

The Armor of God: Belt of Truth – *Ephesians 6:14-15*

Sermon by Associate Pastor Joe Davis

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I. INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW

Well today we're continuing on in our study of the last 15 verses of Ephesians, where Paul is giving us his final instructions about how we can walk worthy of the calling we've received. And he tells us as he begins this final section: **"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might."** This is the main point of these last 15 verses of Ephesians, and Paul tells us that the way we can be strong in the Lord is by taking up the full armor of God and praying at all times.

I just had the privilege over the last few days of attending my first pastoral training intensive in Baker City and the focus was completely on prayer. Together with 14 other pastors and elders, we examined what Scripture teaches about prayer and what David, the apostles and other writers of Scripture prayed for themselves and others. We also looked at how they viewed the importance of prayer through what they wrote as the Spirit spoke through them. And what I can tell you is that it was eye-opening, mind-blowing and vastly expanded and re-prioritized how I view prayer in my own life and ministry, the life of each of us as disciples of Christ, and our effectiveness in doing what God calls us to do by his power.

I didn't come away with a sense that I need to add it to my list of things to do, but that it's my lifeblood and a precious gift of communion with the God of the universe that I'm missing out on when I allow the busyness of life to keep me from doing it.

And what we see in Scripture is that even a man whom we all admire like the Apostle Paul, believed that it was only through the diligent prayers of God's people that God's will is accomplished and that his Word goes forth in power. I think a quote that was shared at our intensive sums it up well: "When people work, people work. When people pray, God works." I look forward to sharing more about prayer in the coming weeks as we wrap up Ephesians and possibly

even a little beyond that as I consider devoting some messages to this topic after we finish Ephesians. We'll let the Lord lead as he determines where we're going next!

Now back to the full armor of God. If you'll remember, we were reminded last week that we actually need to put it on and take it up if it's going to do us any good. Just knowing that it exists and understanding what it does is not enough. We need to actually put it on and use it if we want to come out victorious in this battle...To move beyond just head knowledge to actually putting the armor to use in our own daily lives and challenges.

Paul also shared with us two specific abilities we will be given as a result of taking up the full armor of God...abilities that we would not otherwise have without the armor. And these two abilities are the power to resist and the power to stand firm. Paul told us first that as we take up the full armor of God we will be able to resist in the evil day. The armor of God will give us the power to resist and fight back against the schemes of the devil and his attempts to deceive us and draw us away from God and to cause us to doubt his goodness and faithfulness.

Secondly, Paul said that when we take up the full armor of God we will be able to stand firm in the worst of storms and the most intense battles that Satan can bring our way. We may feel physically exhausted and worn out and close to giving up, but God is fighting for us and when we seek him and rely on him and trust in his power, we are undefeatable and can resist and stand firm against any opponent and against the most overwhelming spiritual forces of wickedness that Satan can rouse up against us.

Then we ended last week by discussing that little phrase: "***and having done everything.***" Paul says, "***Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.***" We noted that this phrase speaks to our own responsibility in the battle. God calls us to action, what we called "dependent effort." He calls us to pray and then step out in faith, continuing to pray as we go. We don't pray and then lock ourselves in our room and expect God to work through us. We pray and then walk out in faith and as we do God provides the strength of his might and gives us what we need to fight the battle and be able to resist and stand firm.

So let's read our passage again today in Ephesians chapter 6, verses, 10 through 18, as we get ready now to begin examining each element of the armor of God:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints...

May the Lord bless the reading of his Word.

II. OVERVIEW OF THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

So as we continue on in our study of these verses today, let's start by summarizing the various parts of the armor. Now, on first examination you might conclude that there are 6 pieces of armor that make up the full armor of God, but I'm going to argue that there are 7...which as you know is a rather significant number with God. Beyond God's ordaining 7 days in a week at creation, there are a lot of other significant 7's in Scripture. Sometime for fun, you can check out all the references to 7 just in the book of Revelation: 7 churches, 7 angels, 7 stars, 7 lampstands, 7 trumpets, 7 peals of thunder, 7 bowls of wrath, 7 plagues, 7 years of tribulation...Well, you get the idea. The number 7 has a particular significance to God.

