

LSB Ephesians 6:10 - 17 Pt. 3

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, 17 also receive the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

I find that I have to begin this morning in verse 12 that I worked at covering last week, and as I considered the larger scope and context, I would normally read beginning again at verse 10 to set the context for the armor beginning in verse 13, that's where we were supposed to be at, but the Holy Spirit tagged a word in verse 12 and set my mind thinking about it. So here we are again in verse 12.

12 For our struggle

I did speak about warfare from the opposition perspective, but we failed to stop and consider this word, struggle. *12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but*

Which begs the question. What struggle? Each of us needs to take a spiritual inventory and answer that question. What struggle? Am I in fact in a struggle, or is that verse just meaningless verbiage that doesn't have any application to me? What am I struggling with that I would not be in a struggle with, if I was not born again as a christian?

The word itself, palé (Pronunciation: pah'-lay) is often translated as wrestle. Picture a movie scene, maybe Sylvester Stalone, and it's arm wrestling. Two guys with almost totally equal muscle bulk and someone says "go" and neither arm moves. But the force in the middle is massive if you had something there to measure it. That's our word, struggle. It's force. Power against us met with power in and through us. Struggle. Force against an opposing force.

Now think about what you struggle with that you wouldn't struggle with if you were not a christian. Let me give you some categories to think on. My flesh, even if there was no devil world full of evil spirits, my fallen sinful flesh has appetites that as a christian I simply must deny. That's a pressure that I have to struggle against. The world thinks that's idiotic. Maybe even harmful. It's popular in the world to consider restraint as neurotic these days.

Go a little deeper. My pride. My respectability. My fears. Why don't I walk across the street or next door and tell my neighbors they are condemned and judgement is imminent? If for some reason life quits them, they could be in hell this afternoon. For eternity.

I have long time friends and even some extended family members who think they're going to be OK when they die that have no evidence of salvation. I don't confront them. Pride, fear of man, fear of losing what little acceptance I have in my community.

All of these things weigh on me, because I'm a christian. Inner struggle because I'm a christian and I haven't counted the cost of total obedience. Too often my mouth is like the arctic river. Frozen over. Opportunities come that some correction or help, spiritually could be made and I keep silent. That's a burden. A struggle that I wrestle with continuously. Because I'm a christian.

None of that matters if you're just a worldly citizen of the world. Take inventory. Has your responsibility as a christian cost you some struggles.

Inner and outer. If that concept is foreign to you, perhaps you are not a christian.

Now, Paul, is under the assumption, having spent 2+ chapters on how we as christians walk a different path from the world that the category of battle, pressure, wrestling he's going to address here is outside of us, not inside. But I wanted to remind us that if we are christians, we have struggle from our fallen flesh as well as demonic pressure.

And Paul actually addresses that in verse 12.

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Satan doesn't show up in a red suit with a pointy 3 pronged spear and little horns coming out of his head. He has designed a world that applies pressure against every fallen appetite for evil I have.

We almost can't watch TV these days. I want to relax and get into a story, but I have to compromise my values and see wickedness and hear wickedness in order to watch most movies these days. *the world forces of this darkness, and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places* did that.

Satan designs a world that hurls offenses at my fleshly appetites continually. Satan designs a world system that continually gets more and more evil. Spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places that create darkness and evil and entrap the world's inhabitants in death, but also cause non stop pressures against God's redeemed elect.

As christians, our job is to be able to withstand the storms, the beatings, the tidal waves, the hurricanes, and maybe worst of all the long periods of boredom, just plain waiting, and waiting, and waiting some more, and at the end, whether it's the end of our physical life here, or perhaps even hearing

the bridegroom call us to Him, in this life, and be standing on that day.

That's Paul's message here. Satan's got a lot to throw at you, and at the end of the day you need to be still in the battle, still in the war, still standing, not a casualty of conflict that is removed from it's place.

I've been a christian 54 years. I can't number the people who claimed to be christians but then disappeared. Vanished. Gone. They come and then one day, we simply don't see them any more. Poofers. There for a while, and then, poof, they're gone. Casualties of Satan's war.

These days where ridiculous names for every disorder makes them an illness and not a wickedness we even have a name for walking away from the faith. It's called religious deconstruction. If that sounds sort of hip, sort of post modern, sort of chic, sort of higher learning intelligencia, and rather elite, welcome to Satan's schemes 101. Hip evangelicals can realize it's all bogus and become de-vangelicals.

In this passage Paul is going to use the word stand, three times. It's the whole point of what he will be teaching us about facing the fierce opposition of Satan. When the seige is over, who is still standing, and who is gone.

In John chapter 8 Jesus has a long discussion with the pharisees regarding who He is. The jews understood that by using the term I AM which is also God's name, He was making a claim to be God. For most of them that was cause to kill Him. But some believed.

