

Sermon Text: [Ephesians 6:14-15](#)

Welcome again everyone. We are so glad you are here

Summary of last week.

We are in week two on the "Full Armor of God" of how to do battle with the unseen spiritual forces, and we need to know that just because something is invisible it doesn't mean it's not real. And so we are talking about the spiritual realities that we have to come up against. And so, in order to do this Paul instructs his friends from 2,000 years ago to put on the full armor of God. Now obviously it's metaphorical. It is something that we do mentally and spiritually and psychologically, but we understand who we are in Jesus Christ, because one of the things as we go through this life is we need to be prepared for is temptation. Satan's greatest tool is temptation; where he tries to get us to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. That's a great definition. We are trying to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. I was hungry, so I stole. I felt inferior, so I lied. I needed money, so I cheated. I was lonely, so I ran with the wrong people. I was depressed, so I drank. I was bored, so I let my eyes wander in the wrong direction. I wanted friends, so I gossiped.

You know the list does not end there. You can think of all kinds of things. And what happens when we fail, when we succumb to that temptation; it is like temptation is the left hook and then accusation is the right cross, right? In other words it's the knockout punch. See, you did it again. And then all of a sudden all of this stuff starts to come up from within that Satan hooks us in to. We suffer recriminations of shame and guilt. And one of his primary objectives is to get us feeling wrongly about ourselves and thinking wrongly

about ourselves. If you buy in to that, you will start to feel down and then you will start to feel depressed, and then you will start to feel bad, and then you will start to feel unworthy, and then inadequate, and then worthless, and like I am nobody. And when you are there you are defeated and that is one of the key ways that the enemy tries to nullify our effectiveness as Christians.

And so today we are going to **address** the battle that can rage within us like that, through looking at the first three pieces of armor. And we are not to just look at the armor, we are not to just consider the armor, we are to put it on. Let's think about the photos that we have seen a lot of unfortunately in the news today. I mean you look at those guys over there in Iraq and you know they are not wearing flip-flops, right? They put on everything from head to toe to prepare for their day. And in a similar kind of way, Paul is saying that even before you get up and your feet hit the floor you can run through this armor in your head and equip yourself for the day for whatever is going to come against you; to appropriate it. Now somebody might say, Well how do you put on something that's, again, an armor that is not real?" "It's not material, but it's real." C.S. Lewis said,

"We can't even picture the atoms that hold together our whole world, how are we going to picture everything that goes on in the spiritual realm?" "And even if we could picture it", he says, "It would not be worth believing, because we just wouldn't understand"; in other words just because it's not visible, does not mean it's not real.

And so, let me ask you a question; is your salvation real? Those of you who have come to put your faith in Jesus, is that real? Is what happened to you real? Could you see it, could you touch it? In some ways when you look at the sacrament of baptism and the

sacrament of communion, the two sacraments in the Protestant church, that's trying to bridge the reality in some small way between the material and the invisible. And so, in greater terms our salvation is real, but it's not material. The battle is real and you can't see it, but you can see the effects all around. So the armor we look at today is God's armor.

In [Isaiah 59:17](#), I think Paul was thinking of these kinds of verses when he thought about the armor. It wasn't just that he looked at a Roman soldier; listen to Isaiah 59, verse 17: "He put on righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on his head." That is Isaiah speaking of God and speaking of the Messiah, of the one who will come. And so, when Paul is talking to his Christian friends, he is saying you know what, this is what God does. God does all of this on our behalf and so when you are putting on the armor you are really putting on Jesus. You are really putting on what God has provided. So each piece is a gift to cover us fully. There are no unprotected surfaces so that we will be able to stand against every attack in Jesus Christ. Now, let me read to you the text in its fullness. Somebody may not have been here last week and even though I am focusing on 14 and 15, I want you to hear the whole context again of this issue of the armor of God in spiritual battle. Let's again pray before we read.

Lord, we pray because we know that apart from your Holy Spirit we will not be able to understand or grasp what you have for us and so we pray that you would use these words not just as words of ancient times, but as words today to each of our hearts as we have need and we pray this in the power of the Holy Spirit in Christ name, Amen.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should."

See we are to put on every piece so that we might fight the good fight of faith as Paul says in another context. So it makes complete sense that when he begins with these six pieces of armor or six pieces of military dress as it were, that he starts with the belt of truth. He says to buckle it on; to put it on firmly around your waist, buckled around your waste I just read a statistic that it's estimated by the folks who study this that 15,000 lives a year are saved because people buckle up their seatbelts. There was a time when there weren't even any seatbelts and there was a time that people didn't even buckle them if there was and even some may still not

buckle them up, but the majority of people because they do it, 15,000 lives are saved it's estimated. So what a great image to say the first thing we've got to do is buckle on the truth of who we are in Jesus Christ; to be safe in him.

