

Prepared – Properly Equipped, part 1

Last week was a great Homecoming service. The music was good, the food was delicious, and the Word from Tony out of Psalm 121 was spot on. I hope you left here last week refreshed and knowing where indeed your HELP comes from. I thought his message fit perfectly with the previous week's message where we discovered that it takes "*divine power to destroy strongholds.*" (2 Corinthians 10:4b ESV) in our life.

This week we are continuing our series on spiritual warfare. Now that we understand the Christian life is not lived on a playground but is instead carried out on a battleground where attacks from the enemy are ever present, we can now begin investigating what it takes to defend ourselves. The second message in our "Prepared" series was focused on "Knowing the enemy." Understanding the enemies we face is a vital part of warfare. When we know who or what the enemy is, where the enemy is, what the enemy can do to us, then we can prepare to go against them. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2; we face the world as an enemy; we face the flesh as an enemy; and, as we saw a few weeks back, we face the devil as an enemy. Listen to what Paul says. **Read Ephesians 2:1-3.**

The "world" as our enemy is witnessed as those things around us that oppose God. The Bible teaches us that these things are driven by "lust." Lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and as we discussed last time, lust of the pride of life. Look at **1 John 2:15-17**. If it pulls you away from God, then it is without a doubt your enemy.

The "flesh" is our enemy because of the curse we inherited from Adam. Our hearts natural desire stands in opposition to God and is as Jeremiah says, "*deceitful above all things, and desperately sick.*" (**Jeremiah 17:9**) Some translations say *desperately wicked!* A heart that constantly pulls you away from God is also your enemy, but the enemies of the world and the enemies of the flesh or physical in nature. Paul, if you remember, says these are not our real enemy.

Remember, the "devil" is described as our "accuser." Satan, another of his names means, "adversary." He is also our "tempter." Jesus said he is a "murderer" and a "liar." No wonder he is referred to as a "serpent" in Genesis and a "devouring lion" by Peter. Paul calls him the "God of this world." But, since he too is a created being and limited just like us, this enemy does not know everything, nor can he be present everywhere, and while he is more powerful than us, he is not all-powerful. So how does this enemy accomplish so much in our lives? Let's go back to Ephesians 6. **Read Ephesians 6:10-12**

Folks, while we may struggle and fight against the things of this world and against the desires of our flesh, our most challenging enemy is Satan and his army of evil minions. This is why Paul says our battle is a spiritual one. Paul tells us that our first line of defense begins with God's might and His strength. We must know that our first key to victory over these enemies is not found in anything we can do, but only in what God can do through us. We must "stand" in "His

strength and in His power,” clothed in “the whole armor of God” if we are to go to war
“Properly Prepared.”

Standing firm against the devil is a major theme for us here in Ephesians 6. Four times Paul uses the word “stand” to encourage believers as they prepare for battle. The other theme here is the components which make up the “whole armor of God.” **Read Ephesians 6:13-17.**

I want you to see something here. It’s important for us as followers of Christ. Nowhere yet does Paul encourage us to attack the enemy. He simply says, “stand.” Biblically speaking, we stand upon our feet, upright, grounded, resistant to any force that comes against us, not bowing down, giving in, or persuaded by anything contrary to God’s will. Paul says, we can only do this successfully when we are clothed in spiritual garments designed to protect us from spiritual weaponry. Christian, we are to put on this armor with complete trust, knowing that Jesus has already conquered Satan and putting our faith in God as we go to war – also knowing that *“If God is for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31 ESV)

What is this armor we GET to put on?

The Belt of Truth – A belt is something which encircles the waist and works to hold everything else together. Without a belt, you’ll most likely be caught with your pants down. Think of it this way... Satan, as we know, is a liar. Lies cause great harm in our lives, whether we are the receiver or the deliverer. Lies are fought off with the truth. A believer who has at their center, at their core; the Truth, which is found only in God’s Word, is prepared for every lie Satan can tell. It’s not enough to know the truth, however. You must also wear it. You must put it into practice. Walk with integrity, “stand” in the face of the enemy with a clear conscience knowing that God’s truth controls you and nothing else. When in a war, if you lose a battle but survive with your life, most likely you’ll end up a prisoner. Jesus said, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* (John 8:31b-32 ESV) Part of the application from these words is this... The better you know the Word of God, the more you trust the Word of God, the easier it will be for you to detect the lies of the enemy and reject his offers.

The Breastplate of Righteousness – A breastplate was the largest and heaviest piece of armor worn by a soldier. It was either a metal plate or a series of intertwined chains which covered both the front and back of the soldier from the neck down to the waistline. It protects the vitals. Satan, as we know, is the accuser. Revelation says he *“accuses them (people) day and night before God.”* (Revelation 12:10 ESV) What is it then he accuses us of? He loves to point out our sin and our lack of holiness. He loves to stand before God and attempt to get God to renege on His mercy, grace, and forgiveness. He loves to remind us that we aren’t deserving of any of God’s promises. Satan is allowed to accuse us of these things, but he knows he cannot accuse the believer who is living a godly life, covered front and back by the righteousness of Christ, and walking daily in the power of the Holy Spirit. Here’s a question for you... Are you living a life which protects you against Satan’s attacks and accusations, or are you living a life that makes his

job easier? Know this... If your salvation is genuine, and I hope it is, God will not change his mind about your forgiveness, nor will he renege on His gift of salvation. **Read Romans 8:31-39.**