

Series: Unsearchable Riches in Christ (Ephesians)

Text: Ephesians 6:14

Message #30 (May 6, 2007)

DRESSING FOR BATTLE – Part 1

Introduction

1. We are in a battle and the battle is to the death and the enemy is incredibly powerful. Whatever might be our struggles against flesh and blood, a far greater battle rages in the realm of the spirit. Without much explanation, Paul speaks of “cosmic powers over this present darkness” and “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”
2. Because of the severity of the conflict and the strength and power of the enemy, we need to heed the call of Paul to be ready for battle. Last week we learned about the preparations we must make so we are ready for the fight. We must find our strength in the Lord and in the power of His might. To fight in our own strength is suicide. We will lose. But if we find our strength in Him, we will fight from victory. In other words, we will win! That is a good start in our preparations for battle, but we are only half ready.
3. The other half of the preparation involves our putting on “the whole armor of God.” We are on the Lord’s side and we fight from victory, but we still need to be properly shielded from the fiery darts of the evil one. (There are casualties even on the winning side). Paul’s concern here is that when the smoke clears and the dust settles, we will still be standing. Once again look at verse 11 and verse 13 and verse 14; Paul was concerned that we would remain standing through the battle. (Actually this whole section from verse 10 through 20 is about standing).
4. Paul mentions six pieces of armor that are to be put on (and not taken off or laid aside) that need to be in place if we are going to be able to stand in the evil day. There is the **belt** of truthfulness and the **breastplate** of righteousness and the **shoes** of readiness in relation to the Gospel of peace and a **shield** of faith and a **helmet** of salvation and the **sword** of the Spirit. If we are going to be standing at the end of the day, we need to have these on.
5. While we could, with some great value, speed through these, I think it best to slow down and talk about one piece of armor at a time. The stakes are too high. If we are not prepared we will stumble and fall. So today we begin to consider the matter of dressing for battle with an examination of the belt of truthfulness. To help us comprehend the point Paul was making, we need to consider three comparisons with

truthfulness.

I. TRUTHFULNESS AND FALSEHOOD (Are we true?) When we think about truth or something being true, we also think about something being false. The life of the believer is to be a life of truthfulness. Although there are many scenarios that could be given to justify telling a lie, no room is given for that in the life of the believer. Everything in our life is to be true or based on the truth. There is no place for falsehood.

A. The armor all hangs on the belt of truthfulness

1. If we remove the belt, the breastplate is unattached and the sword drops off so the vital organs are exposed and we have nothing with which to ward off the enemy's attacks.
2. If we are not truthful, the Word does not do us much good. Not to be truthful is to be unrighteous. When we slip over into untruthfulness, we are no longer guarded by that righteous protection, leaving ourselves vulnerable to the enemy. When we are dishonest the Word does us little good and when we reach down to grab the sword, to fight the enemy, it is either not there or it is not accessible.
3. (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, p. 189 – *Truth is the first thing we put on. Without it we are completely lost. It means that we have a settled conviction with regard to the truth; it means that there are no uncertainties, no doubts. It means also that there must be no lack of clarity. There is no hope, Paul says, unless you put this on first. And that means nothing less than that we should know whom we have believed, and we should know what we believe. The girdle is truth – looked on, understood, appropriated, and in such a manner that it governs the whole of my outlook in every respect. Only in this way, says the Apostle, can you possibly fight a successful warfare against the enemy*).

B. The enemy hates the truth; he is the father of lies.

1. Every time we are deceptive we are following the father of lies. Such traitorous action is aiding the enemy. Surely we do not wish to do that?
2. Shortly after creation, Adam and Eve believed the lie of Satan and rejected the truth of God. This resulted in the downfall of the entire human race. Although God should be trusted and obeyed, many exchange the truth for “the lie” and worship and serve the created thing rather than the Creator. To hold anything more important or precious than God is to abandon the truth and to believe and live a

lie. (The day will come when God will cause those who have embraced the lie to be committed all the more to the lie – resulting in their eternal destruction – 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).

C. Freedom is heightened by the truth

1. Roman soldiers wore large tunics that were little more than a large square piece of material with holes for the head and arms. It hung low and loose over the body. Such a garment would hinder the soldier's ability to fight and possibly even to walk. The belt would gather the tunic together and keep it from becoming a hindrance to movement.
2. That was the picture in Hebrews 12:1 and Luke 12:35 "girding up the loins." When Paul spoke of a good soldier not being tangled in the affairs of this life, the same idea was present. Not to walk in truth is like trying to run a race or fight a battle in a graduation gown! We are not going to win!
3. We are not free to minister or contend for the faith if our lives are marked with falsehood.

II. TRUTHFULNESS AND HYPOCRISY (Are we real?) This is the second side of truthfulness and it is often ignored. Unfortunately there is a good deal of this that goes on in the church. Essentially hypocrisy is playing a part. In the Greco-Roman world that was the word used to speak of an actor in a play. He was a hypocrite because he was playing someone other than himself. Here we are, brave soldiers of the cross on the outside, but inside we are scared stiff. I am reminded of the story of Gideon. He was called to lead the Israelites against the enemy. He was outnumbered about 4 to 1. God spoke to Gideon, "Gideon, you have a problem." Gideon agreed with that, but was unprepared for what God would say next. "You have too many men. Some are afraid and their hearts are not in this. Send them home." 22,000 or the original 32,000 men left! The story concluded with Gideon and a mere 300 men armed with empty pitchers, torched and trumpets being victorious over a great army of 135,000. God caused confusion in the ranks of the enemy and they ended up killing off each other! The point of my interest here is the 22,000. Why were they afraid? They weighed the odds and assessed their strengths and weaknesses and concluded that they would likely die in battle. Why are we afraid to live for Jesus and to battle Satan? Maybe we have assessed our strengths and weaknesses and took a look at the enemy and concluded that we would die in battle. Let's explore this a little

more.

