**Brought to Life; Brought Together**

**Spiritual Warfare: The Armor of God**

**Ephesians 6:14-15**

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Well, here we are again. We are live streaming for a number of reasons we stated in our weekly newsletter. A number or our church family, including ministry leaders and volunteers, have either been exposed to COVID or have tested positive for COVID severely limiting our ability to meet. As I have said several times, I am not fearful of getting COVID or dying; I welcome death because I will be in the presence of Jesus. But I am also not going to be foolish and unnecessarily expose individuals. Then there is the very practical reality is that it would be very difficult and taxing on many volunteers who are already taxed. Finally, my biggest concerns is always been the reputation of the gospel. In our day, the greatest need for all of us is to hear from God so let’s look his word to us today.

 We are continuing our series in Ephesians, Brought to Life; Brought Together, looking at the spiritual battle we face in 6:10-20. Our text today is 6:14-15, looking at The Armor of God, specifically, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and shoes of gospel peace. The rest of this section, 14-20, can be outlined this way. There is one primary command, stand strong (14) for two reasons we saw last week, because we face evil spiritual enemies and because God has given us his armor (10-13). Then he tells how to stand strong, by wearing God’s armor described (14-17). Paul closes this section on our spiritual battle with prayer, tying it all together. Prayer is a means by which we appropriate God’s armor (18-20).

 Big Idea: Stand strong, resisting Satan’s schemes, with the armor of God.

**Stand Strong in Resistance/Unshakable (14)**

 Paul tells us again to stand strong. He has moved from describing discipleship as waking in obedience to Christ to discipleship as resisting Satan. As you stand strong in the Lord, resisting Satan, you are *able* (11, 13, 16,) to walk in the victory Christ has secured for you. This resistance applies to us corporately as a church too. We are only as strong as our weakest link. So over the next three weeks we are going to see how the armor of God enables us to stand strong!

**Stand Strong by the Armor of God (14-15)**

 First, we stand strong by wearing the belt of truth. The belt was a leather apron which protected a soldier’s groin, held their sword, and was used to tuck in their tunic. The belt is listed first because truth protects us as the foundation for life, following Jesus, and fighting Satan’s schemes. To tighten up the belt means to rely on truth as your foundation. Truth is the foundation because of the constant danger of false teaching that leads people away from Christ (2 Cor 11:3; Acts 20:29-30; Eph 4:14; 1 Tim 6:20-21). Biblical ignorance is Satan’s playground. This is why CCC emphasizes the Bible and expository preaching, has adult and children’s Sunday School, life Groups, and D groups. All of us need to love the truth, to live the truth, and to leverage the truth. Loving the truth is demonstrated by wanting to know the truth, engaging your bible, studying your bible, listening to good preaching, and reflecting on your bible as your source of life and strength. As you immerse yourself in the truth, God the Spirit changes your desires so you live the truth. Finally, we leverage the truth by speaking the truth to one another in love (4:15; 4:25). Unity and maturity in God’s family comes as we speak the truth to each other, though that is often hard. It’s hard to tell the truth because we get too easily offended. God wants us to welcome the truth spoken in humility and love because we love Jesus and want to be like him.

 Secondly, we stand strong by wearing the breastplate of righteousness. The breastplate was made of metal that wrapped around the front of the chest cavity from the shoulders to the groin, protecting the vital organs and so the soldier’s life. The breastplate of righteousness empowers you stand your ground against Satan because it represents Christ’s righteousness. Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us when we are justified or made righteous by faith before God. Thus, we are no longer condemned before God and under his wrath for sin (Rom 5:9; Rom 8:33-34). When you grasp this truth and rest in it – that there is nothing you can do to earn God’s approval except trust in the gospel - it is so freeing, motivating, and life giving. It frees you from beating yourself up for your own lack of righteousness and look to Christ and his righteousness imputed to you. Christ’s righteousness protects your spiritual life because your faith is founded on him, not you. When Satan whispers that you are not good enough, that you sinned again, questions your desire, he wants you to look away from Christ to yourself and you will never find life or strength within you. The belt of truth calls us to look away from ourselves, our own sinfulness and instead look to what Christ did for you. The breastplate of righteousness not only points to Christ’s righteousness but also to our personal righteousness. The fruit of justification is sanctification, becoming like Christ. That growth in righteousness sometimes comes in spurts or slow and steady, it is often painful, and other times imperceptible. So putting on the breastplate of righteousness means we are relying Christ’s righteousness to protect our spiritual organs which keep us alive, heart.

 Finally stand strong by binding your feet with the gospel. This refers to soldier’s leather sandals that were ¾ inch thick with spikes for gripping. The gospel, which reconciles us to God, making peace with God prepares us for standing against Satan’s schemes because we have changed allegiances Satan to God. The gospel rescues us from Satan’s clutches as we have seen and gives us stable footing with God and to stand against Satan. One of Satan’s schemes is to get us to lose our footing by falling back to works righteousness, thinking I have to do something to save myself, to justify myself before God, to gain his approval today. And secondly, the gospel prepares us or makes us ready to share the gospel with others. All of us are way more equipped to share the gospel than any of us think. The real issue comes down to boldness, which even Paul struggled with (6:19). But he promises to be with us and gives us words to share. Our community is ripe for the gospel. There are so many looking for peace and hope in the midst of fear of death.

**Response:**

* How is God speaking to you?
* Are you relying on truth as the foundation for your life?
* What about Christ’s righteousness?
* Or the gospel?

**Life Group Questions:**

1. What do you think of when you think of spiritual warfare?
2. Can you share positive or negative experiences?
3. What does it mean to be strong in the Lord and to stand strong?
4. How does Paul tells us to stand strong?
5. Describe what Paul means by each of the armor David looked at Sunday, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and the shows of the gospel?
6. How does each one of these make us strong?
7. How is God speaking to you in this message?
8. How are you to respond in obeying God?
9. How does this passage relate to you own discipleship?
10. How does this message help you in making disciples?