

Armed for Battle
Pastor Joe Oakley
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In our series on Discipleship, we have been talking about how to resist Satan through spiritual warfare. We've learned that Satan resists us growing in our faith, so we must resist his resistance. We cannot remain passive and defeat the enemy. 1 Peter 5:8-9 says:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith.

Not only must we stay on the alert for spiritual attacks – we must also stay aware of Satan's devices. In John 10:10 Jesus said:

The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Jesus shows us the purposes of Satan – stealing, killing and destruction.
God wants to bless you; Satan wants to block that blessing.
God wants to bless your marriage; Satan wants your marriage to die.
God wants to bless your finances; Satan wants you broke.
God wants to bless your health; Satan wants to kill you.
God wants to bless your life; Satan wants to destroy it.

Satan wants to destroy us, but 1 John 3:8 says:

The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to destroy the devil's works. Jesus came to destroy the destroyer.

He won the victory over Satan at the cross, but it's up to us to enforce that victory. And not only must we stay alert and aware – we must also stay armed.

So – I'm preaching a message today called Armed for Battle – How to Put on the Armor of God. Do you know what your weapons are and do you know how to use them? Our text is Ephesians 6:10-18 which says:

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.

Be strong how? In ourselves, in others, in our power? NO - it says; Be strong in the Lord. It is only by using God's power and armor that we can stand against the attacks of our enemy.

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

This verse describes Satan's hierarchy. Spiritual warfare is against demons, not people. Your spouse is not your enemy. Your boss is not your enemy. Your neighbors are not your enemy. Your in-laws are not your enemy. People are not your enemy – demons are.

It seems like our warfare is against people because many times demons influence what people do. For instance- Satan used Judas to betray Jesus and he used Peter to try to convince Jesus he didn't have to die for our sins. Satan works through other people – but we must remember our war is not with people, but evil spirits.

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.

Paul tells us twice to put on the whole armor of God. Not part of the armor or most of the armor. Put on the full armor so that you may stand against evil. This is vitally important! A missing piece leaves a weak spot in your defense. The enemy never attacks a strong link; he always goes for the weakest link. If you put on body armor, but you have no helmet – your head is vulnerable. If you put on a helmet, but no breastplate – your heart is vulnerable. If you have armor, but no spear – you cannot fight back.

Notice we have to literally “Put On” Gods armor. Do you know how to put on the belt of truth and the breastplate of righteousness? Not symbolically, but actually? It takes more than just praying – “God I put on truth, righteousness, etc.”

So, I want to teach you how to put your armor on. Before I do – let me remind you that Paul wrote this letter from prison where he had a close-up view of Roman soldiers on a daily basis. He was able to see the armor a Roman soldier wore. He then applied it in a “spiritual” sense, with armor and weaponry that we must have to defend ourselves against the devil.

The first piece of armor is: Belt of Truth. The belt was a very important part of the Roman soldier's uniform. The belt was the foundational piece that held it all together. The soldier's shield and sword were attached to his belt.

The belt was tied in several places to stay in place, so that no matter how the soldier moved – even if he fell down - the belt was always in place with weapons at the ready. Without the belt – the soldier's armor would fall apart in a battle.

Likewise – truth is the foundation of the Christian life.

Everything in our spiritual life is fastened and held in place by truth.
 If we are not grounded in truth – we will have no armor!
 If we are not grounded in truth – we will fall apart in a battle!
 We must be so grounded in truth that no matter what happens – we can stay
 armed and stand against the attacks of Satan.

The key to putting on the belt of truth is to put on Jesus. Romans 13:14 tells us to *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*. John 14:6 says Jesus is the truth. Not A truth, but THE truth.

Let me tell you something – if you do not put on Christ – you cannot defeat Satan. We only have authority over the devil when we are in Christ. Only believers can have on spiritual armor! If you are not a born again Christian, you are defenseless against Satan. But when you do accept Christ as your Lord and Savior – you put on Christ and He gives you power over all the works of the enemy!

The second key to putting on the belt of truth is to be filled with the Holy Spirit because John 14:17 calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of truth. In Luke 24:49 Jesus said to His disciples –

I am going to send you the Holy Spirit, just as My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

The Greek word for clothed is enduo – is the very same word used to tell us to put on our armor and put on Christ. To win spiritual battles, we need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The third key to putting on the belt of truth is to put on God's Word. John 17:17 says God's word is truth. That means to put ourselves under the authority and the teaching of the word of God. We are doers and not just hearers of the word.

Truth is also found in the church. 1 Timothy 3:15 says:

I am writing so that you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Notice the word foundation. Truth is the foundation of our lives. And the church imparts foundational truth to us. God did not create us to mature alone. In fact, you cannot grow to full maturity as a Christian all by yourself. God has designed it where we need Jesus – we need the word – but we also need each other in the church – leaders, 5-fold ministry and fellow members. No part of the body can say I don't need you.

Eph 4:11-16 teaches about the 5-fold ministry that equips God's people for service and brings us to maturity. When that happens:

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Apart from the church – people are susceptible to false teaching and deception. We need to be in a Bible-teaching church where we hear truth, but we also need to be in relationship with people who love us enough to speak the truth in love when we get off track.

We all need others who speak truth into our lives. Way too many Christians are oversensitive and just get mad and leave when you point out deception – even when you’re doing it for their good. That’s the plan of Satan – if he can get you alone you’re defeated. To be grounded in truth – we need Jesus, we need the word and we need each other speaking the truth in love to us.

Also – there’s another very important aspect to putting on the belt of truth. Ephesians 4:25 says:

Therefore each of you must put away lying and speak truthfully to each other, for we are all members of one body.

To put on truth you must first put off untruth, lying and deception.