- A. We may be afraid of the truth because it reveals to us what we really are
 - 1. If we have on the belt of truthfulness we will accept ourselves and be ourselves to the glory of God. Even though the truth may show some things about me that are not too flattering, I need not be afraid of the truth.
 - 2. Someone has correctly said that God has given us three editions of the truth: God's Word is truth; Jesus Christ is the truth; the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Jesus Christ is truth – a person I can love. The Bible is truth, a book I can learn, The Spirit is truth, a person who lives in me and enables me to live what I learn from the Word about Jesus Christ. Christ captures my heart in love; the Word instructs my mind and the Spirit enables my will to obey the truth. We do not need to be afraid of truth – regardless of the circumstances.
- B. We may be afraid of the truth because it reveals to others what we really are
 - 1. The truth sets the standard and shows how far away we fall short. If we have failed to live the truth, we cannot face the enemy without great fear. If we are living a lie, we are afraid that the truth of that will come out. The accuser of the brethren is usually correct in his accusations concerning us.
 - 2. If our lives are characterized by the truth there is nothing that can surface to bring indictment or embarrassment. There is great comfort and freedom in living a life of truthfulness. The enemy has nothing on us when we live a life of truthfulness.

III. TRUTHFULNESS AND INSINCERITY (Are we committed?) Truthfulness not only carries the idea of honesty and integrity, but also the concept of serious commitment. Too many of us never really apply the belt of truthfulness. We are insincere in our walk with Christ. We do as little as possible to sooth our own conscience, but we are not really fully committed to a life of obedience to Christ. Here are three questions concerning truthfulness in regard to sincerity.

- A. Are we serious enough to pay the price? Paul paints a picture of the cost of living a life of truthfulness in the midst of the battle when he writes, "endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." He also speaks of not getting entangled in civilian affairs. If we are to have on the belt of truthfulness, it means that we know the cost.

- B. Are we serious enough to win at any cost? If we have on the belt of truthfulness, it means that we maintain the desire to win. I think that is what Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians, ***Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.***
- C. Are we serious enough to settle for nothing but giving our best? That may be what Paul was speaking about to the Philippians, ***And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.***

Conclusion

1. Our objective is to be standing when the battle is over. That is not likely to be so if we do not begin with the belt of truthfulness. If we compromise the truth, we will look like David trying to wear King Saul's armor. It won't fit well and will lead to more harm than good. If we compromise the truth, we will trip over the breastplate of righteousness as it falls to our feet, damaging our shoes. The sword will fall to the ground and be lost, making it necessary to lay down the shield of faith and to remove the helmet of salvation so we can look for our lost sword, leaving us vulnerable to the evil one's fiery darts! We must not compromise the truth! There is too much at stake.
2. Maybe it is time for us to take inventory of our lives in regard to the truth. Do we know the objective truth of the word? Are we dabbling with dishonesty? Are we playing the hypocrite? Are we lackluster in our commitment to Christ? It is time to put on the belt of truthfulness and to keep it on! If we do, we will be standing when the smoke clears and dust settles.
3. There is no excuse for us to falter. If we draw our strength from the Lord – from the power of His might, and if we put on the whole armor of God, beginning with the belt of truthfulness, we will be standing when the battle is over. It starts with the truth!
4. *{We have been called to endure hardship, and every Christian who has gone before us has had his share. Jesus said, "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you"*

(John 15:20). But Jesus also said, "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus is the perfect Commander who leads by example and will bring us to certain victory in the end.

5. *As a good soldier we are separated from the "normal" life. A "soldier in active service" does not have a 9 to 5 job, or even a long 60 to 70-hour workweek. He is a soldier 24/7. His body, his health, his skills, his time - all that he is - belongs to the military. Even on leave, he is subject to recall at any time, without notice and for any reason. And whenever ordered into dangerous duty, he is expected to put his very life on the line without question or hesitation. Consequently, he is separated from his normal environment, so that he will not "entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life." It is not that we, as Christians, should have no contact at all with former friends and surroundings, but we should never be caught up and enmeshed in them. We should never allow earthly matters to interfere with the fulfillment of our duty to the Lord. Temporal concerns and activities, innocent in themselves, have neutralized the effectiveness of many pastors, ministries, and even doctrinally sound churches. Though they once labored faithfully in the primary purpose of serving Christ to advance His kingdom against the forces of darkness, they have unwittingly taken themselves out of the battle or have become casualties in it. Just as the dutiful soldier places his life willingly on the line in the service of his commander, so also we must willingly deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). We will then find ourselves echoing Paul's words, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:24).*
6. *A good soldier has a genuine desire to "please the one who enlisted him." The Lord deserves our honor, our affection, and our obedience for all He has done for us. His own courage on the battlefield was unparalleled. He stayed the course and went before us to win our freedom and to gain us eternal life. And now He seeks our loyal service in His army. We must be strong in Him and in the power of His might and we must put on the whole armor of God so that when the battle is over, we are still standing!} (Bracketed conclusion is, with minor changes, a quote from a John MacArthur sermon on Spiritual Warfare)*