to be engaged.
Always engaging the enemy
Always moving forward.

Or we are standing, remember we talked about this

To stand: To be set, to be put, and to make a stand

To stand firm

To be immovable

To be ready

To be prepared

To be steadfast of mind

To be one who does not hesitate, one who does not waiver

Stand: to maintain your Christian position.

This Christian armor was not something that was done for us, but is something that we must wear.

We are in this armor; we never get out of this armor

The whole armor has to be worn

As I mentioned last week, the armor is a whole set, it is not a collection of individual parts.

You can not emphasis one at the expense of the other

In fact, I don't believe you can emphasis one.
You have to view it as a whole.

The only way that we stand against the wiles, the trickery and evil deceit of our enemy is to be fully armed.

We are told on two occasions by Paul to be strong and also to stand. So dealing with spiritual issues is not one of only being on the defensive, but is one when you must be ready and on the attack

If you enter the conflict with a sense of only being on the defensive, or waiting for an attack before you respond you are already defeated

Pau emphasizes the 'positive' before the 'negative' here.

Stand, wrestle and be strong

If you become defeatists or victim in your approach to the Christian life you are doomed before you begin.

The armor can only be worn by Christians

We are told to be strong in the Lord
We are told that this armor is from God

So therefore the only person who can put on this armor is a Christian

The only person who can wear this armor is a person in right relationship with God

Some people who attend church, some family members and friends that you have; the first thing that you need to talk to them about if there are obviously under attack isn't about being strong in God

Not about fighting the devil

Not about putting on the armor of God

It is about getting right with Christ

If you are not right with Christ, you can not be strong in the Lord

Trying won't make a difference. Praying with them won't make a difference

If you are not right with Christ, you can not put on the armor of God

You have to get right with God
You have to be in right relationship with God.

Remember that before Paul talked about the armor of God, he talked about the wiles of the devil,
Go back and listen to the teaching,
Go over the teaching,
Understand the methods of YOUR enemy

if you have succumbed to the wiles of the enemy, the lies of your adversary and you now realize that you are not right with God, don't waste a moment more, get right with God NOW. Not later, NOW.

You cannot wear just some parts

You cannot wear just the bits you like or are comfortable with

You must wear the whole armor
You must cover your whole body

The armor is designed to give the Christian the security that they are covered and able to withstand the onslaught of the devil himself.

This is no light enemy and this is not frivolous armor

This is the place where we must look at the context that Paul is writing in; to truly understand the nature of the armor he is talking about.

The theme of the book of that the letter to the churches at Ephesus was written to, is the believer's responsibility to walk in accordance with the calling that they have been given from heaven.

It was not written to address a certain issue
It was not written because of a certain problem in a certain church,

Remember this was a circular letter that was to be passed around the group of churches that inhabited the regions around the city of Ephesus.

The letter was written to prevent problems in the church at large.

It was written to encourage the believers as a whole to mature in Christ.

To be aware of their position in Christ
To mature as believers

To live out their Christian life with honor and success on every level.

In order to do this, you must put on the whole armor of God.
Twice he says it

The whole armor.

There is a very clear dividing line in the book of Ephesians

Chapters 1-3 speak of the positional aspects of a Christian.

Who they are in Christ

The reality of the Trinity

The power of God's grace

The redemption of grace in each believer's life

How we are all heirs in Christ

All heady stuff

But there is a change in the last 3 chapters.

As chapters 1-3 were the positional aspects of a Christian's life, chapters 4-6 are the practical aspects of a Christians walk.

As Paul talked about doctrine in the opening half and then what he is doing is applying the doctrine in the back half of his letter.

I believe he is saying, that you must take up the whole armor
You must walk in the full doctrine of the scripture

But every truth that has been revealed to you
Every truth that we Apostles have past on to you, all of it is important.

Not just one point
Not just one aspect

Now I know this is a major departure for some of you from the interpretation of this scripture that has popped up in the last 10-15 years...and that is all it has been, it is only a recent interpretation, but the majority of the commentators that I read in preparation see that this is what Paul is doing here

Now I want to remind you of something here that I believe supports this argument,

In Acts Chapter 20, Paul is speaking to the elders of the very same church that he wrote this letter to, the church that received this letter...