So let's briefly run through the various pieces of armor and then we'll begin looking at them one-by-one. Today we'll be tackling the belt of truth.

So here we go. The 7 pieces of the full armor of God are:

- 1) Truth girding your loins;
- 2) Righteousness as your breastplate;
- 3) Preparation of the gospel of peace as your shoes;
- 4) Faith as your shield;
- 5) Salvation as your helmet;
- 6) The Word of God as your sword;
- 7) Prayer in the Spirit covering it all.

I want you to notice first that there are 3 “having’s,” 3 “taking’s,” and 1 “praying”:

- 1) having girded your loins, having put on the breastplate; and having shod your feet; then
- 2) taking up the shield, take the helmet and take the sword; and finally
- 3) praying at all times.

You should also notice that the having’s are in the past tense, and I think this is quite significant. I believe what Paul is telling us here is that the first 3 pieces of the full armor of God are basic, essential, foundational things that must be firmly in place and established before we even think about doing battle with the spiritual forces of wickedness.

Have any of you had any recurring dreams or nightmares that you’ve experienced over and over through your life? I can think of 3 for myself right off the bat. In the first one I suddenly realize that I’ve totally forgotten about my horses and haven’t fed them for an entire month. I go down to the barn and find them completely emaciated and barely hanging on to life. What an awful feeling and an amazing relief when I wake up and realize it was just a dream! In the second dream, I arrive at a large banquet with thousands of people in attendance and suddenly realize that I’m the speaker and haven’t prepared anything. This is one of my ultimate nightmares! The final one is a dream I haven’t had since I was in junior high or high school, but I used to have it quite often. In this dream I go to school and suddenly realize I don’t have any pants on. Have any of you had that one? I know I’m probably a little strange!

But my point is: this is similar to what it would be like if we go to battle against the spiritual forces of wickedness without the first three pieces of armor. Yes, it would be very dangerous to enter a battle without a shield, a helmet and a sword. But to enter the battle with no clothes or shoes will mean we won’t be able to do a single thing to protect ourselves or even move around effectively for that

matter. Our biggest concern will be just trying to find some clothes to wear so that everyone will stop staring at us. If we don't have these first three pieces of armor in place before we go into the spiritual battle, we'll be a sitting duck...an easy and noticeable target for the enemy...completely distracted with our own nakedness and vulnerability.

So today, as I already mentioned, we're going to focus on the first of these 3 essential pieces of armor we need to have in place before doing battle with the enemy: the belt of truth.

III. THE BELT OF TRUTH

A. Girding Your Loins

Paul tells us in verse 14 of Ephesians, chapter 6, to: ***“Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth,”*** giving us the first important piece of the full armor of God. And I think the first thing we need to get a grasp on is what it means to gird your loins. This isn't a phrase we use very often today in modern-day English and needs a little explanation as we try to figure out what Paul is telling us here. The original Greek word translated, “girded,” means to fasten a garment with a girdle or belt. The English word carries with it the same idea of fastening a belt to hold something in place. And the word, “loins,” in this context refers to the hips. So the idea Paul is trying to communicate here is that of fastening your pants in place so you can move freely and quickly and without the distraction of having no clothes or poorly fitting clothes that hinder your movement or your ability to fully engage in battle. And the belt that we need to fasten our pants on and get us ready for action is truth.

B. The Status of Truth in the World Today

What would you say is the status of truth in the world today? How do you think the concept of absolute truth is faring in our culture and in the world as a whole? Josh McDowell in his book, “The Last Christian Generation,” reported the following thoughts on some statistics that were gathered about people in America today by the Barna Research Group.

He wrote:

“...the majority of our young people (81%) have adopted a view that ‘all truth is relative to the individual and his/her circumstances.’ So while our kids may be willing to state that certain things are right or wrong, they believe that it applies only to them personally. It’s not surprising then that seventy percent (70%) of our church-ed young people believe there is no absolute truth. In other words, the vast majority of young people from good churches and homes do not believe there is a truth outside themselves that determines right from wrong. They do not believe there is a universal truth that is right for all people, in all places, at all times. They have been conditioned to believe that each individual has been given the right to say and do what that person thinks is best for him or her.”

