9-15-19

Ephesians 6:14-17 (1)

In the preceding verses, Paul has gone to great lengths to help us understand that we are in a very real battle; but this battle is not against people. This battle is against spirits that are in league with satan, and they are constantly working to destroy any good work of God or anyone who claims allegiance with Christ. Spiritual beings are invisible to us; we can’t detect them with any of our physical senses. Because of this, our language is limited in how we can describe them and how to deal with them.

Paul uses imagery that we are familiar with to give us an idea of what we are to do. Each piece Paul mentions gives us an idea of how the spiritual quality is used. He speaks of the important spiritual qualities that are needed for us to survive spiritual warfare. We need to do our best to take each piece of spiritual armor and apply the actual spiritual quality.

Having said that, I do know of people who have been helped through particularly difficult times by going through the motions of putting on each piece of armor every morning. This actually comes down to being a prayer that places everything in the hands of God and under His protection. It is a beautiful way to show our voluntary and faithful dependence on Him.

Paul begins verse 14 with the often repeated “stand firm”. This carries the idea of perseverance. For the Christian to persevere is absolutely necessary because not doing so means apostacy.

Revelation 14:12

Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

There is no alternative for the Christian but to keep their faith in Jesus Christ. For a person to claim Christ as Saviour, and then later deny Him, shows that their original claim was false. As the apostle John tells us in 1 John 2:19,

They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

So those who turn away from Jesus, were never really a member of His body.

We are called to stand firm against an enemy that is far more powerful than we are. The only way for us to stand firm is by using what God provides for us. In this way, our success is all by God’s strength and He is then due all the glory. Remember that our job as Christians is to glorify God.

Paul uses the idea of Roman armor to describe what the Christian must do to protect themselves and to stand firm. Again, the pieces of armor are helping us to visualize spiritual realities that we must use to defeat demonic powers. The first piece of armor, and the order is important, is a belt or girdle, which spiritually is truth.

The belt, or girdle, would be the first piece of armor that the soldier would put on. This is because he would already have on some of his normal clothing; perhaps the shirt, tunic, or cloak. The last thing a soldier would want while he was fighting would be to have his clothing flopping around, coming out from under his armor, and getting in his way. This could be disastrous on the battle field.

The belt would be basic and foundational; without it, the rest of the armor could become useless. The belt is what would hold things together, it would stop unnecessary things from getting in the way, it would keep the soldier from being blinded or bound by loose clothing; because of the belt, the rest of the armor could be used to its full potential.

It is the same for the Christian with truth. It is truth that holds a Christian together, even when everything around him seems to be falling apart. When we know the truth, we won’t be deceived by the lies of satan and the stumbling blocks he puts in our way. By knowing the truth, our eyes are open; we can recognize the tricks of satan and not be blinded by them. The truth keeps us from being bound by the lies of satan, as Jesus tells us in John 8:32, “the truth will make you free”. Truth is the basis for all the rest of the armor and weapons of spiritual warfare. Without truth; righteousness, the Gospel, faith, and salvation wouldn’t exist, and we wouldn’t know the word of God.

We see here that while we can touch a belt and put it on, truth is a spiritual concept. We can’t touch truth; we can’t hold it up and look at it. Truth actually needs to be a part of our being; a part of our inner man. It is an important part of the new man we put on when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

So, where is this truth? Where do we find it and how do we make it a very real part of ourselves? How do we take hold of this belt of truth and put it on? Well, very simply, we find it in the Bible; and by absorbing what we find in the Bible, we gird ourselves with truth.

The Bible is true, all of it, from cover to cover. We may not understand everything we read; but that is actually comforting. It is about God and if we understood everything, then God would be on our level. But He is not; He is infinitely above us in all things which is exactly where one should be if they are God. Because of this, we can peacefully trust Him with all things in our lives; both now and in eternity.

The Bible offers its own evidence of accuracy through prophecy. Page after page predicts not only the multiple rising and falling of Israel, but of many of the world’s secular nations. It speaks of generalities regarding specific nations, all the way to personal relationships of specific world players and to a man’s name who was used by God to rebuild His people. The New Testament describes the coming decadence of mankind that is plainly visible today. Even the history in the Bible gives a vision of the spiritual realities that Christians recognize as currently taking place.

When we understand that the Bible gives strong evidence for its own truth and accuracy, we can believe what it tells us about itself. In Hebrews 6:18 we read something that we already know in our hearts, “it is impossible for God to lie”. So we know that anything God says is true. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read, “All Scripture is God-breathed”. In other words, what is written in the Bible has been “breathed-out” by God; it is what God has said; His spoken word. We understand that ink was put to paper by men, but each and every word was transmitted to them by the Holy Spirit.

When we read the Bible, we read God’s word; and Jesus, while praying to His Father in John 17:17, said, “Your word is truth”. God’s word is true, but it is more than that; it is truth. And because it is truth, as you might imagine, it is under tremendous attack by satan. When the reformation took place back in the fifteen and sixteen hundreds, the Bible was lifted back up to its rightful place of authority. God raised up men and women who understood its divine source and were willing to proclaim it as the sole and absolute truth; often at the cost of their lives.

