

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 6

“10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the [b]wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness 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. 14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

"The Weapons of Our Battle"

Last week we considered the nature of the battle that the Apostle Paul lays out for us here at the end of Ephesians.

- We learned that the battle is real, that it is a battle waged against a defeated enemy and that the victory belongs to Jesus!

This week we are going to consider the weapons of our warfare and I guess I will be playing the role of a drill Sargent inspecting the troops! Now I say this because I want this portion to be VERY practical. We had a long lunch conversation last week discussing how little we know about the heavenly realms compared to the earthly realms, but this week we come face to face with things we can and should know well. As I review them I will be sharing some personal experiences and challenging all of us to do better, like any good drill sergeant would.

At verse 13, the Apostle issues our call to arms: “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.”

Yes, we need God’s armor if we are to engage in this battle, and the first thing that the Apostle mentions is VERY rare in our modern age... 14 “Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth,”

Now why would I say truth is rare? We seem to have truth everywhere! And actually that is the problem!

- Today we are told that each of us can have our own truth and when truth is just what everyone thinks it is, the casualty is truth itself.

Now to be girded means to be surrounded by or be invested in and as Christians we are to be surrounded by and invested in Truth. Not truth as we see it, but the Truth that really exists, or as Francis Schaeffer would often say true truth. Let me give you a simple illustration:

Who here can tell me what two plus two equals.? So is that ‘your’ truth or is it always true?

Yep, true for you, true for me, true here in California and true in China. It will even be true when we build that station on the moon or go to Mars...

- In fact we can only do all those things BECAUSE we accept the truth of mathematics.

Now what if someone here said, I don’t think two plus two equals four, I think twenty-two is the better answer!

Now what would we think if after we explained the realities of basic math to that person, they simply said, well that is fine for you but my truth is two plus two equals twenty-two. Now most folks will say that is pretty silly, but how is it any different then our President announcing this week that a person born as a man has just become our first female Admiral?

In that case they have not only rejected basic biology, but also the Greater Truths that must be seen as true truth and not our private truth. For example, Genesis 1:1 says, in the Beginning God created the heaven and the earth. In that very short verse that begins God's revelation to us, we have the proclamation that God has always existed, that heaven is real and that the earth has a Creator!

➤ Now is that my own private truth or a truth that all men & women can see and must understand?

The Apostle Paul pulls no punches in telling us that it is as universal and knowable as two plus two equals four: Romans 1: "18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, [what truth do they suppress?]

19 "because what may be known of God is manifest in them, [meaning we all have a conscience] for God has shown it to them. [again, what truth has God shown them?]

20 "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, [everyone has to get up and live in God's Creation, not one of their own making]

The Apostle Paul then tells us what happens when we are not girded about with God's truth...

21 "because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools!"

The Apostle stresses the importance of being girded with Truth, not your own personal truth, but God's Truth as revealed to us in the Bible!

Paul then goes on in our text to say that we must understand our right standing before God which comes to us by God's Grace to sustain us in these battles:

"having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace;" Shod is another word we don't use much today, but it simply means what is on our feet! And God is concerned about what is on our feet when we approach His presence:

Exodus 3: "4 So when the Lord saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." 5 Then He said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." 6 Moreover He said, "I am the God of your father—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God.

So as those who are in Christ, what should we have on our feet: The Gospel of peace, the Gospel that makes us righteous in God's sight. Paul alluded to this important part of our armor back in chapter two when he said, "10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

➤ As we often point out, this is why regular confession of sin is so important both in our daily lives and here as we gather for worship.

From Exodus where Aaron and his sons had to wash their feet before entering the tabernacle, down through the examples of woman washing the feet of Jesus and of course Jesus washing His own disciples feet, we see this as the reminder that we must be shod with the Gospel of peace to approach and serve God: When Peter objected, "10 Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean..."

Having walked with Jesus for over 45 years now, I can tell you that those words only become more precious with each passing year! We can only rightly engage in these battles if we remember that that wrath of God against our sin has been propitiated by the work of Jesus so that our feet are shod in the Gospel of peace, that we are now to share with a needy world!