Acts 20:27-28 ESV

(27) for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

Paul says, I preached the whole council of God, be careful for the flock, the people God gave you, teach and preach to them everything that I have given you

Nowhere in his departing remarks, the last time he shall every speak to the church that he loves does he make mention of mystical or superstitious rites or activities they should be engaged in to ensure the church growth or there people flourishes

No he says, I preached the the whole council of God.

Some of you who have been with me for some time....If I was to leave tomorrow on a long trip and I didn't know when I would be back and I gathered you together to talk about the final things, the most important things, the things that I have often mentioned...what do you think they would be.....

The same with Paul

This is what was important to him, this is what he wanted to be remembered by...The whole council of God

The context of this passage of scripture

I believe that the context that Paul wrote the passages of scripture about the armor were the same as the ones he wrote before.

He had just talked about walking in love as brothers and sisters in Christ

He just outlined practical steps for husbands and wives, for fathers and mothers

For hard and difficult work relationship

And then he says in order to beat the enemy
In order to keep him at bay, you have to apply the whole council of God.

You have to be a balanced, knowledgeable Christian
You just can't emphasize one aspect,
You have to work on every aspect of your Christian life,
You have to walk in full knowledge of Christian doctrine, the full council of God

This will keep you from the wiles or the schemes of the devil

Now the word **schemes** as I taught a couple of weeks ago is a compound of two other words which meanto travel and from behind.

Schemes...cunning arts, deceit, trickery, to travel behind you, to go behind you, to come up from behind you.

To catch you unaware and unprepared.

And the first and most preeminent area that is attacked by satan is the area of a persons mind

How do we know this?

Ho do we know that warfare is conducted in the arena of the mind?

Because he told us the EXACT and PRECISE realm of our warfare and its very nature in another letter

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 ESV

(3) For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.

(4) For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

(5) We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,

So this verse can be re worded:

For although we conduct our lives in the realm of the flesh,

We do not fight according to this realm because the tools and implements of our war are not of a fleshly nature, because that is not the area that we need to be guarding against, but rather they are strong implements of our mind, will and emotion and are used to pull down mental fortresses, to pull down proud obstacles and to pull down pretentious thoughts, and everything else that exalts itself against the knowledge of God

The fruit of this victorious warfare is that we bring all our mental activity into slavery and force our mind, will, and body to obey Christ Jesus.

The belt of truth

Having said all of that, and you will see why it is important in a moment, we come to our first piece of armor:

Ephesians 6:14 ESV

(14) Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth,

There are six pieces of armor,
They are broken into two groups,
The first group of three are those pieces that attach directly to the body

- The belt of truth
- The breastplate of righteousness
- On our feet we have fasten the gospel of peace.

Then there are three pieces that are not fixed

- The helmet of salvation
- The shield of faith
- The sword of the spirit

Paul sat beside Roman warriors day after day, he looked at them and picked out the six most important pieces and used them as part of this analogy

I do not believe that he set these things down in a haphazard way

Because you will notice that they build one on another, they are absolute in essence and important to consider in the order that he has written here.

Now the belt was a leather belt with a leather apron that hung in front of the solders groin and lower abdomen.

It protect his loins, the KJV says, his bowels, his genitals

It was the Roman soldier's version of an athletic cup

It was considered the first piece of protective clothing that the soldier put on, it clung closely to his body and it protect the most vulnerable parts of his body

The second thing is that the belt gathers all of a soldiers garment together

The smock that he wore

It was lose

It was gather tight to his body ready for battle

Putting the belt on was the first thing he did in preparation for battle

The other is that from the belt you could hang the sword, the sword of the spirit. Without the belt, there was no place to put the sword

Here are some thoughts

1. Truth is the first thing we put on

We are completely lost without truth
We must be settled in our convictions
There can be no uncertainties
There can be no lack of clarity

At times there are,
I understand, we are working out our salvation with fear and
trembling, but we must strive to put these questions to rest

You must deal with this first

You can not stand strong in the Lord and stand against the schemes
of the enemy if you are not certain of what you believe

My doctrine
The things I believe
The belt of truth governs my whole outlook
it is not something that I preach, it is something that I live

Only in this way can you fight a successful battle against the enemy

You see the devil tries to confuse us and confound us
We must be certain of what and why we believe what we believe

See this is the problem with the majority of the church today. She
does not know what she believes.

Some say there is no sin
Some say the Bible isn't the word of God
Some say miracles do not happen any more

And so it goes on.