A Christian's survival in the world requires a firm grounding in the absolute truth of the Bible. The power of truth is that it sets us free by breaking the power of the devil's lies and the deception they create (John 8:31-32) ***the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."***

Just as with Eve in Eden, the devil downplays the consequences of sin and promotes its pleasures. Firmly rooted in the truth, we are best equipped to recognize the lies, resist the devil and do God's will.

Paul mentioned that the "belt of truth" is part of the whole armor of God in Ephesians 6:14. Soldiers in Paul's day wore belts to secure their clothing and hold weapons. The belt of truth has similar but expanded functions for spiritual warfare that include:

Functions of the Belt of Truth for spiritual warfare include:

1. Sanctification: The belt of truth sets us apart from people who don't follow God. Jesus prayed that God would sanctify us by the truth (the word): "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). To sanctify means to set apart for a special purpose and to purify. The truth helps us stay on mission for God and avoid falling back into sin's corruption.

2. Guidance: The Holy Spirit uses the truth to guide us in whatever circumstances we're in. John wrote, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13). Just as communications are crucial on the physical battlefield, so is the Holy Spirit's guidance via truth on the spiritual battlefield.

3. Intelligence & Discernment: Intelligence data and its interpretation (i.e. discernment) can play a critical role in the outcome of military conflicts. God's word reveals truth that helps us decisively recognize the devil's lies in spiritual conflicts. Hebrews 4:12 explains how the word reveals truth: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Armed with the truth of the word, we'll recognize the devil's lies for what they are.

4. Battle readiness: Belts were used in Bible times to secure loose garments so that a person could run and/or fight effectively (1Kings 18:46, 2 Kings 4:29)

***example David and the vet South River Bridge or the teens with their pants hanging down - may need belt to run.**

The belts also provided a place to attach weapons (2 Samuel 20:8). When the enemy attacks us we may have to move quickly and use our spiritual weapons (Praise, Prayer, Sword of the Spirit, etc) "on the run". The belt of truth enables us to move quickly and confidently without tripping into lies or losing our weapons.

PUTTING ON THE BELT EACH DAY: There are some key actions we can take to put on our belt of truth securely each day. These include:

1. Speak it: When we say we are putting on the belt of truth and believe it, the belt's function is maximized. Example words to speak:

"I put on the Belt of Truth. I believe that God's word is truth and I fill my mind with God's word. I have the Holy Spirit living in me, who will guide me in truth. The truth enables me to discern the devil's lies and avoid being taken captive to do his will."

2. Study the word: Daily Bible study will help keep truth in the forefront of our minds (John 17:17). This is done by studying the Bible, memorizing scriptures and speaking verses applicable to the situations we face each day. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). There is no substitute for Bible study during our quiet time with God. It's essential if we hope to grow closer to God and maintain victory over our old sinful habits.

3. Ask God to remind you of the truth: The Holy Spirit, the "Spirit of Truth," will remind us of the truth and guide us in truth as we walk with God (John 14:17,26). In order for the Spirit to "remind" us of God's word, we have to have already read it or heard it. If we've done our part in abiding in God's word, we'll have maximum sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. A simple invitational prayer we can pray is: "Heavenly Father, please remind me of your word today and guide me in truth by the Holy Spirit. Please help me hear, know and obey your voice in every situation. Please strengthen my

ability to retain and recall your word as it applies to the situations I face. Thank you, Heavenly Father. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."

Maintaining the Belt

To keep our belt of truth in great shape, we must keep our heart pliable and obedient to God by clinging to his word. Our belt can become corrupted by the sin we commit and tolerate in our lives. For example, Joab's belt was stained by his murders of Abner and Amasa in 1 Kings 2:5.

David's Charge to Solomon

1 When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son.

2 "I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man, 3 and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, 4 and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: 'If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.'

5 "Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me—what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. 6 Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave ^[a] in peace.

When we give sin a protected place in our lives, we embrace the lies that the sin is based on, we twist the word to fit our situation, our way of life. These lies are what corrupt our belt of truth. If we sin, we must return to God in repentance and the blood of Jesus will wash away the stains from our sins (1John 1:7)

Everybody is called as a Christian to believe that the truth that they have wrapped around them is that they are highly regarded in God's heart and mind, because of their union with Jesus. That is the belt of truth. That is who we can settle in on. That is who we are. And so when the devil tries to tell you that you are a nobody, you know it's a lie.

