

Strength in Christ

Ephesians 6:13-14

This morning I want to continue in our study of the book of Ephesians specifically in chapter 6:13-14. We have come to this point in scripture where Paul wants to give us further insight into what he calls in Ephesians 1:3, “*spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms.*” As you and I sit here this morning there is more to our Christian walk than what you can see and touch, but issues like truth and righteousness that none of us can earn or obtain on our own.

We have seen that according to Paul’s words that we are living in this life with a continual struggle – a struggle against an adversary who wants nothing more than to steal kill or destroy. He wants to discourage us, to disconnect us, to cause us to dispel everything that we find and know about Jesus Christ. We have an enemy of the soul who wants to sever us from reality and truth.

How many of us here have found ourselves, sometime within the last month, in a position when we have become discouraged, or fallen into the trap of distancing ourselves from God, or willing to give it all up because it seems like the battle is too hard to fight?

This morning, I want to look at Paul’s words that help us to face our enemy head on, face to face, to stand our ground. Paul gives us in our next section of text what we have come to know as the armor of God. We find this in **Ephesians 6:13-18**: (Let’s read it together)

*13 Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.
14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.* 16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.* 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

As I was studying for this morning I came across something I had never known before – the term Beelzebub which is an alternative name for the Devil actually means “Lord of the Garbage.” To the Jewish people hell is a cosmic garbage dump. We have an adversary that is trying to get us to buy into his garbage and we need to guard ourselves against that.

We need to be on guard because if ever there is a strong point of war or conflict it will be in the church. Our enemy wants nothing more than to destroy what God has brought together - our enemy wants nothing more than to take the legitimate, God altering moments in our lives and get us to believe that is was mere emotionalism – our enemy

wants us to be a people who are discouraged and who can't continue – it is in his character (that is what he does). What must we do to make sure that we don't fall prey to his tactics? James, Jesus brother wrote in **James 4:7**:

7 So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

The only answer we have to living a life of victory is found in only one person – Jesus Christ. **The armor of God which is to be our source of defense and attack is found in Jesus Christ. John 14:6** Jesus tells us:

6 Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

So, Jesus is the beginning point. The only way to a victorious life is to take who Jesus is and clothe ourselves with him each and everyday. Paul wrote in **Romans 13:14**:

Clothe yourself with the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So as we talk about the armor of God, we are not talking about some secret formula, or some emotional reaction to all of our struggles – but we find a firm, unchangeable, never wavering confidence and trust in God that needs to be reminded of what we truly believe and what we truly have. As we begin to look at the armor of God we find a couple of things that I want to highlight for us, which will help us over the next couple of week as we look at each of them..

Highlight One: First, as we look at the armor of God we find 2 divisions – (this division is based on the tense of the verb used). **The first division is found in what we already have – truth, righteousness and peace. The second division is found is what we are still to take on – faith, salvation and sword of the Spirit.** There things we already possess and things that we need to pick up and use.

Highlight Two: Second, that **the armor of God is given in a specific order.** This explains why some who utilize the sword of Spirit fail to use it properly. This will make more sense as we go through our study. That leads us to our first piece of armor found in **verse 14 – “stand your ground putting on the sturdy belt of truth.”**

Keeping in mind that Paul was also a Roman citizen, his description of the armor of God would most likely be taken from the way the Roman's would prepare themselves for battle. We do know that according to history that the Roman soldier wore short skirts and over these skirts they wore a tunic. When it came time for battle the Roman soldier would tuck in his tunic under his belt so that the tunic didn't get in the way. Thus, giving the soldier more protection and mobility.

Now take this and apply it to our world. We live in a time when people are being tripped up by all kinds of lies and deception in regards to what the truth is. Some say that truth is relative – it changes from one person to the next, dependent upon each person's reality.

Some say that the Bible is open to each persons interpretation thus presenting to us that truth is nothing more than whatever we say it is. In a book entitled “Time for Truth” we read the words of Os Guinness who says:

“Christianity is not true because it works (pragmatism), it is not true because it feels right (subjectivism), it is not true because it’s “my truth” (relativism). It is true because it is anchored in the person of Christ. The Christian faith is not true because it works, it works because it is true. It is not true because we experience it, we experience it – deeply and gloriously – because it is true. It is not simply ‘true for us’, it is true even if nobody believes it, and falsehood is false even if everybody believes it. That is why truth does not yield to opinion, fashion, numbers, office, or sincerity – it is simply true and that is the end of it.”

I think that based on the events that are happening around the world, especially with the different mindsets of the western world versus the eastern mindset, relativism shows that it doesn’t work.

Relativism doesn’t work because what may be right to you will probably kill, or hurt me or vice versa. Relativism, I believe, is mans way of excusing away his behavior so that he can do whatever he wants.

