

The Warrior, the armor – part #2

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 started in our investigation of what is biblical spiritual warfare, as opposed to marketed spiritual warfare some weeks ago.

We have now come to the place where we began looking at the armor of God.

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 which you must be ready and on the attack

If you enter the conflict with a sense of only being on the defensive, or of 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 belt of truth

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

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

3. The belt gathered 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 or 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 you're not going to fall.

You know that 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

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 area speaks of the word of God that you hold in your hand, and the other speaks of the body of truth that should be taught and preached and the authority that it holds. This is what I want to focus on this morning, I want to have a look at the authority.

The issue of authority

If our truth is truly truth and brings real freedom, then the only way to undermine that truth or to ridicule that truth is to call that truth into question

If the bible can be displaced and no longer seen as the Word of God, but a collection of nice stories, historical myths and great philosophies then as your faith is...so be it unto you, you have made null and void this book in your life by philosophies and traditions.

Now the authority doesn't change
The reality doesn't change
But your perception has been warped

Of recent times a prevailing thought has been that the Bible can't help us. That it is a primitive book for primitive people and in our modern and complex society it is simply inadequate, we have advanced beyond all of this Bible stuff.

In light of this, if I hold this to be true, then how on earth am I ever to be able to put on the belt of truth? How can I possibly see this book

as the doctrine, which is the teaching, the principles and guidelines for my life?

There is a simple answer.

In the Bible, truth is definite and error is condemned.

The Bible is the result of God disturbing men by His Holy Spirit, giving them a message and then enabling them to deliver it in speech or in writing.

2nd Timothy verse 8:

Here we have the Apostle defending the faith.

Paul is telling Timothy to be wary of ignorant and foolish controversies, of idle talk and slanders against the claims of Christ

And in the middle of it he makes this bold assertion.

2 Timothy 2:8 ESV

(8) Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel,

Today such a statement is simple viewed as arrogant.

Paul would be told that he could not be so forth right, so bold, that he is alienating people, that you must present a softer, more gentle approach if you are going to grow a church and win souls.

Paul says...Remember Jesus Christ preached in MY GOSPEL

People don't like this attitude in Paul, they certainly don't like it today...*we prefer a simple gospel they say, a gospel of love, Paul was just an old Jewish Pharisee that got saved and the legalism didn't get all the way out of him.*

Yet Paul very specifically tells Timothy at the top of the chapter...take THESE things and teach THESE things to faithful men and help them be able to teach it to others.

Do not sway from the course

Do not complicate or water down MY GOSPEL, but preach it in its fullest and preach it passionately for it is the gospel of the Christ; it is the truth that will set our world free.

The example of the resurrection

In order to do this he uses the example of the physical resurrection of Christ, it was under attack by various groups within the early church

Paul focuses on this one aspect of his teaching, that of the resurrection, and he makes a point of emphasizing that this is the truth that undergirds all that is important in our faith.

Friend, look at the media today, look at aspects of the church world today, people are watering down the resurrection, they are discounting it, and they are saying it is not a real resurrection or a complete resurrection.

Paul says that people who hold this stance are to be pitied and we are to endeavor to set them free.

But this is not done by acquiesce to them, this is not done by hearing them and trying to understand them, this can only be achieved by challenging them with love and compassion disclosing their error and pointing them to the truth

Is it no wonder that the church is in the state she is in the western world

- We have more knowledge and less truth
- We have more information but less passion
- We have more signs but no wonders
- We have more teaching but less miracles

The issue of human knowledge

Human knowledge sets itself up as the great answer to all things, yet it is this very knowledge that Paul warns us against in the verse we are looking at in Ephesians. He says be careful of the schemes of the devil and the evil forces of our enemies

Friend, there is a mind greater than mans, that will use the mind of man against the purpose of God, a mind that will try to undermine all that is true and all that we should hold dear. That mind devises these evil schemes and that mind is only surpassed by that of the Triune God.

If human reason and the human mind is the greatest source in the universe then we are left without a higher authority

I have had people ask me, "If God had proposed to send a deliverer, a messiah all along, why did HE wait so long? Why did we have to go through all that we had to go through before this messiah came?"

