

"Put On the Full Armor of God"
(Ephesians 6:14-17)

Introduction: Last week we saw the fierce battle that is being waged by the world forces of darkness, the spiritual wickedness in the heavenly places. Though they know that the battle has already been won by the Son of God, they are doing all in their power to overcome or to forestall the advance of the Kingdom of God, and their power is tremendous. The devil and his angels know that they have but a short time. They are using all their cunning and all of their supernatural powers to take as many souls to hell with them as they can. They know that they cannot claim those who belong to Christ, but they are doing all that they can to neutralize their strength, demoralize their values, desensitize their consciences, and overall to nullify any effectiveness which they might otherwise have in their service to the King. They can only go as far as God will let them, but God has given command to His soldiers to watch and pray that they enter not into temptation. If they fall into it, they have only themselves to blame. God has given the strength and He has given the weaponry of our warfare. What we do with these spiritual weapons will determine whether we will experience victory in our battles, or a life of defeat and discouragement at the hands of Satan. And what the Spirit of God is saying to you through this text this morning is,

Christian, you are commanded to stand firm against the enemy of your souls by taking up the whole armor of God and to wage a faithful warfare for the glory of the Lord.

- I. *Christian, You Are to Stand Firm Against the Enemy of Your Souls.*
 - A. *Your Strength Will Do Little Good against Your Adversary.*
 1. *Do not be deceived, the devil is a fierce enemy.*
 - a. *Yes, Satan was bound by Christ in His earthly ministry. "OR HOW CAN ANYONE ENTER THE STRONG MAN'S HOUSE AND CARRY OFF HIS PROPERTY, UNLESS HE FIRST BINDS THE STRONG MAN? AND THEN HE WILL PLUNDER HIS HOUSE" (Matt. 12:29).*
 - b. *Yes, the evil demons who were once the angels of God are bound and in prison, "AND ANGELS WHO DID NOT KEEP THEIR OWN DOMAIN, BUT ABANDONED THEIR PROPER ABODE, HE HAS KEPT IN ETERNAL BONDS UNDER DARKNESS FOR THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT DAY" (Jude 6).*
 - c. *But though they are bound in a limited sense, that they may not gather the nations together for the great battle of God the Almighty, that they might not bring history to the antichrist stage, they are still very actively seeking to thwart God's plans.*
 - d. *Satan is a very strong and fierce adversary.*
 2. *You cannot defeat him with your own devices.*
 - a. *His power and might are too great.*
 - b. *No mortal being can assault the lord of darkness in his own strength and triumph.*
 - c. *Even Michael the archangel, "when he disputed with*

the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you' (Jude 9).

- (i) The flippant attitude prevalent today towards the devil is lunacy.
- (ii) Those who delight the most in symbolically crushing him underfoot are usually those churches which he has most tightly bound.
- (iii) You dare not underestimate his power.

B. But God Has Provided You With His Strength and Weaponry.

1. Remember Christ has defeated your enemy on the cross.

- a. *He is the seed of the woman who was to crush the head of the serpent.*
- b. *He is the champion of God who brings the unlawful usurper to a timely end.*
- c. *He broke the power of the devil on the cross, yet the battle continues for the devil knows "that he has only a short time" (Rev. 12:12).*

2. And He has provided you, His soldiers, with His strength and armor to wage the warfare.

- a. *You are commanded to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.*
- b. *You are to put on His full armor that you might be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*

C. And He Has Given You the Command to "Stand Firm."

1. Paul is not saying here, "If you want to stand firm, then you should put on the armor."

- a. *This goes without saying.*
- b. *No soldier truly convinced of a war, seeing it with his own eyes, would dare to step onto the battle field wearing his civilian clothes.*
- c. *He would be cut down in a moment!*
- d. *The armor is necessary for the soldier's survival.*

2. But Paul here is giving a divine command, "Stand firm!"

- a. *The war is not at the Christian's discretion.*
 - (i) *One cannot say, "I never signed up for this!"*
 - (ii) *All mankind are fighting in this war, either on the Lord's side, or Satan's.*
 - (iii) *It is the battle of the ages, the war of two kingdoms.*
 - (iv) *And you as Christians are enlisted in the ranks of the King of kings.*

b. You are expected to fight valiantly for the One who gave His life for you.