Now because they do not know what they believe they spend their
time fighting each other, destroying each other and the devil sits by
and watches

2. We are most vulnerable in the area of truth and doctrine

If we don't know what is right, then we can't live what is right

If we don't know our position in Christ, we can't live out the practicalities

Our minds desperately need the protection that comes from sound doctrine and from biblical truth.

The schemes of the devil are aimed at building strong holds in our minds that are anti the truth of God and His word.

We have to be very careful what we listen to

Just because it is on CET does not mean that it is right, sound, or you should listen to it

To be honest the best thing that some of you can do is turn off CET and pick up a bunch of CDs in the foyer

Sheep are called to listen to the voice of a shepherd, it is very hard to lead a people who are continually being seduced by other voices.

Am I saying that you should read or shouldn't listen to teaching by others..not at all

I read a range of people, but they are all sound morally and biblically

If a person on CET is on their third marriage, has been through a national scandal and is standing there teaching the Bible; can I suggest to you that his actions, her actions, have disqualified them a long time ago?

That they stopped believing the truth because they stopped living the truth

They do not see it as truth, because they can not live the truth

3. The belt gathers the smock together

The soldier was unencumbered because of the belt

He was able to move freely.

He could raise his shield, draw his sword and nothing would catch, nothing would get in the way

When you know the truth, the truth sets you free

You can live life with a sense of abandonment to the will and purpose of God

When you know the truth, you know your not going to fall.

You not you are not going to stumble or trip.

4. The belt gave the soldier security

He was protected

He was ready and prepared

He was keyed up

Alert

Ready for battle

Preparation is 90% of victory

I lifted 380 lbs in a bench press about a week ago. I have a goal of 500 lbs

It will take me 7 weeks of intense training 4 days a week 2 hours a day

When I lie on that bench there will be five plates on each side

And I will be ready,
I will intimidate that weight,
That weight will not intimidate me

But I will be prepared
I will be ready

I will feel secure

Truth does that to a Christian

It doesn't matter what they face
How big the battle
How heavy the weight is that they must carry or lift

They know the truth

It doesn't matter what the economy is doing, they know the truth

It doesn't matter what the medical report says, they know the truth

It doesn't matter what the enemy is saying, they know the truth

5. The sword of the spirit, and the belt of truth, are not the same thing.

Paul says that the sword of the spirit is the word of God

Jesus is the only one who is ever called the Word of God
So he is not talking of the Holy Spirit,
Because,
One speaks of the word of God that you hold in your hand, the other
speaks of the body of truth that should be taught and preached

Often I have heard this mentioned as the same

I don't believe it is

Paul is never redundant like that

The sword of the spirit, the word of God

Truth is primarily defensive

The word is also offensive.

Truth will protect you from lies

The Word we proclaim takes new ground and sets people free

We are not to defend ourselves against the enemy; we are to be strong in God

We are not to attack the enemy ourselves;
The Word of God is our offense.

You have to know the Word and it will set you free from fear, anxiety,
and the lies of the world and the seduction of the enemy

Where do I start?

Some of you say; where do I start, I don't have enough time, how can I do all this, how can I possibly know what it is I believe, what the bible says?

Let me help you with that.... Wednesday night

That is why we teach doctrine Wednesday night

That is why I tell people if you are only a once a week Christian ...do Wednesday pm

If you do twice a week...come to supernatural Sunday nights as well

If you want to be a balanced, complete Christian then come to Victorious Christian living Sunday Am

But friend, your balanced Christian experience starts Wednesday PM, and ends Sunday pm, it does not take place Sunday am ONLY

You have to first of all put on truth because this is how you repel your lying enemy....with truth

Here are some books

Here is a program for you

- a) Re order your life to be at Wednesday night
- b) Get a journal

Buy a small book or a book you can carry with you and your bible

- c) Get a bible reading plan
- d) Set aside 45 minutes every day
- e) S.O.A.P. for 20 minutes
- f) The read one of these books
- g) Download the sermon for your iPod, on the treadmill listen to the teaching instead of Fergalicious or Grandmaster flash
- h) Or buy the CD of the teaching. The CD's we have in the foyer are for you to take and give to your friends as evangelism tools or they are for new people. You regular CLC people, come on, you can buy an iPod and pony up with \$5