Secondly, put on not only the belt of truth, but the breastplate of righteousness. This is a piece of armor that goes from the neck down to the waist and it covers for protection and the truth that we are covered in Jesus Christ and his righteousness.

I put on the breastplate of righteousness. I believe in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I am clothed with God's righteousness, which protects my heart from the enemy. All footholds that the devil had in me have been washed away by the blood of Jesus. I am no longer clothed with filthy garments, but rather with rich robes of righteousness. The righteousness of God covers me and protects me from the enemy.

[Romans 2:13](#)

For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Nobody is good. Nobody in the sense of good enough to bridge the gap that gets us to God, nobody is good enough to do that and so

the breastplate of righteousness reminds us that in Christ we have been declared good through him. So this whole idea of putting on the full armor reminds us why we are accepted by God, put on that breastplate and say

No it's not my righteousness that gains me favor, it's because of Christ.

Author Robert Hicks wrote a book called "The Masculine Journey: Six Stages of Manhood" and he quotes a British psychiatrist who was studying the impact of the holocaust and kind of bring some lessons from that and the psychiatrist writes about as he went back and started to study this he said,

"You know to think that every guard who was recruited to work in concentration camps was a psychopath or a sociopath or a sadist would be to assume too much. It makes no sense at all to suppose that these people were all like this" and he continues and I am reading right from his book, he says "One has to accept that quite ordinary citizens of what had been one of the most cultured nations on the earth could be persuaded without too much difficulty and on an unprecedented scale to treat their fellow citizens with barbarous cruelty."

He says, "One of his Jewish friends puts it even more graphically. Upon visiting one of the extermination camps he noted that in the middle of the camp was the commandant quarters. One went through a stone fence with a white picket door. Inside was a grassy lawn complete with a set of swings. My friend at that point uttered, My God this man had his children there. At the entrance of the house besides the door on a coat rack were his Nazi overcoat and hat. In the living room was a piano and with the music of Bach,

Beethoven and Handel still on it. His next thought was this man gassed people all day, buried them with lyme, covered them over and then came home and took off his Nazi uniform and sat at the piano and sang Christmas carols with his children" And he asked the question, "What kind of person can do this?" And he answers it, he says, "The kind of person that I am." I have done the same kind of compartmentalizing. In my mind in order to carry out someone else's unjust wishes on many occasions the only difference is the degree and the job description. The psychology is the same.

Now listen to what he says now. Please listen to this.

"Until I realize the evil that I am capable of, I don't really believe that Jesus Christ means all that much. I mean, I know I am saved, but I have no real idea of what I am saved from."

I believe I am now just beginning, he says, to catch a glimpse of this reality after 25 years of being a Christian. Only now am I seeing how utterly incapable of righteousness that I am. What a powerful testimony; a powerful testimony of how much we need Jesus.

There is a song called "Jesus, I come" and if you sing that with the understanding and in truth and you really mean it, you will be in essence putting on the breastplate of righteousness. You will be affirming again how much the need, how great the need it is to be united with him and come to him again and I pray that some of you, I don't know where you might be or how deep of a valley or how much of a struggle or what you are thinking about yourself or whatever, but again use this opportunity to again realign yourself with God in his righteousness and that's what leads to righteous living. It's not trying to be a person who lives righteously to gain

God's righteousness. We are righteous in him. We desire to do that which is right.

The words to "Jesus , I Come"

Out of my bondage sorrow and night,
Jesus, I come, Jesus I come.
Into Thy freedom, gladness and light
Jesus, I come to Thee.
Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thy-self
Jesus I come to Thee.

Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus I come, Jesus I come;
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of earth's sorrows into Thy balm,
Out of life's storms and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of unrest and arrogant pride,
Jesus, I come, Jesus I come;
Into Thy blessed will to abide,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of myself to dwell in Thy love
Out of despair into raptures above,
Upward for aye on the wings like a dove,
Jesus, I come to Thee.

Out of the fear and dread of the tomb,
Jesus, I come, Jesus I come;
Into the joy and light of Thy home,
Jesus, I come to Thee;
Out of the depths of ruin untold,
Into the peace of Thy sheltering fold,
Ever Thy glorious face to behold,
Jesus, I come to Thee. AMEN

How to maintain the breastplate:

Just as with conventional weapons of war, regular maintenance of our spiritual armor is critical to its operation in battle.