- (i) *In a state of nature, you fought against God and were His enemies.*
 - (a) *"AMONG THEM WE TOO ALL FORMERLY LIVED IN THE LUSTS OF OUR FLESH, INDULGING THE DESIRES OF THE FLESH AND OF THE MIND AND WERE BY NATURE CHILDREN OF WRATH, EVEN AS THE REST" (Eph. 2:3).*

- (b) Everything you did was abominable in the sight of God. You were the children of His wrath.
 - (ii) But Christ came and removed your sin and reconciled you to God.
 - (a) "FOR IF WHILE WE WERE ENEMIES, WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON, MUCH MORE, HAVING BEEN RECONCILED, WE SHALL BE SAVED BY HIS LIFE" (Rom. 5:10).
 - (b) And now you have peace with God, whereas before you were bitter enemies.
 - (iii) You are to fight on Christ's side now, for His glory, as faithful warriors.
 - (a) You are to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.
 - (b) And you are to promote the advancement of the Kingdom of God and His Christ.
 - (c) This is your calling as a Christian. Nothing else will do.
 - (d) If you are not enjoining the battle at some point, you are sinning against the Lord and being a traitor to His cause.
 - (e) Don't run from the battle; stand and fight!
3. *But unless the armor is on and in place, you will not stand no matter how fiercely you might try.*
- a. *The armor is meant to protect you in warfare and to be a means of fighting back.*
 - b. *It must therefore be put on before you will be able to stand.*
 - c. *And yet the warfare commences, at varying degrees, as soon as you are converted to Christ.*
 - d. *And the effectiveness of your armor will be increased or diminished by how much you cultivate its usefulness in your lives.*
 - (i) *As you will see in the various pieces of armor, you may be stronger or weaker in relation to each.*
 - (ii) *The cultivation of each area should therefore be your life-long concern.*
 - (iii) *So let us now look at the first piece of armor.*

II. *First, You Are Commanded to Gird Your Waist with Truth (6:14a).*

- A. *The Belt Was the First Thing Applied to Prepare for Action.*
 - 1. *The soldier wore a large tunic that needed to be fastened down before he could effectively fight and not be encumbered.*
 - 2. *He did this by way of a leather belt into which he would tuck his tunic.*
 - a. *If the tunic was not fastened down, it might cost him his life.*
 - b. *Therefore it had to be secured by the belt.*
 - c. *This is the same thing that Jesus refers to when He says, "Be dressed in readiness", which is literally "have your loins girded" (Luke 12:35).*
 - d. *And where Peter says, "Therefore, gird your minds*

[or more literally "gird up the loins of your mind"] for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:13).

- e. "Girding the loins was a mark of preparedness, and the soldier who was serious about fighting was sure to secure his tunic with his belt" (MacArthur 348-9).

B. *And So You, Christian Soldier, Are to Gird Your Life with Truth.*

1. *It does not refer to the natural virtue of sincerity of mind.*
 - a. *That is, it does not necessarily refer to an honest and sincere spirit.*
 - (i) You've seen individuals such as this, though they are becoming increasingly scarce.
 - (ii) Many of the ancient philosophers prided themselves on speaking the truth and seeking truth.
 - b. *But men in a state of nature may possess this.*
 - (i) Yes, total depravity teaches that all of a man's being is touched by sin.
 - (ii) This means that in himself he is unable to do any truly good works that would commend him to God.
 - (iii) But it does not teach that all men are as bad as they could be.
 - (iv) There are even those whom we would say are "virtuous."
 - (v) Their deeds of love and charity put most every Christian to shame.
 - (vi) Yet, this they do only because God is restraining their wickedness.
 - c. *And if this be of nature, then it is no part of God's divine armor.*
 - (i) No part of man's original constitution may be counted among the pieces of Christ's armor.
 - (ii) The armor is composed of gracious helps, we would not need them if we already possessed that faculty.
2. *Nor does it refer merely to the objective truth of the Word of God.*
 - a. *That is, it is not the mere knowledge of the truth of Scripture that equips you for battle.*
 - (i) You may know a great deal about the Bible.
 - (ii) You may know all the Bible stories.
 - (iii) You may know enough Bible "trivia" to amaze your friends and family members.
 - (iv) You may know the doctrines of Scripture.
 - (v) You may even know the more comprehensive and coherent Reformed system of doctrine.
 - (vi) And you may even be qualified to teach them at a Bible college or seminary.
 - b. *But mere knowledge is not sufficient considered in and of itself.*

