

The warrior – The Armor part 3

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 have spent this year looking at the life of the early church

We looked at how it started

We looked at the things that made it so fruitful. Things that we should actively seek; attitudes, beliefs and practices that should be a part of our lives as believers, if we are sincere about seeing the church of Jesus Christ rise and become the glorious bride she is destined to become.

We mentioned three things that marked the early church:

First:

We noticed their single focus was on the mission at hand.

Second:

We saw that they were all in one accord. They were of one mind and one passion. They were mission and vision focused. They knew who they were and what they were called to do.

Third:

We commented on the supernatural nature of the church.

How it was something that only God can build.

How its origins were supernatural.

How the early Christians needed an encounter with the Holy Ghost to enable them to be who they needed to be and do what needed to be done.

How the early church knew that they were engaged in a spiritual battle.

Friend, Christianity is not a philosophy.

It is not a social network; it is a commitment to the Word, will and ways of God.

As a group these early Christians were devoted to the Doctrine of the Apostles

You can not be devoted to something you can not trust

You can not submit and serve something that has no authority

We have been looking at the spiritual armor that Paul says is ours

It is the armor of an occupying force, of a ruling army, the army of the every day warrior

It is our armor.

It is useful

It is practical and it is essential for all that we are called to do and become in Christ Jesus.

Now we have been looking at the quality of this armor

We have began looking at its different elements and we have started with looking at the belt of truth

If our truth is truly truth and brings real freedom, then the only way to undermine that truth, 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.

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. It is a primitive book for primitive people, that 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 that 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.

Recap

We are looking at the wonderful nature of the Word of God

We saw last week that it was

- a) Inspired
- b) Inerrant
- c) Infallible
- d) Accurate

That is

- 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

And we come this week to continue our look, by looking at the final three aspects of its divine authority.

Now us looking at and realizing the authority of the Word of God does not give it power.

It is powerful

Us understanding the true nature of the quality of the Word of God gives us confidence.

Confidence in our weaponry

Confidence in our ability to subdue the terrorist, the devil and his demons that try and ensnare us by arguments and lofty debates that try and usurp the authority

Today I want to look at the whole area of the authority of the scripture, or rather the authoritative nature of the scripture.

The final three elements of the word of God are:

- 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

e) Authoritative

Authoritative – backed by an established and accepted authority.

Authority

God governs His people through Scripture

2 Tim 3:16

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

The first thing you must realize is that the bible is our authority on the Bible.

The authority of the scriptures as a whole:

In the early days of the Church the apostles went everywhere preaching the resurrection, Jesus as the Savior of the world, and Jesus as Lord.

They proclaimed that He was the Son of God.

They declared that 'there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved' (Acts iv. 12).

In other words they proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, the final and supreme authority.

The Christian principle of biblical authority is two fold:

1. That God purposes to direct the belief and behavior of his people through the revealed truth set forth in Holy Scripture;
2. This means that all our ideas about God should be measured, tested, and where necessary, corrected and enlarged, by reference to biblical teaching.

Recent attacks on the authority of scripture

Because the Bible takes such a strong and assertive view of itself, of God and redemption, it is not surprising that the authority of the Scriptures has been from time to time a matter of dispute and debate.

It is important to remember, however, that until the eighteenth century it was more or less accepted universally by the whole Church.

You may have heard such phrases as: *'the Bible is not the Word of God, but that it contains the Word of God'*.

The people who hold this view tell us that the Bible is *partly the Word of God and partly the word of man*. What they are saying is that in part it has this great divine authority, and in part it has not.

Friend the Bible is either the Bible in its entirety is the Word of God or none of it is.

How are we to approach this question of the authority of the Scriptures?

a. Scripture must be viewed as a whole

There is nothing more important if we are concerned about the authority of the Scriptures, than to start with the whole Bible first and to consider the details in the light of the whole.

b. A matter for faith

Our second principle is a realization that ultimately this question of the authority of the Scriptures is a matter of faith and not of argument.