*30 As He was speaking these things, many believed in Him. 31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “**If you abide** in My word, then you are truly My disciples; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”*

That's a conditional statement. If - then. If you abide. If you remain. Then you are truly mine. Did they? We already have the pattern that most

will walk in chapter 6 of John. Jesus talking about eating His body and drinking His blood. It freaked the shallow "believers" out. Disciples come and disciples go.

60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?"

66 As a result of this many of His disciples went away and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

Staying doesn't result in salvation. That would be works that we do. But true salvation does result in staying. Have you ever noticed that my prayer at the end of our teaching session always includes thanking the Lord for all those who continue to come.

I don't chase after the people who leave. I thank God for the folks who stay. Through thick and thin. I know I'm not a feel good preacher. This book isn't a feel good book. Most of it is a stern warning. That's exactly what we have here today. This is about as fun as boot camp training.

When the battle is over, when the hurricane has passed, we'll look around to see who's still standing. Covid was a stress test for God's church. If 40% of the people before Covid didn't come back after Covid, we can surmise that their faith wasn't genuine. Christians abide. Christians remain. Christians are still there after the storm subsides.

So, then, listen again to Paul's words as he tells us how to be the ones who are still standing after the Tornado passes over.

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore

We want to take a careful look at verse 13 this morning, continuing to set the context for the articles of armor we will need in our battle as christians.

Remaining a christian after Satan's onslaughts is the ultimate purpose. Our goal is to stand, and to be found standing at the end of the war.

Satan is a busy fellow. He is not omnipresent like God. He is busy in one place at a time waging wars against God and God's people. I get a little impatient with people who walk around in this world talking to Satan, binding Satan, as though he was in the room. You aren't that important that Satan has to come and use his time doing combat with you.

Perhaps if you're Donald Trump, or Vladimir Putin you might get some of Satan's direct time. There's a famous legend about Martin Luther where he got so mad at Satan that he threw his inkwell at him and the stain from that ink remained on that wall for hundreds of years.

Martin Luther was important enough that Satan indeed may have been in his presence. I'm no Martin Luther and neither are you. But here's a question that may be more realistic than shouting at Satan and binding him and ordering him around which is foolishness.

A more realistic question might be, can I listen to the media, year in and year out and not become like the proverbial frog in the frying pan. I watch my christian friends and little by little by little I see creepage. Away from God's high standards and more and more little compromises with this world.

I want to draw you to a word in verse 13;

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to

resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

That word resist is actually a compound version of the word stand. We want to be found standing after the storm passes by. The word resist is the stance of standing during the battle. During the pressure.

If I find myself out doors facing a 100 mile an hour wind, my posture needs to change. I have to get my feet on firm ground and I need to lean into that wind at perhaps a 20 degree angle. That's resistance. It's the posture needed to keep upright, to keep standing during the battle. During the pressure brought against me.

You all know I love the premise of Jude's letter stated in verse 1, because I've read it often; Actually it's verse 3 right immediately after his formal salutation. He says this;

3 Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you exhorting that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

I wanted to have a fireside chat about the lofty and beautiful salvation that we share, but instead, I'm forced to exhort you to take the defensive posture and fight earnestly for what? The once for all time delivered to the saints faith.

No time for comfortable pleasant chatting when an enemy is making a direct frontal attack. When there is pressure, the church must suit up and meet the attack with direct opposition. Earnestly contend is victorian english for take up war positions and fight!

The idea is bound up in Paul's word, resistance. Equal opposing pressure against the pressures coming at you. Resistance is leaning into the battle, to win. So that when the battle is over, you're still standing.

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to

resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Let me give you a paraphrase. *13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to repel the enemy with equal or greater force, in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.*

I was a 15 year old teenager, not yet a christian, in 1967 when Israel went to war against it's Arab neighbors which had attacked them. But even as an ordinary kid I thought it was very cool that the underdog, Israel, not only met the opposing forces, but they expanded their holdings by 3 times.

The reason we're in this battle is because God called us out of Satan's authority to reign and into His kingdom. We found ourselves, as a result, in the ages old battle between God and Satan, and we're trying to take ground for our King. My dream scenario would not to only be found standing after the battle, but to have taken territory for our King.

Paul isn't so much worried about gaining territory as he is about sending me into the battle with enough preparations that I come back out in one piece.

What is the "evil day" that Paul speaks of in verse 13?

13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

The evil day began in the garden of Eden, when Satan convinced Eve and by extension, Adam, to join him in his rebellion against God who is rightful. owner of this creation and everything in it.

Your Bible is the complete story of that event where paradise is lost, all the way to the end of Revelation, where Jesus returns to this world and retakes this world, away from Satan, and rules as it's rightful owner and King for a thousand years, and then a new heavens and a new earth replace it.