3. ***Rather, it refers to the truth of God apprehended and applied.***

a. ***It is not merely the intellectual attainment of information.***

- (i) I say not "merely," the apprehension of truth.
- (ii) This is only the first step, there is still much more, that which makes all the difference.
- (iii) Does the knowledge of how to eat properly for a healthy body do you any good if you do not act upon it?
- (iv) Does the knowledge that cigarettes cause cancer, or that excessive alcohol consumption causes premature liver failure help you if you don't eliminate these excesses?
- (v) No! Neither does knowledge of divine things do you any good at all unless you act upon it!

b. ***The truth referred to here is that truth applied to your life and lived in faith.***

- (i) So many deprecate the acquiring of divine knowledge.
- (ii) But some may do so for a good reason.
- (iii) To learn all that the Bible teaches and then to sit on it and not act is hypocrisy.
- (iv) It is saying that I believe these things to be important enough to know them, but they are not important enough to do them.
- (v) James said, "But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of a person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does" (1:22-25).
- (vi) It is good to acquire knowledge if we are willing to put it into action.
- (vii) Anything less is sinful; it is the result of the exceeding deceitfulness of sin.
- (viii) THAT WHICH WILL EQUIP THE LORD'S SOLDIER FOR BATTLE IS NOTHING LESS THAN THE TRUTH OF GOD STORED INTO OUR MINDS, RECEIVED WITH A READY HEART, AND PATIENTLY APPLIED TO OUR LIVES SO THAT WE ARE TRULY LIVING A LIFE OF GODLINESS.

4. ***To gird oneself with anything less in this war is futile.***

a. ***You may seek to fight equipped with your own philosophies.***

- (i) Many in the history of mankind have tried.
- (ii) The gnostics tried to overcome sin by severe asceticism, but they failed.
- (iii) Every philosophy of man which is not built upon the timeless and perfect truth of Scripture, or

consistent with it, will lead a man down the path of destruction.

- (iv) "THERE IS A WAY WHICH SEEMS RIGHT TO A MAN, BUT ITS END IS THE WAY OF DEATH" (Pr. 14:12).

b. You may seek to fight guided by your own reason.

- (i) You may seek to trust your own unenlightened reason.
 - (a) The mind corrupted by sin is certain to lead you astray.
 - (b) It does not know the truth of God, nor does it desire to know it.
- (ii) You may even seek to trust your enlightened reason apart from the Word.
 - (a) Many trust that they have an infallible source of guidance in the Spirit bearing witness in their hearts.
 - (b) And some believe that the truth is *so* self-evident that they follow what they call "common sense."
 - (c) But even the regenerate heart is laced with the remnants of indwelling corruption and is sure to lead us into error unless measured against the standard of God's infallible Word.

c. You may even seek to fight guided by dead traditions of men.

- (i) Some agree that reason cannot be trusted and *so* cast aside all reliance upon their own reasoning ability.
- (ii) Instead they retreat into the long-standing traditions of the church, relying on what it says, and trusting that they have God's truth in its fullness.
- (iii) However, there is no excuse for neglecting the study of God's Word.
- (iv) There is no guarantee to the church of an infallible teaching agency.
- (v) All of God's children are commanded to read and search the Scriptures.
- (vi) And *so* this you must do if you are to fight and remain true.

d. The only reliable guide in matters of spiritual warfare is the truth of God.

- (i) It is a sure and steadfast guide.
- (ii) It is the Word of the infinite God and *so* is certain to be the truth.
- (iii) It will protect you from every evil and false way, *so* that your feet do not lose the path and thus fall deep into enemy territory.
- (iv) But remember, the Word left unapplied will do you no good. Like the vaccine which is able to save your life won't as long as it remains in the bottle, *so* the Word will do you no good unless it is whole-heartedly embraced and applied.

- (v) Children of the Lord, you need this piece to divine armor if you are to stand. You need to search the Scriptures and be constantly applying it to your life.
- (vi) Cinch up the wholes in your obedience, and ready yourself for the war, and be victorious. Amen!