Truth in our time is unclear, yet truth in the person of Jesus Christ could never be more clear. **To put on the belt of truth simply means to remind myself that when I came to know and accept Jesus Christ, I found the truth behind all things, I found the one who speaks truth and who reveals to me the secret of the universe. In Christ I find reality.** In **Ephesians 4:20-22** Paul writes:

20 But that isn’t what you learned about Christ. 21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.

Jesus is the truth, he is reality and he is the key to true living. **Colossians 2:3** tells us:

3 In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

How does Jesus show us that he is the truth?

1. **Jesus showed us that he is the truth by what he said.** When you read his words in scripture you find that he had the clearest of insights into what the human life was about. Even his enemies said the same thing. No one ever saw as clearly, no one was ever able to pin point the human condition as Jesus was able to. Even the temple guards said of Jesus in **John 7:46**:

46 “We have never heard anyone speak like this!”

2. **Jesus showed us that he is the truth by what he did.** Jesus did miracles – evidence that a piece of heaven came down and touched earth. He loved the unlovable, but most importantly of all took care of one aspect of life that no one else was ever able to solve – he conquered death. He showed that he was who he said he was by coming out of the grave so that you and I would be reunited with God once and for all time.

That is why men today try to disqualify Jesus death and resurrection because it is the point of authenticity of the Christian faith. Books like “The DeVinci Code” where even though it claims to be a fictitious story, says that there is truth behind the research.

Jesus’ actions on the cross, his sacrifice, his suffering, and then his resurrection from the dead authenticates his validity and his truth.

3. **Jesus continues to show us that he is true by what he is to us.** Look back at the beginning of your Christian life – has God changed you, has he delivered you from things, has he taught you things, has he set you free, has he shown himself faithful to you? Jesus is still very active in your life today. You can even call out to him today and he will answer you. He will guide your life, he will bring you through things you never thought you would be able to go through. He will always be your sense of hope for the future. He is a living, involved, personal savior who is still with you. **We have all had experiences that have pointed to the fact that he is real and full of truth.**

When it comes to the issue of standing firmly against our enemy, we need to come back to the basic principle that Jesus Christ is the truth - that what he communicated, that what he demonstrated, and that what he is still doing today shows us the reality of this world, the reality of mankind, the reality of me, and the reality of sin, the reality of life, and most importantly the reality of the spiritual blessings we have in the heavenly realms.

One of the traps I believe that the world and even the church have succumb to is that truth is always changing. We are always learning new things that should change our lives. **But real truth doesn’t need updating or modernizing.**

I have heard of religions around the world who have changed their doctrine simply to match the times. I have seen the church go through the “program mentality” when in reality ministry is most effective in relationships. I have seen Christianity embrace worldly concepts of success when reality is that success is only measured by faithfulness and not by numbers or profit. But the one thing that really matters is the one person who never changes but whose truth is always the same. **Hebrews 13:8-9** tells us:

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. 9 So do not be attracted by strange, new ideas. Your strength comes from God’s grace, not from rules about food, which don’t help those who follow them.

There's a story of a man who went to his old friend who was a music teacher. He asked the teacher, "What the good news today?" The old man, saying nothing, walked across the room to pick up a tuning fork and struck it with a hammer. The sound resonated throughout the room. The teacher said, "That is an 'A.' It is 'A' today, it was 'A' five thousand years ago, and it will be 'A' thousands of years from now. The soprano upstairs sings off-key, the tenor across the hall sings all of his high notes flat, the piano downstairs is out of tune." He struck the note again, and said, "That is 'A' my friend, and that's the good news for today!"

Church, remember that when you feel defeated, when you are under attack, when doubts come flooding into your mind – Jesus is still the same. His truth is still the same. That no matter how you feel, or what you hear, or the more you feel alone, or the more you feel helpless - the truth of Jesus Christ changes our wandering frail perspective and grounds it once again into the reality of heaven and earth.

In order that I don't fall into the trap of Satan, I need to find my foundation and my mobility in the work and life of Jesus Christ. Let's Pray!

Prayer:

Lord of Heaven and Earth. We come to you to ask you to make us people who find our confidence in your son Jesus Christ. The world is nothing but shifting or even sinking sand, but in you we find a rock that is immovable and unshakeable.

Lord, as we find ourselves living this life of struggle and conflict, God teach us to return to your words of truth. Help us to believe you more than what we are told, and to be students of your truths that transform us from being victims to victors in life. May we go from being held captive to finding freedom in you so that we may find a new sense of mobility in life.

Lord, help us to never add or take away from your word. Help us not to feel the necessity to modernize or update your truths but to take you at your word and let your Spirit within each of us breath life into them. May we be people who rest in your truth and who are ready to do battle with what we have come to understand or already know. Do that in us, in Jesus name we pray. Amen!