The answer is that God sent His son into the world, after the world had been given a full opportunity to deliver itself and particularly to deliver itself through human wisdom and philosophy.

All the greatest Greek minds had lived before the time of Christ, the greatest minds the world would ever know, men like Plato, Socrates, Aristotle all lived and died before Christ came

They represent man at his very zenith.

There is no doubt at all that the greatest period of articulation of the human intellect was during this time, the time before Christ. Here you have man's ability to think at its very best and very highest, and still it was proved at as nothing when faced with the reality of Christ or the arguments of Paul

Then we must settle once and for all that we have access to an absolute and objective authority that is external to ourselves, and is not based on what I think, what I feel, or the traditions of man.

The issue of human feelings

Many people today place their feelings at the center of their justification for all that they do, all that they want to do, and indeed all that they believe

If it feels good do it-
Let go and let God-
Just hand it all over to the Lord and He will work it out-
God will understand, we are in love-
It doesn't matter what we do, we are Christians, and we have grace-

Some quarters have reduced church to an attempt to compete with a sensual world by presenting a sensual and emotional based gospel and faith

The problem with this is that feelings are transient

They change

Circumstances, mood, even food and environment can change how you feel.

God help us if we have a faith that is only exciting if the lights are dimmed, the smoke machine is on, and if we have eaten enough red food coloring!

Our authority

If human knowledge isn't enough

If human feelings are not enough

We then come to the issue of do we trust the Word of God.

We all at some point or another have to face and settle for ourselves this ultimate question:

Do I accept the Word of God as the sole authority in all matters of my faith and the practices of my life, or do I not?

Is my whole thinking and way of life governed by the authority of the Bible?

Do I accept the scripture as revelation from God, or do I see it as part good ideas and great philosophy?

Do I see it as the Word of God and not just containing the word of God...in other words do I see it as inspired and inerrant

Why do we need to settle this fact for ourselves?

- 1) Because a large portion of the church no longer believes the Bible is true
- 2) Because the church individual – you and I – on large don't believe the Bible is true and reliable.
- 3) We give lip service to the Bible but we do not passionately live it
- 4) The Bible has every day applications other than a bookend, it is the rule and contact by which we can life and serve God with passion.

Opening Statement:

God is Truth and speaks truth only and has inspired Holy Scripture in order to reveal Himself to lost mankind.

Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, was written by men but it was prepared and superintended by His Spirit,
It is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches:

Therefore:

It is to be believed as God's instruction;
It is to be obeyed as God's command;
It is to be embraced as God's promise to us

The Holy Spirit, who was and is the Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching.

Let me give you some definitions to start with.

Now remember we are not in a hurry
I won't keep you here all day that is the beauty of having next week

- a) Inspired – to be guided or controlled by divine influences. To communicate or suggest by a divine or supernatural influence
- b) Inerrant – containing no mistakes
- c) Infallible – incapable and immune from error
- d) Accurate – precise and providing correct information
- e) Authoritative – backed by an established and accepted authority.
- f) Reliable – able to be trusted to do what is expected or has been promised.
- g) Applicable – relevant to a particular person, people or situation.

a) Inspired

Inspired – to be guided or controlled by divine influences.
To communicate or suggest by a divine or supernatural influence

2 Timothy 3:16 ESV

(16) All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

In this verse the Greek word "Theopneustos", translated "inspiration" simply means "God-breathed".

God breathed into Adam the breath of life and he became a living soul.

(Genesis 2:7; Acts 17:25)

But there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the almighty giveth them understanding.

(Job 32:8)

The dry bones of Ezekiel's vision needed the breath of life, but there was no breath in them

(Ezekiel 37:8, 9)

Jesus "breathed" upon His disciples on the morning of the resurrection telling them to receive the breath of the Spirit of life.

(John 20:22)

That's what inspiration means, it means that it came from within God and was expelled and brought life

It is a source of life

b) Inerrant

Inerrant – containing no mistakes

First:

The Bible teaches its own inspiration, and this requires inerrancy.

The Scriptures are the breath of God (2 Tim. 3:16), which guarantees they are without error.