There are many relevant arguments. And of course, many of these arguments have great value.

Just as a man may have an intellectual conception of, and give an intellectual assent to, the truth about Christ without really receiving Him and becoming a Christian, so he can do exactly the same with the Scriptures.

A man who is not a Christian cannot believe in the authority of the Scriptures. We should not expect him to do so. We are wasting time if we argue with him about it.

c. A truth to be asserted

Friend, let the Word do the work and allow the Word to defend itself.

The authority of the Scriptures is not a matter to be defended, so much as to be asserted.

Charles Spurgeon once said

'There is no need for you to defend a lion when he is being attacked. All you need to do is to open the gate and let him out.'

We need to remind ourselves frequently that it is the preaching and exposition of the Bible that really establish its truth and authority.

d. The whole Bible is the Word of God

The Bible comes to us as a whole.

We are to declare that the entire Bible--the canonical Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments--is the Word of God.

You cannot possibly believe the New Testament doctrine of the atonement and redemption in Christ unless you accept its teaching with regard to the fall, and with regard to sin.

You have to believe in creation to believe in redemption.

It is all very well to say that you can believe these positive lifestyle doctrines in the New Testament, but you can not deny the teachings of the fall of man without undermining the very ground upon which you are trying to stand.

e. Scripture's own claims to it's authority

The most important argument of all is that we should believe in the authority of the Scriptures because the Scriptures themselves claim that authority.

They come to us as the Word of God.

Martyn Lloyd Jones states that:

The phrases 'the Lord said', 'the word of the Lord came', are actually used 3,808 times in the Old Testament. These men make it clear to us that it is not their own idea. They are not writing as the result of their own insights, meditations, and cogitations. No! They constantly claim 'the word of the Lord came', 'the burden of the Lord', 'God revealed', and 'the Lord said'. That is their constant assertion everywhere. It is the whole background. It is an essential part of their message."

And not only does the Book itself assert this, but the Jews always accepted it in that way and took it to be thus. Indeed they took it for granted that their Scriptures were the Word of God.

f) Jesus taught the authority of the Word

Jesus often says, 'It is written!' He meets the attack of Satan by quoting Scripture.

Jesus quoted the Old Testament as fact.
He used it to validate the claims of who He was and the authority within which He moved and operated.

He quoted Adam's relationship to Eve.
The existence of God's judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah
The judgment of the flood and the record of the fall of Satan
All as fact and all as accurately portrayed in the Word
If Jesus believed that the Old Testament was true, and the account of creation as accurate, then don't waste your breath in vain arguments and meaningless genealogies

f) Reliable

Definition: able to be trusted to do what is expected or has been promised.

Has the Bible changed and become corrupted over time?

You will sometimes hear people say things like:

The New Testament has been translated so many times that it has become corrupted

If the translations were being made from other translations, they would have a case. But translations are actually made directly from original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic source texts based on thousands of ancient manuscripts.

The reality, as I shall show you, is that the bible is THE most accurate of any and all ancient texts

We know the New Testament we have today is true to its original form because:

1. We have such a huge number of manuscript copies--over 24,000.
2. Those copies agree with each other, word for word, 99.5% of the time.
3. The dates of these manuscripts are very close to the dates of their original texts that they were translated from

Sometimes the spelling may vary, or words may be transposed, but that is of little consequence – we talked of this last week.

The New Testament is humanity's most reliable ancient document.

The integrity of the New Testament is more certain than that of Plato's writings or Homer's Iliad.

Lets have a look at some examples of these ancient writings and compare them

The Bibliographical Evidence of the New Testament and Homer's "Iliad" Compared

Homer's Iliad is secular literature from ancient Greece that has the largest number of manuscript copies in existence - excluding the New Testament.

Both the Iliad and the New Testament MSS were written in the same language (Greek).

Both were considered "sacred" writings of their culture.

