

The Upside Down
Week 4: Full Coverage Part I

- I. We are not in a world at peace! Our first thought is likely to think of physical conflicts such as violence or wars among nations, and that is true. However, physical conflicts are a tangible expression of a far greater reality that we are in a spiritual battle that doesn't subside nor will until the 2nd Coming of Jesus. Satan, and the power of evil, was defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

We don't guess about that; God's Word reveals that to us in Colossians 2:

Colossians 2:13-15 [Slide]: 13 And when you were dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with him and forgave us all our trespasses. 14 He erased the certificate of debt, with its obligations, that was against us and opposed to us, and has taken it away by nailing it to the cross. 15 He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.

- A. In one sense, Satan and other demonic powers have been defeated. Humanity was insufficient for that task. Only the God-Man could accomplish the defeat of Satan. In another sense, the authority that Jesus has already been given is being implemented through His Church. That's you and I who are in Christ. This is the crux of the battle! God is exerting His authority over Satan through fallible yet redeemed human beings! We are called to engage in the battle. Not to achieve victory, but from a position of victory, even as Satan deploys everything at his disposal to derail the Christ follower and destroy those who have yet to name Christ.
- B. The victory has already been won, why would God put us in this position? Some things are beyond my fickle brain, but some things aren't. To answer this question, we need to first remember why it is that we exist in the first place. The Creeds (core beliefs) of the Church recalibrate us in right thinking:

[Slide]: What is the chief end of man?

[Slide]: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

The Psalmist says in Psalm 73:25-26:

Psalm 73:25-26 [Slide]: 25 Who do I have in heaven but you? And I desire nothing on earth but you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion forever.

- C. To ask the question, "why God?" is a natural thing to do, but is a symptom of a faulty perspective. God reigns supreme and is worthy of all praise, honor, and glory. We do not reign supreme and the primary objective of our relationship with God isn't our happiness. The primary aim is for God to receive the glory that He alone is worthy of and in our glorification of God we discover a pleasure that is non-existent in any other created thing!
- D. Amid the battle, God is implementing the authority of Jesus through His Church and He is teaching us how to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever! This is a process that includes pain. There are many seasons of life, and we have the opportunity for growth in them all. However, there are times we experience the attack of Satan in an acute way and many times a correlation exists between pain and maturity in Christ. Attack isn't limited to but includes loss or conflict in relationship, depression or anxiety, temptation.
- These are times our preparation has put us in position and the only thing we can do is:

[Slide]: Take our stand!

- II. Ephesians 6 beginning with verse 10 is presented like a Standard Operating Procedure. We've got a lot of Navy folks in our midst, and I understand that they have an affinity for S.O.P.'s! And for good reason! We have several pilots around Tab and something we've discussed is the diligence in completing the preflight checklist no matter how many times you've been in the cockpit.

- A. As it pertains to the spiritual battle in which we're engaged:

1. [Slide]: Have we checked our power source?

We receive power through the Lord's vast strength. We don't generate the power!

2. [Slide]: Have we identified our enemy?

Satan works through people and other situations of life but he's always in play.

According to Ephesians 6, Satan and other demonic powers under his influence are the opposition.

3. [Slide]: Have we prepared to take our stand?

We've been granted full access to the power of the Most High God! The same power that rose Jesus from the grave is now at work through us! God has also provided everything we need to stand against the schemes of Satan. There is power available on one side and provision on the other. God is taking care of us from every direction!

B. But there is a crucial step in the process! In verses 13-17, there are 4 imperative statements. Imperatives are commands. The repeated command is some variation of:

1. [Slide]: Take!

When it comes to spiritual warfare, God doesn't offer a cafeteria plan, nor does He offer liability coverage. God is gracious in our shortcomings, but He never lowers the standard.

a. What's a cafeteria plan? That's the idea that we can build our own coverage. I'll take this and that. I like the grace package, but you can hang onto the side of obedience. I'll take the forgiveness package, but you can hang onto the extension plan. I'd rather not extend that forgiveness to others. We treat the full armor of God like we get to dictate the coverage. That's not the offer. To stand against the schemes of Satan it's going to require full coverage!

b. Other times, we treat the full armor of God like liability coverage. We falsely believe we're capable of handling things on our own. We convince ourselves it's a good option because we get to live our life on our own terms. We like the thought of God tracking from a distance and stepping in before anything catastrophic happens. This is built on a false premise that we can recognize the schemes of Satan. False!! Evil rarely looks the part until it's too late!

The cafeteria plan is out! Liability coverage is out!

C. What does full coverage look like when it comes to the armor of God?

Ephesians 6:13-17 [Slide]: 13 For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having prepared everything, to take your stand. 14 Stand, therefore, with truth like a belt around your waist, righteousness like armor on your chest, 15 and your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace. 16 In every situation take up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit- which is the word of God.

Paul is using imagery that would be familiar with anyone alive in the Roman world. Romans ruled by might and Roman soldiers were a common sight. Paul would also be familiar with Messianic battle imagery as depicted in Isaiah and some of that imagery is being utilized as well. We won't look at those verses but if you're interested jot down these chapters in Isaiah: 11, 52, and 59.

