

Living In The Truth

Humans throughout recorded history have used various types of materials as body armor to protect themselves from injury in combat and other dangerous situations. The first protective clothing and shields were made from animal skins. As civilizations became more advanced, wooden shields and then metal shields came into use. Eventually, metal was also used as body armor, what we now refer to as the suit of armor associated with the knights of the Middle Ages.

Late in the 19th century soft body armor made of silk was produced. Silk armor of this type was said to have been worn by Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria when he was killed by a shot to the head, thereby precipitating World War I.

During WWII troops wore bulky flack jackets. In the 1970s, one of its most significant achievements in the development of body armor was the invention of DuPont's Kevlar ballistic fabric. Ironically, the fabric was originally intended to replace steel belting in vehicle tires.

Today we're on the verge of a whole new generation of body armor. The London Daily Mail had an article this past week that was titled: "U.S. military develops Robocop armor for soldiers."

The goal is to have voice translators, color shifting exteriors for camouflage, and super-strong exoskeleton.

When you're under attack, your armor can make the difference between life and death.

It's interesting how the Bible portrays life as a spiritual battle. There's a war between spiritual forces and angelic forces.

It isn't a battle for the honor of a nation or for a piece of real estate. This is a battle for the souls men, women, and children and it's a battle with eternal, everlasting consequences.

The Bible tells us that in eternity past Lucifer, the annointed cherub, led 1/3 of the angels in a revolt against God. It was a failed revolt and Lucifer, or Satan, was

thrown out of heaven along with the rebellious angels, which we call demons.

God made a pronouncement of judgement on Satan. His end was to be the lake of fire.

And while that sentence still stands the execution of that sentence hasn't been carried out.

Today we live between the two events. Rather than just hurling Satan into eternal punishment and only showing one side of His character, God has postponed the sentence.

Satan could have accused God of being unloving and unforgiving. So God has used this interim time to demonstrate His character through redeeming humanity.

We sinned but God provided His Son as a sacrifice for our sin. That way holiness and righteousness were made clear. Sin is punished by God.

But His grace and mercy were also made clear because God forgives all who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

One day, in the not to distant future, God will execute the sentence on Satan. But until that time Satan is the enemy of God and the enemy of everyone who believes in Jesus Christ.

Satan hates God with all that's in him and his number 1 priority is to rob God of the worship that He alone deserves.

So the Devil, with all his craft and trickery attacks you and me.

His goal is basically two-fold. For a person who doesn't know God personally it's found in II Corinthians 4:4. *But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.*

He wants people to trust in their own morality, their own religion, their own system of ethics. Satan doesn't oppose religion just as long as people trust something other than Jesus Christ for their forgiveness.

The Bible says that demons don't appear as some gargoyle-like creatures. That would be too obvious. II Corinthians 11:14-15 *For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness.*

Satan and his followers come as angels of self-righteousness. they want us to believe that we don't need a Savior.

It takes the Bible to show us that we're sinners who need Jesus Christ.

But once we see our need of a Savior and Jesus and what He did for us at the cross Satan doesn't just give up and move on.

And so while we have II Corinthians to warn us about Satan's agenda with people who haven't trusted Christ yet, we have our passage we're currently studying in Ephesians 6 to warn us about his attacks on believers.

If anything when a person trusts Jesus Christ as the way to heaven Satan's assaults increase.

If he can't have you for eternity he wants to make sure you don't honor God with your life or introduce other people to Jesus Christ.

You want to get on Satan's bad side, live for God and bring others into the kingdom with you.

And that's why all throughout the New Testament we find warnings about Satanic attacks and instructions on how to resist the Devil.

And out of all of those passages, the one we're in now in our study of Ephesians, gives the clearest, most detailed account of the battle.

Open your Bible to Ephesians 6 pg. 1041

Before Easter we started the section by looking at verses 10-13 and I'll just like us to reread those.

Read vs 10-13

We saw last time that Satan is real. He's not a cartoon character in a red suit with a

pitchfork, but a very real enemy.

God's got some armor for us to put on so we can stand against Satan's attacks.

We saw that in verse 11 we need to put on the whole armor of God. The word translated "whole" in that verse is the Greek term *panoplia*. We get our English word "panoply" from that term and "panoply" means a "complete collection."

The word *panoplia* is actually a military term from Classical Greek that meant "the full armor of a heavily armed soldier." This was full battle dress.

God has a full battle outfit for us. This is a full complement of armor for us to wear because Satan is so deadly.

We know that his goal is to bring us down. It's obvious from all the references in these verses to holding our ground.

Verse 11 *that you may be able to stand...*

Verse 13 *and having done all, to stand.*

Verse 14 *Stand therefore...*

It's obvious that God is concerned about unstable Christians who don't have a solid footing in the truth.

That's why God has provided the armor. That's why we're to stand in His strength.