Next, in the early eighteen hundreds, a movement began in the study of Scripture known as “higher criticism”. The very name shows the appalling arrogance of man; that they can think higher than the word of God and point out which parts are right and which are wrong. The damage done by following this line of thinking has been huge. This is the basis of all that we call “liberal churches”.

They deny the accuracy and the authority of the Bible and replace it with what agrees with man’s philosophy. We can immediately see the danger here because the Bible tells us in Genesis 6:5, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Higher criticism denies the miracles of Christ, denies the virgin birth, denies even the divinity of Jesus and the Trinity. In this thinking, the Bible becomes a book of good ideas to follow so that everyone in the world can get along. We know from our study of Ephesians that to consider the Bible as simply a book of morals is to miss the book entirely.

Also, in these last couple of decades, we have witnessed what Paul told us would happen in 2 Timothy 3:2, that men would become “lovers of self”. Is it not evident that there has been a shift away from caring about others and being fascinated with one’s self? The deep underlying problem that comes with this is that when we allow ourselves to become the center of the universe, everything has to line up with what we want. Truth is no longer absolute but is relative to our own lives and thoughts. Each person has their own truth.

Of course, this won’t work. Absolute truth is in fact reality. God is sovereign and what He has said as recorded in the Bible is true and the opinions of the world won’t change that. But the rejection of the truth that is rampant in this world, shows us exactly why we must “gird our loins with truth”. If we don’t know the truth and cling to it without compromise, we will be deceived and find ourselves fighting against God while in league with the devil. The Bible makes it clear that we don’t want to be in that position. Remember, the Bible is not the philosophy or musings of men, it is revelation from God. If God had not revealed it, we would not have it.

As truth is vital for the individual Christian, so it is for the church. Much of the book of Ephesians is dedicated to the unity of the church. This doesn’t mean that everyone agrees on every little thing. It even leaves room for disagreement about the meaning of certain parts of Scripture. But the church must be united, and willing to stand for, primary Christian doctrines. That the Bible is truly God’s word and authoritative and accurate is one of those primary doctrines. We must always be ready to stand firm against any teaching contrary to the Bible.

We must go a step further with truth. We have looked at the Bible, the word of God, as being truth. And so we read in the Gospel according to John, chapter one, verse one.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

We have here a powerful spiritual truth that is very difficult for us to grasp. The Word in this verse is, of course, Jesus Christ. The Word was in the beginning because God spoke the universe and all creation into existence. We know that the Word, or Jesus, was with God because Jesus is part of the divine Trinity. We know that the Word is God Himself because the Trinity is one God. Jesus also says in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one”. From these things, we see that Jesus is the Word of God manifest. He is the Word of God as a living, breathing human-being.

Furthermore, Jesus tells us in John 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life”. He tells us here that He is truth; and what else can He be? He is the Word of God; He has to be truth. Hebrews 1:3 tells us, “And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature”. This is saying that Jesus is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of God’s nature; in other words, Jesus is a revelation of God; Just as Scripture is. The most ironic question in all of Scripture has to be from Pontius Pilate, when during his examination of Jesus, he asked, “What is truth?” When he asked that question, he had pure, absolute truth standing right in front of him. But how much of the world can’t see that truth today?

In Genesis 32 is the story of the patriarch Jacob spending the night wrestling with an angel. The angel touched him and dislocated his hip socket; how painful that must have been. But Jacob would not let go; he clung to the angel saying, “I will not let you go unless you bless me.” This is how we have to be with the Bible, with Jesus. We must not let them go until we have received eternal life. We must cling to them tightly while we live in this world.

Gird your loins with truth. This is a command that we are to actively do. We must read and study our Bible. In this country, there is no excuse for not doing so. All of Scripture is God’s word and so, we must consume it all; not just our favorite parts. Plow through Leviticus, try to figure out what in the world Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon are talking about, try to make sense of the arguments of Job’s three lousy friends, learn the important things in the veiled language of the twelve minor prophets. In this book is truth; without it, we cannot be good soldiers of Christ.

Prayer

LORD God, thank You for the Bible. It is Your word and so, we can believe it; even staking our eternal life on it. Thank You for Jesus, Your word manifest and our only salvation. We know that Your word in the Bible is living, because Your Word Jesus also lives. We can always apply it to our times, no matter how long ago the pen touched the paper.

We pray now and ask that the Holy Spirit make Your word take root in our hearts; give us a hunger and a thirst to consume the Bible. Give us not only that desire for knowledge, so that we do not perish; but also the desire to live Your word. May we be the light of the world, reflecting that light of Christ.

By Your strength, Lord, help us to gird ourselves with Your truth so that we are not deceived by the devil and his lies. We acknowledge him as a liar and a murderer, and he has no rightful place in our lives because we are temples of the Holy Spirit and children of almighty God.

We lift this prayer up to You in the powerful name of Jesus

Amen