This is probably not a surprise to any of us here as we’ve observed the way our country and world seems to be abandoning any sort of absolute truth and fully adopting the philosophy of whatever works or makes you happy is fine. And really what the world now thinks is the ultimate sin is to actually claim there’s absolute truth. And if you take the next step of actually sharing absolute truth with someone else, you’re labeled a hater. How dare you make a statement about what’s right and wrong or true for someone else! Right and wrong and truth are believed to be a personal determination by each individual person and there’s no universal truth that applies to all people in all places.

At the same time our schools are subtly teaching our kids that there’s no ultimate meaning or purpose in life, but that we’re just highly evolved animals that are here only as a result of random chance and accident operating with nothingness over millions of years. It’s not surprising that teaching the rules of logic is no longer an integral part of our educational system, because logic applied to the theory of evolution will reveal how non-scientific and illogical it is. And the hopelessness and despair and meaningless of life that results from this philosophy of random chance and accident, of human beings simply being animals with no source of absolute truth, is having a profound effect on our society. Clearly truth is in crisis in the world today.

The question of Pontius Pilate to Jesus before his crucifixion could be an accurate description of the state of our world today. As Pilate tried to determine who

Jesus really was and whether or not he was guilty or innocent, Jesus responded with a true statement about who he was and about his commitment to truth. He said to Pilate, ***“You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.”*** And Pilate responded with that famous question, ***“What is truth?”***

And don't you hear the world asking that today: “What is truth?” Absolute, trustworthy, unchanging truth that can guide our choices and keep us on the right path has been discarded like trash on the side of the road. In its place has been erected the philosophy of “whatever works for you” and the elevation of science as the closest thing we have to truth these days. If you can see it and observe it with your eyes and test it scientifically, you've come pretty close to truth. Or if you can make an educated guess about what could have theoretically happened millions of years ago and call it science, it must be true. After all it must be true if educated scientists say it is or if you can find it on the Internet, right?

C. The Influence of the World's Philosophies on Believers

So this is the state of truth in our world today. And it could be that some of us even as believers in Christ have been influenced by these philosophies in ways we may not even realize. Have you ever said or heard another Christian say, “It's not our place to judge?” While this statement is true in the biblical sense of judging another person's salvation or their inner motives or writing them off as a hopeless case, what people usually mean when they say this is that we don't have any right to make a judgment about what's right or wrong in another believer's life or even confront them about sin they may be involved in. It's really the same philosophy that the world is promoting, wrapped up in a misinterpretation of the verse that says, “Do not judge, lest you be judged.” It's very close to the worldly philosophy that there's no absolute truth and that right and wrong is just determined by each individual person's perception of right and wrong.

Certainly, our job as believers is not to go around pointing out the faults of other Christians and nit-picking their behavior and choices. But we are called by God into a covenant community with other believers, whereby we are committed to each other in love and have the biblical responsibility of caring enough about each other to spur each other on to growth in Christ and to confront each other in love

when one of us wanders off the narrow road onto rabbit trails of sin and destructive behavior. I certainly hope that if you see me participating in something that is clearly out of step with biblical truth, you care enough to come to me in love and show me where I've stepped off the path.

Some believers have also been influenced by worldly attacks on the Bible that have mocked its account of creation, discounted the reality of a worldwide flood, challenged its historical accuracy, claimed it contradicts itself, and tried to explain away miraculous and supernatural events recorded therein. There are an alarming number of church goers that have accepted these worldly attacks on the Bible and have begun to view the Bible as full of good moral stories, most of which didn't really historically happen. They just focus on the moral and spiritual principles that the Bible teaches, while not really believing that the Bible is really the most trustworthy and accurate history book we'll ever have. As a consequence they also easily explain away or ignore clear teachings of Scripture that are unpopular in our world today.