Both have had been subject to debate regarding the authenticity of the authors.

Lets compare these famous documents

The Iliad is major epic of Greek antiquity written in a poetic literary style that is set in the final year of the Trojan War (c. 1200 B.C.),

The story is of the wrath of the Greek hero Achilles.

Homer is the name traditionally assigned to the author of both the Iliad and Odyssey, the two major epics of Greek antiquity.

Now nothing is known of Homer as an individual, and in fact the question of whether a single person can be said to be responsible for the creation of these two epics is highly controversial.

Historians doubt the actual existence of an individual named "Homer" credited as the author of the "Iliad;" but, they also presume that the literature was indeed written by ancient Greeks in the late 8th century B.C.

So lets put the evidence for the reliability this ancient document together:

- Written 900 B.C.
- There are 643 manuscript copies of the Iliad.
- The only preserved manuscript with the complete text dates to the 13th century A.D.
- The earliest manuscript with a portion of the whole text dates to 400 B.C.
- The time span from the latest date written (900 B.C.) to the earliest' partial copy (400 B.C.) is 500 years.

Now in the minds of scholars, there is no doubt that the existing manuscripts of Iliad are indeed actual copies of an original document that has never been located.

Now let's have a look at the evidence for the reliability of the New Testament

- Written A.D. 40-100
- There are more than 24,000 manuscript copies of the books of the New Testament.
- The earliest MSS copy dates to A.D. 125.
- The time span from the date written (A.D. 100) to the earliest copy (A.D. 125) is 25 years.

Thus, the New Testament, with more than 24,000 MSS in existence, having an oldest MS dating to only 25 years from the time of its original writing is not considered as reliable literature or history by scholars!

A comparison of the New Testament to other ancient writings...

Here is how the New Testament compares to other ancient writings

Author	Book	Date Written	Earliest Copies	Time Gap	# of Copies
Homer	<i>Iliad</i>	800 B.C.	c. 400 B.C.	c. 400 yrs.	643
Plato		400 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,300 yrs.	7
Caesar	<i>Gallic Wars</i>	100-44 B.C.	c. A.D. 900	c. 1,000 yrs.	10
New Testament		A.D. 50-100	c. A.D. 114 (portions) c. A.D. 200 (books) c. A.D. 325 (Complete N.T.)	c. +50 yrs. c. 100 yrs. c. 225 yrs.	5366 complete

The Reliability of the Old Testament

The system that the Jews had for copying down the Old Testament was zealous to the point of fanaticism, but the result is that the Old Testament has also been remarkably well preserved.

A synagogue scroll must be written on the skins of clean animals that were:

- * Prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew
- * The skins must be fastened together with the strings taken from clean animals
- * Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex.
- * The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other color, and be prepared according to a definite recipe
- * An authentic copy must be the example from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate
- * No word or letter, not even a jot, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the manuscript before him
- * Between every letter the space of a hair or thread must intervene
- * Between every new section, the breadth of nine consonants
- * Between every book, three lines
- * Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress
- * Wash his whole body
- * Not begin to write the name of God with a pen newly dipped in ink
- * And should a king address him while writing that name, he must take no notice of him.

(g) Applicable

Definition: relevant to a particular person, people or situation

Faith is trust and trust is built on a relationship. A trusting relationship is established on consistent, predictable, coherent and rational behavior.

Faith is not a mystery.

It is a truth that is based on the very character and nature of God, the cornerstone of which I would like to suppose is found in Numbers 23:19

"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"

As it is with God, so it is with us.

God's word is His bond.

God's word is the expression of His nature.

God's word is the measure of His character.

God magnifies His word above His name.

God's word is the sole source of faith and the absolute rule of conduct.

If you undermine God's Word, you undermine God's character and you call into question His authority. You can not build your Christian life upon a shaky foundation.

If this teaching has helped you, or last weeks, please download them for free online. Why not buy a copy for a friend? Place your order today and get the word about the Word out there!