Second:

In Deuteronomy 13:1 - 5 and 18:20 – 22

Israel is told how to tell the difference between a real prophet and a false prophet

This is mark of a divine message is total and absolute truthfulness.

Third:

The Bible teaches its own authority and this requires inerrancy.

In John 10:34 - 35 Jesus says that Scripture cannot be broken and so is absolutely binding, this authority can only be justified by or grounded in inerrancy. Something that contains errors cannot be absolutely authoritative.

Finally:

Inerrancy follows from what the Bible says about God's character.

Repeatedly, the Scriptures teach that God cannot lie (Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; Titus 1:2; Heb. 6:18). If then, the Bible is from God and his character is behind it, it must be inerrant and infallible.

c) Infallible

Infallible – incapable and immune from error

Inward Witness

Scripture is authenticated by the Holy Spirit

Why do Christians believe that the bible is the Word of God, sixty-six books forming a single book of instruction in which God reveals to us the reality of redemption through Jesus Christ the Savior? The answer is that God himself has confirmed this through what is called the inward witness of the Holy Spirit.

John 15:26

“But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me

It is a matter not of imparting new information but of enlightening previously darkened minds to discern the truth of the Word

The result of this witness is a state of mind in which both the Savior and the Scriptures have evidenced themselves to us as divine –
Jesus a divine person
Scripture a divine product

Because of this we no longer find it possible to doubt the divinity of either Christ or the Bible.

Let me rabbit trail here a little bit....

Two big issues people sometimes have

- 1) How come people read the same passage and come to different conclusions?
- 2) What about all the so called contradictions in the bible?

Different conclusions

I sometimes have people ask me that if this is all true, then why do people read the bible, the same passages, and come to different conclusions?

First of all the great majority of Bible readers have no problem agreeing on the Bible's central teachings. Even those who do not believe the Bible to be true have no difficulty whatsoever discerning the main message.

Within all branches of Christianity, we find the same basic understanding as to what the Bible teaches.

The Bible's message is clear for those who will read it and seek to find out its meaning.

The problem comes when people attempt to make the Word fit their world. They don't use it to grow in their faith, but in attempt to stay in their sin.

This is not the fault of the Bible, but of the people who force the Bible to say whatever they want it to say.

Are there contradictions in the Bible?

While some claim that the Bible is full of contradictions, this simply isn't true.

The number of apparent contradictions is actually remarkably small for a book of the Bible's size and scope.

What apparent discrepancies do exist are more curiosity than calamity.

They do not touch on any major event or article of faith.

Here is an example of a so-called contradiction.

Pilate ordered that a sign be posted on the cross where Jesus hung. Three of the Gospels record what was written on that sign:

In Matthew: "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews."

In Mark: "The king of the Jews."

In John: "Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews."

The wording is different, hence the apparent contradiction. The remarkable thing, though, is that all three writers describe the same event in such detail-- Jesus was crucified. On this they all agree. They even record that a sign was posted on the cross, and the meaning of the sign is the same in all three accounts!

Not good enough?

What about the exact wording?

In the original Greek of the Gospels, they didn't use a quotation symbol as we do today to indicate a direct quote. The Gospel authors were making an indirect quote, which would account for the subtle differences in the passages.

Here is another example of an apparent contradiction.

Was Jesus two nights in the tomb or three nights in the tomb before His resurrection? Matt 12:40 and mark 10:33-34

Jesus was killed on Friday and the resurrection was discovered on Sunday. How can that be three days and nights in the tomb?

It was a Jewish figure of speech in Jesus' time to count any part of a day or night as a full day and night.

So Friday, Saturday, and Sunday would be called three days and three nights in Jesus' culture. We speak in similar ways today-- if a person were to say, "I spent all day shopping," we understand that the person didn't mean 24 hours.

This is typical of apparent contradictions in the New Testament. Most are resolved by a closer examination of the text itself or through studying the historical background.

d) Accurate

Accurate – precise and providing correct information

Is the Bible Scientifically Accurate?

Science is knowledge. It is what we know.

With this definition, science and the Bible are in perfect harmony.