While I think the military image of the inspection of our armor is appropriate, when we consider the nature of the battle we learned about last week and some of the images Paul brings in from the Old Testament:

- We will notice that the image we are seeing here is more like a priest than a soldier.

It is a reminder to not skip over many of those details that can seem tedious in the Old Testament!

The Priests were girded about with a linen sash, they had washed their feet and their breastplate was impressive: Exodus 28 gives many of the details about the breastplate worn by the High Priest where we learn in part that it included twelve jewels, 21 And the stones shall have the names of the sons of Israel, twelve according to their names, like the engravings of a signet, each one with its own name; they shall be according to the twelve tribes.”

And we learn why at verse 29:

“So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart, when he goes into the holy place, as a memorial before the Lord continually.”

The Book of Hebrews goes to great lengths to show us how all of this relates to the work of Jesus and the breastplate of righteousness we are to put on is that very work...

Hebrews 6: “19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.”

And of course the writer of Hebrews takes us to that great hall of faith in chapter 11, which is why Paul continues with our text by saying,

16 “above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation,”

- I would summarize all of this as confidence or boldness because it is hard to picture a timid soldier who is triumphant in battle isn't it?

And again the Book of Hebrews tells us that we are to have such boldness:

Hebrews 4:16: “Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Hebrews 13:6: “So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”

And Paul finishes with the two most practical and thus most convicting weapons we have...

The Study of God Word and Prayer!

Paul tells us that above all we need, “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—”

We began with Truth, which can only be known based on God's Word and we end with God's Word in the image of the Sword.

- To be effective in these battles, we must know the Word of God so that it changes us and so we know the changes needed in our families, churches and nations!

I could share an awful lot of Scriptures that remind us about the importance of studying God's Word, but this morning I want to focus more on what we are doing about those commands!

Going back where we started how can we know True Truth without knowing the Bible?

How can we have the assurance of our salvation without knowing the Bible? How can we have confidence and boldness if we do not know the Bible?

Of course this begins with reading the Bible itself! It means availing ourselves of the tools we have to help us understand the Bible, like the Catechisms and Confessions we study. And it includes hearing and reading what others can teach us about the Bible in sermons, lectures or good books.

➤ **And to be successful in all of this we need time!**

I learned a valuable lesson about time in my political days when Senator Richardson was explaining how campaigns worked. He said they had three elements: People, money & time.

He rightly pointed out that we needed to be careful about time, because you could always find more volunteers or hire helpers and you could always raise more money, but once a day was spent, you could not add more time.

Knowing the Bible is no different: We need to have the Bible and other resources to study, we need health and the ability to read or hear those resources and we need TIME.

We have an abundance of Bibles and resources, which can be replaced if we lose them, we should stay healthy and be able to read, but we can eat better and learn more if needed but once a day goes by, there is no way to get it back! Putting off the study of God's Word until tomorrow is never a good plan.

We need to have a plan and to stick to it [mention how I read the Bible].

Our families need to have a plan and to stick to it, like family devotions and the training of our children.

Our church should have a plan and stick to it! Lots of Scripture in the worship service, Bible centered sermons and other opportunities to learn!

➤ **In ALL of these areas consistency is important!**

We should never tire of God's Word and we should know it like a bank teller knows good currency so that counterfeits stand out.

You will be amazed at what can be accomplished with consistency: Mention the men's and ladies studies or AI with church history.

And we should always evaluate what is stealing our time: Mention video games and other distractions.

I can't be up here acting like you drill Sargent every week, so we all need to discipline to evaluate our lives on a regular basis.

And finally the Apostle Paul turns to prayer and tells us that we are to be praying always... We often pass over that like we do the command to be anxious for nothing because who could do either!

➤ **Truth is, no one in their own strength can do either, but as we mature in our Christian walk both should be more true year after year!**

Example of Nehemiah... Personal examples.

AND remembering that we are to be praying for other as the Apostle asked them to pray for Him: 19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."

- **Let me close with Paul's reminder about the importance of these weapons to the Saints at Corinth...**

II Corinthians 10: “ Now I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ— 3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 6 and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.”

Communion Meditation: Deuteronomy 20:

“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses & chariots & people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for Jehovah your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. 2 So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. 3 And he shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; 4 for Jehovah your God is He who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.