D. The Biblical View of Truth

These are the challenges we're facing as we consider the state of truth in the world today and the influence the world's views have had even on believers. So let's take some time now to examine the biblical view of truth. And let me tell you, the Bible has a lot to say about truth and none of it lines up with what the world is promoting today. If we're going to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might, we must develop a biblical view of truth. It's the first piece of the armor of God and if we don't learn to walk in it and know it and accept God's view of truth, we'll be defeated before we even begin. Remember, our battle is against the father of lies, so if we don't know and live truth, we're dead in the water.

1. God's Connection with Truth

I first want to share with you a few Scriptures that talk about God and his connection with truth. The first one is in Exodus 34:6, when Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days in a meeting with God.

If you'll remember, Moses asked God to show him his glory. However, God only agreed to show Moses a glimpse of his back since Moses wouldn't have been able to survive a look at the full and awesome glory of God. God then hid Moses in the cleft of a rock and passed by in front of him, proclaiming this about himself: **"The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth..."** Here we see that truth is an essential part of who God himself is.

And David proclaimed of God in Psalm 40:11: **"Your lovingkindness and Your truth will continually preserve me;"** and in Psalm 57:10: **"...Your lovingkindness is great to the heavens and Your truth to the clouds."** God's truth is great and perfect and completely trustworthy. Psalm 117:2 proclaims, **"...the truth of the Lord is everlasting."** God's truth is not just something that was true in ancient times, it's true before time began, it's true today, and it's true for all eternity.

And what about the second and third members of the Trinity, Jesus and the Holy Spirit? What's their connection to truth? In John chapter 1, the Word, Jesus Christ, is full of grace and truth, and we're even told that grace and truth were realized or fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Jesus also said of himself in John 14:6: **"...I am the way, and the truth, and the life..."** And consider the Holy Spirit. Jesus describes him as the Spirit of truth in John, chapters 14 and 16; and the One who will guide you into all the truth...not just some of it! Clearly truth is a central part of our Triune God's character...truth that is unchanging and never becomes irrelevant over time. God is truth that we can count on and trust now and throughout eternity.

2. Where to Find Truth

And what does Scripture teach us about where to find truth? The world points us to science as the closest thing we have to a reliable source for truth, though it's always changing as new research is done and as a few more million years are added or subtracted here or there. But Scripture has quite a different view on where to find truth.

2 Samuel 7:28 tells us that God's words are truth. Funny the Bible never tells us that the words of the wise or highly educated scientists are truth. In fact it says quite the opposite in 1 Corinthians 3:19-20: **For the wisdom of this world is**

foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS"; and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS." Yikes, that's kind of a bold statement against those who consider themselves wise sources of truth in this world: their reasonings are useless and their wisdom is foolishness before God!

The Bible gives us only one sure and completely reliable source of truth, and that is the Word of God. This is made perfectly clear in Psalm 119. Verse 142 tells us God's law is truth; verse 151 says that all of God's commandments are truth; and in case you're still in doubt, verse 160 proclaims that the sum of God's word is truth. When you add up all of God's word and put it together, every bit of it is true and there are no contradictions!

Jesus, in John 17:17, reiterates that God's word is truth. And we can't forget that passage we all know so well in 2 Timothy 3:16:

All Scripture is inspired by God [the God of truth] and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

There's only one place to find unchanging, life-giving, practical, trustworthy truth in the world today, and it's the very Word of God given graciously to us in the Holy Bible and illumined for us as believers by the precious Holy Spirit dwelling within us.

3. The Benefits of Believing and Walking in Biblical Truth

So according to Scripture, what are some of the benefits we receive from the truth God gives us? One of them we already mentioned, and that is the benefit of preservation. We're told that God's truth will preserve us...it will protect our heart, keep us on good paths, and show us the best way to make it safely to our destination.

And Jesus shares with us in John 8:32 one of the most amazing benefits of believing and walking in God's truth: ***"...you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*** The truth breaks the chains we've enslaved ourselves with by believing the world's lies and accepting its hopeless and meaningless view of

life. When we know and believe the truth we experience true freedom like we've never known before. The world defines freedom as being able to do whatever you want, but God shows us true freedom and it comes from knowing how he designed the world to operate and learning to walk in step with his design, in dependence on him. That's true freedom!