Don’t tell me you’ve got on the belt of truth and you’re still a liar.

Don’t tell me you’ve got on the belt of truth and you’re cheating on your taxes or your expense reports or your spouse.

When you lie, you speak the language of Satan.

When you lie, you do the work of Satan.

When you lie, you are taking off the belt of truth and your entire spiritual armor falls to the ground! You are absolutely defenseless! But a person of integrity has a clear conscience and can face the enemy without fear. If we’re going to stand our ground, then we must be committed to living in truth. If we are not truthful people – we will not have on the belt of truth.

The second piece of armor is the breastplate of righteousness. The Roman soldier’s breastplate protected all his vital organs – especially his heart. Likewise, the breastplate of righteousness protects our hearts. Proverbs 4:23 says:

Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

This is why the enemy attacks our heart! If the devil can control our hearts, he can control our lives. That’s why we need to put on the breastplate of righteousness. Apart from Christ, no one is righteous. Romans 3:9-10 says:

Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one.”

Apart from Christ we have no righteousness, but here's some good news!
2 Corinthians 5:21 says:

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

Those who are born again by placing their faith in Jesus Christ are now totally righteous. Where we used to be guilty, we are now not guilty. Where we used to be sinful, we are now righteous.

If you do not know that you are righteous in Christ, you are an easy target for the enemy. You'll not be able to pray with authority or worship with intimacy. Why? Because you'll never think you're good enough.

But when we have a revelation of our righteousness in Christ – when we put on that breastplate - we reign in life and we reign over Satan. Without that revelation the enemy reigns over us. So put on the breastplate today by placing your faith in Christ, not in yourself.

Ephesians 6:15 says *Have your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.* Peace prepares us! Prepares us for what? For spiritual warfare. Romans 16:20 says: *The God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly.* Through God's power and God's peace, we can crush Satan.

The sandals were an important part of a Roman soldier's armor. They were both defensive and offensive weapons. These sandals had spikes fitted to the bottom of them. So – they helped a soldier to stand no matter what the terrain. And – they were used as an offensive weapon to kick an enemy.

Likewise – the sandals of peace enable us to stand no matter what we are walking through and they enable us to defeat our enemy.

So – how do we obtain this peace from God? We find peace with God by being born again. Romans 5:1 says:

Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The only way to have peace with God is through faith in Jesus Christ. That peace should rule our lives. Colossians 3:15 says:

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

If peace does not rule our hearts – something will take its place.
If the peace of Christ does not rule our hearts, the worries of Satan will.
If the peace of Christ does not rule our hearts, the fears of Satan will.

If the peace of Christ does not rule our hearts, the lies of Satan will. When we know we are right with God, we have peace with God. Without that peace, the enemy will control our hearts.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

The Roman soldier's shield was large enough to protect a soldier – he was completely covered by it. And the shield of faith is a large shield that completely covers us! Faith is something you must take up – raise up. 1 Timothy 1:18-19 says:

Fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.

The shield of faith is something we must take up and hold on to. If you don't hold onto your shield of faith, you will end up shipwrecked because of the fiery arrows of Satan. Those fiery arrows are thoughts like: You're going to die of cancer. Your marriage is going to fail. You'll never amount to anything. You'll always be broke.

The fiery arrows of Satan hit their target only when we put our faith in Satan's words over God's Word. We put on the shield of faith by believing God's word over Satan's words.

Put on the helmet of salvation.

Obviously, a helmet protects a soldier's head. No soldier in his right mind would go into battle without his helmet. The helmet gives the soldier a certain amount of confidence. The helmet of salvation gives us confidence in Christ.

You see – our minds are a battlefield. We win or lose spiritual warfare by the way we think. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 says:

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Satan attacks our minds with things like fear, discouragement and doubt. He loves to point out our failures and faults and anything else negative. He wants us to doubt our salvation, to doubt God's goodness, to doubt God's word.

The helmet of salvation protects our minds from these attacks. Jesus died on the Cross to give us this helmet of salvation. If you want assurance, look to the cross. Jesus died there for you. All the religion in the world will not benefit you without taking God's offering of salvation. Salvation is not found in good works.

Salvation only comes by receiving God's gift of grace. When I recognize my ways cannot make me right before God, I turn from my own ways and choose God's way. Then I receive the protection of the helmet of salvation.

Take up the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

The Roman soldier's sword was a deadly, 2-sided weapon. Our sword is the word of God. It is also a deadly weapon. The word used here for sword is rhema, and it means to utter, to pronounce or speak. It means actually speaking the word of God. There is power in speaking God's word! Hebrews 4:12 says:

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.

I taught last week how we must resist Satan by speaking the word of God. Another way we speak the word in spiritual warfare is by praying the word of God. Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 6:18

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.

Paul tells us to pray, pray, and pray, and then pray some more. Prayer is where the action is. If we're not praying, we're not in the battle! We're like troops dressed up in armor, carrying their weapons, but staying on their base playing war games.

Prayer is where we exercise our authority over the enemy. So in our prayers we must praise God because praise defeats the enemy. Another big part of warfare prayer is binding and loosing. Jesus said in Matthew 16:19

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Biblically, keys symbolize authority, authority to open or to close. As believers, we have been given authority and power over the all the works of the enemy.

The main thing Jesus is talking about is binding the enemy. Christ has given all believers the authority to bind and loose. Satan is a strong man armed; but our Lord Jesus is stronger. We have the power to bind and loose. We have the keys of the kingdom.

We have the name of Jesus and the blood of Jesus.

We have the full armor of God and we can withstand every single attack of the enemy in Jesus name!

So go forth armed for battle – submit to God and resist the devil and you will defeat every fiery attack of the enemy in the name of Jesus!