Another important aspect of this passage that can easily be glossed over is that it contains 4 participles that carry an imperatival force and verse 17 has a straight up imperative. Participles are verbs acting like adjectives and each is modifying the way in which we stand!!

God's power has been supplied, the Enemy has been identified, now get up and take your stand!

1. The first piece of armor and coinciding participle is "truth like a belt."

The literal way to bring out the command is to stand:

[slide]: belting truth around your waist.

a. What does it mean to belt truth around our waist? This isn't an exterior belt like we think of today. It was an undergarment that guarded the skin from the other pieces of armor. We would think of it today like the brand Under Armour. This armor is closest to us and is representative of truth. We need to let Scripture interpret Scripture and while there is an outworking component to proclaiming and calling others to truth that isn't what is primarily in mind here.

This is a call to think deeply about the gospel and the truth about who we are now in Christ!

Paul uses the word truth throughout Ephesians most often in terms of:

[Slide]: Identity!

(1) Now it makes sense why we need truth belted around our inner waist!

When our identity in Christ is misunderstood, we're exposed to all sorts of attack.

(2) Yes, the world needs the gospel, but WE desperately need the gospel! The gospel isn't a box that we check off, it's the new lens by which we view ourselves and those around us! God loved us enough to send Jesus to die on the cross for our sins and to reconcile us (nasty sinners) to God the Father!
Do you want to know the truth? God really loves you!

2. The second piece of armor and coinciding participle is "righteousness like armor."

The literal way to say this is to stand:

[Slide]: covering righteousness on your chest.

a. Because of what God has declared true and what He has done on our behalf we now have a permanent right standing before God! That's what righteousness refers to. Remember that every piece of armor isn't our armor! It's God's armor given to us! In Christ, we've been justified or eternally declared in right standing before God and nothing can alter that standing.

(1) However, Satan attacks us most often in terms of our identity and we start to believe the lies. This begins to muddle our understanding of the truth which then begins to muddle our understanding of the arrangement by which we've been brought into relationship with God. When we sin, our tempter becomes our accuser. He knows our weaknesses and convinces us that we're not worthy.

(2) We don't earn favor with God through our righteousness. We cover ourselves with the righteousness of Christ. We live out our new identity in community with others from a posture of having already been accepted!

3. The 3rd piece of armor and the coinciding participle is "feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of peace." We stand by:

[Slide]: strapping or sandling our feet with readiness for the gospel of peace.

a. The imagery is that of a protected foot gripping the ground with the peace of God in Jesus Christ. This entire passage isn't about how we go charge the hill. That's to miss what Paul is depicting here through defensive armor. We are in a spiritual battle and the primary aim of Ephesians 6:10-17, and on through 20, is to instruct the believer on how we stand firm in the face of such intense opposition!

(1) The Roman caliga was a military sandal with stubbed knobs on the bottom sole specifically designed for giving the soldier a sure footing. Now there may be a secondary application of our proclamation of peace but what Paul has in mind here is the weapon of peace granted to the believer. Weapon of peace sounds like an oxymoron doesn't it! In the middle of spiritual warfare, God has granted us the weapon of peace! Only God could be that incredible! But it's true! There is no better place to be than in the center of God's will no matter what circumstances surround us because the will of God is always accompanied with the peace of God!

We stand encompassed by the very peace of God and it gives us courage in the face of the storm!

4-6. I'm going to pull a good old fashioned:

[Slide]: To Be Continued!

a. We've got 3 more pieces of armor that are available to us and they're crucial to us taking up the full armor of God. Please come back next week or tune in online. I want to be able to dive into the last 3 in detail and talk about the role of prayer in spiritual warfare.

D. In case we're wondering what do we do with all this? Let's not lose sight of the forest through the trees! Spiritual warfare mostly occurs in the battlefield of the mind. What we've looked at today is our responsibility to take up the full armor of God which is a God given resource available to every believer! The power of God has already been supplied. The provision of God has already been made available.

Our responsibility is to:

[Slide]: Take it up!

1. We put on the belt of God's truth. We cloth ourselves in the righteousness of God. We strap up our feet ready with the gospel of peace. We'll look at the others next week, but with every piece of armor given, we take it up by soaking and saturating ourselves in the Word of God. There is no shortcut.

2. When Jesus was attacked by Satan in the desert, He took up the same weapons available to us. He knew the Word and He humbly walked with the Father!

3. So, here's some Scripture to saturate our brains with this week:

a. Do we want some truth? Here's some truth for us this week:

2 Corinthians 5:17 [Slide]: 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away and see, the new has come!

b. Do we want to be reminded of our right standing that we have already achieved because of Jesus?

Romans 3:25-26 [Slide]: 25 God presented him as an atoning sacrifice in his blood, received through faith, to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his restraint God passed over the sins previously committed. 26 God presented him to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so that he would be righteous and declare righteous the one who has faith in Jesus.

c. Is the storm swirling around us? Could we use some peace in our lives?

Philippians 4:6-7 [Slide]: 6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

E. The power of God is available! The provision of God's armor has been supplied and it's a full coverage plan! The question is, "are we going to take it up?"