Another benefit of the truth is sanctification. Jesus prayed in John 17:17, ***"Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth."*** The truth of God's Word sanctifies us, making us more like Christ as we believe it and learn to live it by the Spirit's power. Without knowing the truth of Scripture, we're not going to grow in our relationship with the Lord and experience the freedom and life and joy he wants to give us. Without knowing Scripture we won't know what God is like and how he designed life to operate. Sanctification occurs by the Spirit's power as he guides us into the truths of Scripture and empowers us to live it out. The benefits of knowing and believing God's truth are summed about beautifully in Psalm 19:7-11. Close your eyes for a moment and absorb these incredible benefits that come from knowing and living God's truth:

***7 The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul;
The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.
10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.
11 Moreover, by them Your servant is warned;
In keeping them there is great reward.***

The benefits of knowing and living God's truth are quite literally "out of this world!"

4. What Role Does Truth Have in Our Walk with God

And finally, as we round out the biblical view of truth that we need in order to gird our loins with it, what does Scripture tell us about what role truth needs to have in our walk with our Savior? Well, one clear teaching of Scripture is the

importance of truth in the form of sincerity and honesty in our service and worship to the Lord. Hypocrisy, deception and lying are to have no place in our walk with God. God already knows the state of our heart, the sins we're struggling with, and the mixed motives we have in the actions we take in life, and he's concerned with us approaching him and our fellow believers honestly and with humility, rather than trying to pretend we're very spiritual and have it all together.

We so easily get distracted with appearances and externals and feel a need to paste on an appearance of happiness or perfection or religiosity for others and even for God sometimes. But God calls us instead, to approach him and others as real, flawed people, who recognize their desperate need for him and know that he's the only source of truth, and hope and true heart change in life. He simply asks us to draw near to him in sincerity and truth, beholding him, experiencing his love and wisdom and fellowship, and allowing him to change us from the inside out.

We draw near to him in prayer and through his Word and find truth and freedom and hope and abundant life in him. He'll bring about the changes we need as we learn to delight in him and begin believing his truth in a practical way. Don't allow yourself to be led astray from "the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ." When we learn to simply delight in him, approaching him with sincerity and truth, he creates a true inner happiness and contentment that will naturally flow out through our lives to others.

IV. APPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

Well, I hope today we've each gotten a very clear biblical view of truth and where to find it. I hope that through what we've done today, the Spirit has created a desire in you to know and immerse yourself in the truths of God's Word. To put on the belt of truth, we each need to come to full rejection of the world's perception of truth, asking God to replace it with a passionate conviction that his Word found in the Bible is perfectly trustworthy and contains everything we need to know for life and godliness.

We're doing battle with the father of lies and the one who has been persistently and successfully throughout the ages leading the world to adopt his false view of truth. He whispers lies constantly to us and everyone around us, and the only way we'll be able to counter those lies with the truth is to know, believe and learn to live the truth of the inerrant Word of God. If we still haven't reached the point of practical, heart belief of the truth and sufficiency of Scripture, we're walking into battle with no pants on and setting ourselves up as easy target for the father of lies and his flaming arrows.

In our pastor's intensive over the past few days, we looked at how Jesus handled his direct battle with the father of lies during his temptation in the desert. And what we see is that Jesus didn't spend his time arguing and debating with Satan. Instead he simply spoke the perfect and unchanging truths of Scripture and Satan was defeated on the spot.

May we be equipped to do battle in the same way as our Savior, fastening on the belt of truth that is God's Word, not spending our time debating with the best liar in the universe, but simply knowing and believing God's Word and speaking it out in the temptations and daily deceptions we face. May God create in each of us a deep and burning desire to immerse ourselves in his truth and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into the unfathomable riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God that have been so graciously given to us in the Bible. May we as parents be given the wisdom and ability to model this for our kids and train them to reject the world's view of truth and instead believe in the unchanging, absolute truths of God's Word. Without a biblical understanding and belief in truth as defined by God, we will be heading into the battle grossly unprepared and destined to fail as soon as we enter the fray.