But now understand that all of this isn't just automatic. All believers have God's strength available to them but they have to put on the armor.

I. Christians Have To Make A Conscious Effort To Put On God's Armor

It's obvious this doesn't just happen. The way I know that is I look at my life and yours too. We're all prone to stumbling and being deceived by the Evil One. That alone shows that whatever putting on the armor is, it's a conscious learned process.

Edward Gibbon, in his classic, *The Rise And Fall Of The Roman Empire*, wrote that the Roman army began to despise the full battle armor they originally wore and that as time went on they were allowed to wear less and less of it. Gibbon says this was part of the reason they became less and less effective in battle.

When we get to heaven apparently we'll be wearing robes of glory, but not now. Now we're supposed to be dressed for the battle.

We're all in the battle. The question is are you equipped to fight? Are you successful in your walk with God or are you constantly being defeated?

The command is "put on the whole armor of God." Now that phrase can mean "the armor that God provides" or it can mean "the armor that God wears."

I believe both ideas are true. It's God's armor and He provides it to us as a shield.

Now at this point you you might be thinking, "Wait a minute. What would God need armor for? Does God wear armor?"

I. Christians Have To Make A Conscious Effort To Put On God's Armor

II. Christians Are To Be Clothed With The Armor That Belongs To God

The answer is "Yes, God has armor." And to see that I'd like you to look with me at 2 passages in Isaiah.

Turn to Isaiah 11 pg 614 Read vs 5

Now Isaiah 59 pg 657 Read vs 17

There's an obvious connection between these verses and Ephesians 6.

Those Isaiah passages are Messianic. In other words they describe Jesus Christ when He returns to judge His enemies and to establish His kingdom.

The last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation culminates Christ returning in righteousness to judge and to make war.

Revelation 19:11-16 gives this description: *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*

His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

For the Easter season "Artist" Cosimo Cavallaro, whose "art" involves use of food, decided to use chocolate to make a crude-looking Jesus with outstretched arms. The title was "My Sweet Lord." Fortunately the Roger Smith Hotel in New York, which houses the gallery, cancelled the show amidst an avalanche of complaints.

The good news is that Cavallaro did not make a chocolate sculpture of the Prophet Mohammed. THAT would be very disrespectful!

It's amazing how people feel so free to mock Jesus Christ. It's His name that's a universal swear word.

Nobody hits their finger with a hammer and says, "L. Ron Hubbard."

It's Jesus who's in the crosshairs. But that's not going to last forever.

And when He returns dressed for battle Satan is defeated and Christ's kingdom is established forever.

That's the same armor we're to put on. God's armor. Every confrontation we have with the Evil One is a miniature picture of the great battle between Satan and God which culminate at Armageddon.

God's armor is essential for us. So just what is it that we're to put on? What's going to enable us to win the battle?

II Corinthians 10:4 says, *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.* (NIV)

As we turn back to Ephesians 6 verse 12 explains: *We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against...spiritual hosts of wickedness...*

This isn't some kind of physical protection although we're going to see some interesting parallels between the Roman armor of the New Testament times and the armor of God.

Remember, the man writing this letter to the Ephesians is an Apostle of Jesus Christ, named Paul.

While he's writing this letter he was in prison in Rome and was chained to a soldier 24 hours a day. And even though they didn't wear full battle gear while they were guarding him, I'm sure the sight of a soldier just inches away must have kindled Paul's imagination.

I. Christians Have To Make A Conscious Effort To Put On God's Armor

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III. Christians Are To Put On The Belt Of Truth

Read vs 14

One of the rules of Biblical interpretation is we have to be aware of the culture in Bible times. It was the custom of men in the first century to wear robes, or in the case of Roman soldiers, a tunic.

The tunic was like a shirt that came down to the knees.

Every Roman soldier wore a belt. That belt held his dagger, it often had leather pieces down the front for added protection, and it held his tunic.

The Bible says, "Gird your waist with the truth." The word "gird" means "to surround" or "encircle."

A Jewish man starting on a journey would gird up his robe. He would tuck his robe in so he would be free to walk unencumbered.

For the Roman soldier it was "Put on your belt," because you didn't want any loose ends when you were out there in hand to hand combat.

You don't want some guy pulling your dress up over your head while your fighting!

So the belt did a number of things.

It held the dagger or sword. It prepared the soldier for action by keeping their clothing in place. They could hold up their shield in one hand and their sword in another without worrying about getting tangled up in their own clothing.

And it gave them a sense of confidence. To tighten up your belt meant you were

ready for action. You were pumped and ready to go.

But now what does the Bible mean when it says put on the belt of truth?

Interestingly Jesus said, "I am the truth." If you think about it, He's the personification of truth. So putting on the belt of truth has something to do with putting on Jesus Christ.

But then not only is Jesus the truth, the Bible is truth. In John 17 Jesus said to the Father, "Your word is truth."