1. Obey God's commands for living: We are to obey God's commands, out of loving appreciation for what Jesus did for us. This is a way of exercising our faith which keeps us plugged in to God's power supply. Paul wrote, "Just as you used to offer them in slavery to impurity and to ever increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness (Romans 6:19). God gives us power to live obediently through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11,13)

2. Live in Love: Love is the key activity by which we live for righteousness. Jesus explained that all of the commandments are summed up by love your neighbor as yourself (Galatians 5:14). Paul wrote: Colossians 3:12-14

12Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness

and patience. 13Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

By showing God's love to others, we will grow in righteousness toward holiness. When we combine our faith with living in love, our breastplate is strong.

Thirdly, and lastly for today he says now in Verse 15, "**And with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.**" Now this is a little hard to grasp, because commentators debate whether the focus is on readiness or preparedness to preach the gospel or the stability of peace that comes because we are living in the gospel. We are living in the good news of Jesus and the equipment that Paul has in mind was a heavily soled sandal that had metal studs, almost like a soccer spike; it was strapped up to the knee and so that when a soldier could get a firm grip to hold the shield or throw a spear or whatever they would stand firmly; they wouldn't slip. And so that if that is the emphasis more than preaching the gospel it would read this way; Put on steadfastness, because the gospel of peace is strapped under your feet, just like Jesus' truth, just like Jesus' righteousness, so he brings peace to our wounded souls.

He will ultimately bring peace to the whole universe. The battle is won. On the cross in the resurrection the battle is won and the whole universe will become subject to God in Jesus. Yes, there are many battles, but it's won. Let that peace fill your mind so that you

don't have to do things to try to grasp for yourself, that you don't have to listen to the enemy to say, "Look, take this shortcut." No, hold your peace. Keep peace. It's won. Don't take matters into your own hands and if you do, correct it in his strength. Don't lose the peace footing by forgetting a life that is lived in truth and righteousness.

One of my favorite illustrations, I think it just makes the point. Two kids who went to visit their grandparents farm for the summer, This summer grandpa gave his grandson a slingshot and he said, "Look, you go and practice with this out in the woods, you know trees, cans, rocks and don't aim it at anything living you know people or birds or anything like that." And he said, "Okay, grandpa" and he does it. He can't hit a thing, right? So he is coming back into the barnyard or the farm area yard and he sees grandma's pet duck and so he says, "Well I haven't hit anything all day. I might as well" and wouldn't you know, he pulls the slingshot back and the stone hits it, kills this duck, gone. He picks it up, puts it in the woodpile and tries to bury it, tries to hide the evidence right?

So he comes back in the house and there he sees on the porch his sister Susie who sees everything. She saw it all. They are sitting at dinner that night and grandma says, "Come on Susie, help me with the dishes." And so Susie says, "Oh no, I just talked to Johnny. He said he would love to do the dishes. I know how much he does, right Johnny?" He says, "Yeah" and she whispers in his ear, "Remember the duck. Remember the duck."

You know, I don't know what is getting whispered in your ears these days about who you are or what you are supposed to be in Jesus, but there are some folks who are saying "Remember this. Remember how you did this." Anyway, he goes through this like

days on end, every time she is telling him the same thing and he is doing all of her chores, doing everything "Remember the duck. Remember the duck."

Finally, he can't stand it any more and he comes to grandmother and he sobs and he asks for forgiveness and he tells her what happened and she says, "I saw the whole thing. I was standing right at the window when it all happened and I already forgave you, but I was wondering how long you were going to let your sister make a slave of you."

And Jesus is standing at the window today and he is looking out and nobody knows what you are thinking, but there is stuff going on in your head and it's slave stuff and you are thinking in a way that's robbing you of your peace, because you are not assured of what the gospel shoes, of the ground you are standing on. It's the peace that only Jesus can bring that's brought us back to God. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Those who are in him have peace with God. So strap these three pieces on for sure, the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, that gospel of peace under your feet and know who you are in Jesus Christ and don't let the enemy rob you of any of that as you walk faithfully with Christ today.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you for your love and your goodness and grace to us far more than we deserve and yet so powerful to tear down strongholds, to take captive every thought, to live as life was intended to be. Thank you that we are forgiven people and that because of your armor we can be better people. We pray thanking you for that because of our union with Christ and we ask that you would help drive this home to us so that we live in the mindset that you desire for us. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.