There is no evidence to suggest the Bible is inaccurate in any of its statements regarding creation or scientific facts. In fact, the more advances are made in science, the more it has proven the truth of the Bible!

Now, everyone knows that there are plenty of popular theories in the scientific community that contradict the Bible, the most notable being evolution. Yet even in this case, evolution is not pure science, for it is not known, but only theorized.

As science has advanced over the centuries, stunning discoveries have shown that not only is the Bible scientifically accurate, but the Bible actually made scientific statements about nature hundreds of years before man discovered them! For example, look at the following....

- The Bible said that the earth was round 1600 years before man figured it out. (Isaiah 40:22)

- The Bible said that the earth is suspended in space 3600 years before man discovered it. (Job 26:7)

- The Bible said that the universe is running down only 2500 years before man found out. (Isaiah 51:6; Psalms 102:26; Romans 8:20-21)

- The Bible said that blood sustains life 3300 years before man would agree. (Leviticus 17:11)

- The Bible said the stars produce sound 4000 years before man found out. (Job 38:7)

- The Bible said that the earth rotates on an axis 3550 years before scientists discovered the same. (Job 38:12; Luke 17:31,34)

- The Bible said that the stars cannot be numbered 3000 years before astronomers figured it out. (Genesis 15:5, 22:17)

- The Bible said that man is made from the same materials as the earth 3200 years before man found out. (Genesis 2:8, 3:19; Psalms 103:14)

Does ancient history agree with the Bible?

If the Bible is God's message to us, we should hope its version of history is accurate. It is.

For example, the Bible reports that Jesus of Nazareth performed many miracles, was executed by the Romans, and rose from the dead.

Numerous ancient historians corroborate the Bible's account of the life of Jesus and his followers:

Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 55-120), an historian of first-century Rome, is considered one of the most accurate historians of the ancient world.

An excerpt from Tacitus tells us that the Roman emperor Nero *"inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class...called Christians. ...Christus [Christ], from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus...."*

Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian (A.D. 38-100+), wrote about Jesus in his Jewish Antiquities. From Josephus, *"we learn that Jesus was a wise man who did surprising feats, taught many, won over followers from among Jews and Greeks, was believed to be the Messiah, was accused by the Jewish leaders, was condemned to be crucified by Pilate, and was considered to be resurrected."*

Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, and Thallus also wrote about Christian worship and persecution that is consistent with New Testament accounts.

Even the Jewish Talmud, certainly not biased toward Jesus, concurs about the major events of his life.

From the Talmud, "we learn that Jesus was conceived out of wedlock, gathered disciples, made blasphemous claims about himself, and worked miracles, but these miracles are attributed to sorcery and not to God."

This is remarkable information considering that most ancient historians focused on political and military leaders, not on obscure rabbis from distant provinces of the Roman Empire.

Yet ancient historians (Jews, Greeks and Romans) confirm the major events that are presented in the New Testament, even though they were not believers themselves.

Does archaeology support the Bible?

Archaeology cannot prove that the Bible is God's written word to us.

However, archaeology can (and does) substantiate the Bible's historical accuracy.

Archaeologists have consistently discovered the names of government officials, kings, cities, and festivals mentioned in the Bible--sometimes when historians didn't think such people or places existed.

For example, the Gospel of John tells of Jesus healing a cripple next to the Pool of Bethesda. The text even describes the five porticoes (walkways) leading to the pool. Scholars didn't think the pool existed, until archaeologists found it forty feet below ground, complete with the five porticoes.

The Bible has a tremendous amount of historical detail, and yet not one archaeological find has conflicted with what the Bible records.

In contrast, news reporter Lee Strobel comments about the Book of Mormon: "Archaeology has repeatedly failed to substantiate its claims about events that supposedly occurred long ago in the Americas."

Archaeologists have never located cities, persons, names, or places mentioned in the Book of Mormon.

Many of the ancient locations mentioned by Luke, in the Book of Acts in the New Testament, have been identified through archaeology.

In all, Luke names thirty-two countries, fifty-four cities and nine islands without an error."

Come Wednesday PM. We instruct and inspire you with the reason for your faith, so you can give a defense.

What is your response to the authority of God?