I believe what we're to put on is the truth of the person of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Bible.

I've heard several different takes on this verse over the years and the one that really misses the point is when someone takes truth to mean truthfulness or sincerity.

It's important that we be truthful and sincere people. When we act hypocritically we turn people off from the faith.

But believe me, when it comes to standing against Satan's attacks on your life, you don't want to stand in your own sincerity.

You want to stand in the unshakable truth of Jesus Christ and the Bible.

In John 8:31 Jesus said this to a group of Jewish believers, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

He said, "You believe that I'm the Savior. Good. Now if you continue in my word, my instruction concerning truth, you'll really be my disciples. That's what real discipleship is."

That's what a totally devoted follower of Christ is. The truth that you learn and grow in as a disciple will set you free.

If we're going to be free from the results of Satan's attacks on our lives we have to have on the belt of truth.

According to the Bible Satan is the author of confusion. He leads us astray. He's our

adversary. He's an angel of light and the master of subtlety.

How do you deal with someone like that? Just by your own sincerity? No way!

You put on God's truth.

Without God's truth we're lost. We're defeated before we start.

I take it this means we have to have a settled conviction with regard to God's truth. No uncertainties. No lack of clarity.

We have to know who we believe in and we have to know what we believe.

It means I have to start seeing all of life through the lense of the Word of God.

A Christian who loves and practices God's truth is going to have a strong life. They won't be perfect, but they won't be tossed around by every temptation that comes along either.

Now, just to balance this out and expand upon it a little let me clarify something.

Just because we don't stand in our own sincerity doesn't mean we can just have a bunch of facts in our heads about the Bible but no commitment to incorporate it into our lives.

I've been studying the Bible for 36 years now. In 36 years I've accumulated a lot of knowledge.

But now watch this, because here's where a lot of Christians fail. That knowledge only does my good as far as I incorporate it into my life.

Mr. R. Vincent put it this way, "It's the state of the heart answering to God's truth. In a word, practical knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ; the agreement of our convictions with God's revelation."

So now what does that look like on a day-to-day level? To be girded with the truth involves a couple of things,

1. *Reality* If our lives agree with God's revelation of truth then there must be reality. There must be reality in our beliefs.

Reality in the belief that the Bible is the very Word of God. Reality in the belief that salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ. Reality in the belief that there really is a spiritual battle. Reality in the belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

We sit here and shake our heads and say “That’s what I believe.” but the question is, is it real in your life?

Why is it that every week we read about some pastor or Christian leader who gets caught up in some sin? Why is it that so many start out well in the Christian life but so few finish well?

Why is it that some kids can grow up in a home where God is worshipped and honored and when they get out on their own, God’s not a part of their life anymore?

If faith is just a matter of facts it isn’t really a biblical faith. If you’re a hearer of the Word and not a doer of the Word you don’t have on the belt of truth and you’re going to get all tangled up when you get into battle.

There has to be something rock solid in our personal convictions or we won’t have the ability or the courage to fight.

If God’s not really real to you today your not prepared for the battle. You haven’t put on the belt of truth.

If you’re not totally persuaded that Jesus Christ is alive and that His word is authoritative and powerful, no wonder temptation trips you up so often.

The preparation is to have a cinched up belt of truth. It means that I know personally that Jesus Christ is alive and that He’s living in me. This truth has set me free. I’ve known and experienced it. I’ve thought it through. I’ve interacted with it. I really believe it.

So to wear the belt of truth involves reality.

2. *Sincerity* The truth isn’t our truthfulness, it’s God’s truth, but we have to be sincere about that truth.

In John 17 Jesus prayed this for His disciples: *“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”*

"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17:14-17.

He was praying, "Father produce holiness in these guys through your truth. I don't ask that that holiness come by removing them from the reach of Satan, but that you would keep them through your truth even though they're living in the domain of Satan."

Satan's delight is hypocritical Christians. If there's hypocrisy in our life we don't have the belt of truth on, but we want everybody to think we do.

Satan just loves to expose that hypocrisy. As he does other people around say, "If that's what Christianity's all about, I don't want anything to do with it."

And we just get more and more discouraged ourselves.

That's why every step of the way we're driven back to the Bible and it's pattern of truth.

If we're not just going to get "blown out of the water" by Satan there's got to be reality in our life. There has to be sincerity.

Do you have the belt of truth on this morning? It starts by believing what the Bible says about us as individuals.

It says none of us are righteous, none of us are truly holy, in fact God says we're all sinners who fall far short of His glory.

It tells us that there's nothing that we can do to make ourselves right with God except to believe what He did in our place.

God came as Jesus Christ and paid the price for our sins. God says that all who believe are justified from all things.

Have you come to God through Jesus? According to the Bible, there's no other way to be forgiven. There's no other way to be established in the truth then to come through the one who said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*