

Opening Words

This is the reason why so many Christians are losing the battle. They do not realize God is calling them to fight. Too many Christians do not realize we are in a spiritual battle or that the battle can be fierce, and they run away.

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I have said in many places that the holy war God calls us to is not a war fought with bombs and bullets, swords and spears, but a war fought with spiritual weapons because we are fighting a spiritual enemy. Paul has identified the enemy in clear terms so that we will make no mistake with whom we are fighting – not people, but the spiritual powers in heavenly places. Now in verses 13-17 Paul will list the weapons he provides for our spiritual combat. Listen to his words in Ephesians 6:13-17.

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.

Here we have it – the full armor of God and Paul identifies six weapons available to a Roman soldier to make him successful in battle, and then applies them to our spiritual war. These weapons are the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the boots of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.

This is the full armor of God. Twice in this great passage, Paul told us to take up the full armor of God. In verse 11 he said, put on the full armor of God that you may be able to stand firm against the devil's methods. And he repeats that in verse 13, take up the full armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day. Four times Paul tells us that we must stand. In verse 11, twice in 13 because the word resist is the word to withstand an onslaught, and in verse 14 with the command to stand firm. The full armor of God, standing firm, withstanding an onslaught – it's a sobering picture for God's people.

I must say that I fear this is the reason why so many Christians are losing the battle. They do not realize God is calling them to fight. Too many Christians do not realize we are in a spiritual battle or that the battle can be fierce, and they run away. They are AWOL – absent without leave. Some of God's people, I fear, do not take up the full armor of God. They like certain pieces of the equipment. They may be enamored by the shiny shield of faith, or the sharpness of the edge of the sword of the Spirit, or they may like their new boots of peace. But they must *take up* the weapons God provides because all are necessary in this evil day.

Paul said in verse 13 that the full armor of God enables us to resist in the evil day. In the original text, in the Greek, this is emphatic. We could translate it, “resist in this evil, this day.” Evil was real for Paul. He confronted it in many forms. Do you remember the messages about the founding of the church in Ephesus – there was great demonic activity in Ephesus and the surrounding region. One demonized man overpowered seven unbelieving men in a terrifying assault that sent fear throughout the city, but Paul could cast out demons by the name of Jesus Christ and perform great miracles and healing. The result was a great turning to the Lord, a great spiritual fire that brought about a great physical fire when people repented of their involvement with the occult and burned their magic books and occult objects. But this led to a great backlash in Ephesus and a riot. You can read all about it in Acts 19 and hear our messages on it by contacting our office, but the point I want to make is that Paul and others in his day faced great evil. They were evil **days**. They lived in the darkness of the pagan Roman empire, and it was necessary for them to put on the full armor of God.

Friends, the same is true in the United States. The America that honored Christianity is largely gone. America continues to slide deeper into darkness. America is following the footsteps of Europe, once a bastion of the faith, but now, the new dark continent where only 2% openly profess faith in Christ in an evangelical way. Yes, there are still pockets of goodness and faith, but increasingly in our institutions, educational and governmental, the slide is away from the faith of our fathers and toward the darkness of evil. The media, and the culture at large, espouse philosophies that are antagonistic to our biblical worldview. We live in evil days. As I have said before, this does not mean that we are to wring our hands in worry. On the contrary, Paul says, take up the full armor of God to fight!

It’s time to examine the weapons the Lord has issued us. The first one is the belt of truth. This is how Paul puts it 6:14, “Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth.” We don’t use those words very much today, to gird up our loins. What we say instead is, “tighten your belt.” We say this when times are hard. We also say this to prepare people for action. A Roman soldier would wear a tunic into battle, and if he did not have a good belt around him, the tunic would be too loose and would get in the way of his motions. The belt also held his sword, and we will see the importance of that shortly.

As Christians, we need to have our belt on to tighten our garments around us for the battle. Paul identifies the belt as truth and the first way we fight the spiritual battle is to embrace the truth of God fully. It is the truth of God’s Word that prepares us for battle, and we can apply this in three ways.

First, we must be committed to true doctrine. Back in 4:21 when Paul finished describing the spiral of sin and death, he said, “the gospel you learned in Christ, the Gospel you heard and were taught, is the truth. What you learned and heard is that the truth is in Jesus. It is not in the gods of the Romans or the Greeks. It is in the God of Israel and God revealed his truth supremely in Jesus. He revealed the truth about himself, about the world, about sin, about salvation, and about the future. And the belt that girds you up, that tightens your garments and prepares you to fight the spiritual powers is the truth of this revelation in Jesus.

I’ve shared with you before the sad commentary of too many professing Christians who do not hold

to even the basic truths of God's word.

- 47 percent of born again Christians believe it is possible for someone to earn their way to Heaven through good behavior.
- 38 percent of born again Christians do not believe Jesus was sinless.
- Almost 60% believe that when the Bible refers to Satan it is referring only to a symbol for evil and not someone who is real.
- About 58% believe that the Holy Spirit is not a real person but only a symbol for the presence of God.¹

How can we fight against the lies of our day if we do not know the truth?

There is a second application for the belt of truth. We must have truth in our hearts as well as in our minds. It is not enough just to know doctrine. We must hold to doctrine with sincerity in our hearts. Jesus told the woman at the well that her question about the location of worship was irrelevant. A time was coming and had indeed dawned upon the world when it did not matter if people worshipped on Mt. Gerizim or Mt. Zion. What mattered was the heart of people. People must worship with the truth, but they must also worship with the spirit. It was not enough just to go through the motions. They must have a heart of sincerity and truth toward God. And when we have a heart of truth toward God, we will be able to fight against the evil in our day. One sure way to lose the battle is to be a hypocrite, to have an outward show, but on the inside to be a different person. Let's not be this way. Let's have truth in our hearts as well as our minds and that will tighten our garments so that we will be effective fighters.

There is one more application of truth; truth carries the idea of faithfulness. When a man says to a woman, "I will be true to you," he means "I will be faithful to you." And this may be the primary meaning of the belt because this admonition is a quotation from Isaiah 11:5 and there it reads that "faithfulness will be the belt about his waist." What is also striking about the Isaiah passage that Paul quotes is that this is a prophecy and description of the Messiah. This should be encouraging because it shows that the Messiah is engaged in this battle and the weapons we use are the weapons that He used and still uses today.

What is the weapon of the Messiah? It is faithfulness to the will of God and faithfulness to carry out the plan of God. We gird up garments, we tighten our belt with the certainty that the Messiah will be faithful to all the promises of God and will fulfill them for us. We can prepare ourselves confidently for the battle because our God, our Messiah is a faithful God who keeps his promises to us. One of the titles for Jesus is the faithful and true witness. We find that in Revelation 3:14 which identifies Jesus as the Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the beginning or source of all of God's creation.

So, this is how we start, brothers and sisters – we pick up our belt of truth which is right doctrine, a sincere heart, and confidence that our Messiah will faithfully carry out the promises

¹ *Most U.S. Christians don't believe Satan, Holy Spirit exist* By: Jennifer Riley Tuesday, 14 April 2009, 14:35 (IST)

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and plans of God for us. We put on our belt and we tighten it appropriately so that we can have ease of movement for the battles that face us in these evil days.