The evil day is every day that Satan is in his usurped evil power in this world until the day that Jesus takes it back. We woke up this morning

somewhere in that time line between Genesis 3 and Revelation 19. We are smack in the middle of the evil day.

Now some of us pour over the prophecies and try to figure out where we're at more precisely. Are we closing in on the end of the church age and the church's removal to heaven, which re-starts Israel's 490 year clock at the 7 remaining years left to completion when Messiah was cut off.

Lots of speculation about these things, and it can become a distraction that can pull us away from what we're actually supposed to be doing. Satan can create schemes where christians get sidetracked fussing about things beyond what is clearly revealed for us. Satan would love to knock us off balance where we're so deep in the fog of prophecy that we forget there's a current battle we're supposed to be fighting in.

We are in the evil day. And in my life time I can certainly tell you that I've witnessed one prophecy being fulfilled beyond my wildest imaginations. In 2 Tim 3:13 it says; *But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.*

I never in my life dreamed of the arrogance and wickedness that has increased in my life time. Every time I say to myself, it can't possibly get any worse, how could it? We're up against a wall. We can't be any more evil. And then we do.

Every time I hear in our prayer list the we must pray for our great nation I think to myself rather, pray for the christians who need to survive somehow in the boundaries of this nation that is already experiencing God's wrath and judgement that is well overdue. I admit that when I do pray for this nation, my prayers are rather imprecatory. Look it up.

Well, that's our introduction. Let's dive into our first piece of armor.

We're in a war. Our long range goal is to be standing at the end of the war, not a casualty of war, and as such, we need to be vigilant. Sober. Ready.

Expect the hurricane.

14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth,

Paul's metaphor pictures a Roman soldier which he would have had in proximity for most of his life. A common picture that needed no further explanation to the original hearers, but we need a little help to get a mental image of the different pieces of the armor.

Ordinary dress in the first century was a tunic. Like a dress. Material with arm holes and head hole. Not the best for doing combat. It could get in the way.

So this item, girding your loins, is a belt that has several functions. It pulls the tunic up out of the way so your legs are free to move quickly, and it offers some protections for the mid region. It would be heavy leather and it can incorporate perhaps a loop for your long sword and a sheath for your dagger.

Girding yourself for battle is preparatory for normal warfare in that world. It's the necessary beginning of readiness for combat. Old testament and new.

One of my most favorite verses in the Bible illustrates girding for battle. Ben Hadad is engaging in some psychological warfare with king Ahab in Samaria. Telling Ahab the dust of Samaria isn't enough for all of his troops to have a little handful, there's so many of them. Blah blah blah.

And Ahab sends a messenger back with this message for Ben Hadad. 1 Kings 20:11 Then the king of Israel answered and said, "Speak to him, '*Let not him who girds on his armor boast like him who girds it off.*'"

The time for boasting is post battle, not before. Mr. Trump, take a lesson; '*Let not him who girds on his armor boast like him who girds it off.*'"

It's a grand use of the idea of girding on armor. When you're readying for battle, you gird on your armor. When battle is won, you gird it off.

And so this first piece of armor has with it not only the protections it offers, it also is the beginning of the process of going out to battle. We gird our armor on. Then we engage. That whole idea is captured in verse 14.

14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth,

Girding is the preparation process. The enemy is on the march. They're 3 miles from your position. Peace talks have failed. War is imminent. It's time to get the armor on because battle is unavoidable. What's the key piece here. The loins is a necessary area to protect. Heavily. But beyond that, in the overall preparation process of girding yourself for battle, what is the first thing in the metaphor for this whole process of girding on your armor for war.

Truth. Truth. Information that is true. Listen, I'm thankful every day that I have a massive foundation in truth. The foolish man built his house upon the _____ what? Sand. And the wise man built his house upon the _____ what? Upon the Rock.

Even as little kids, singing that little song, we already understood, Jesus is the Rock. What did Jesus ask of the Father in the High Priestly prayer in John 17? *17 Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.*

If battle is unavoidable, and it is, and if the enemy is approaching and we have limited time and we also have the responsibility to prepare, where does that girding on of protective armor start? The book, people.

It's absolutely imperative that Christians get serious about this book. Life and death hang in the balance. Listen to the prophet, Hosea in ch. 4 vs. 6

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from ministering as My priest. Since you

have forgotten the law of your God, I Myself also will forget your children.

That sounds like God means business. I gave you a book. Your own thriving or perishing depends on what you do with it. Ignore Me and Ill ignore you. For lack of knowledge, my people are destroyed.

One of the reasons I asked to have a web site as a repository for the teaching that has come from this pulpit in the last 13 years is this verse. The fact is, I'm doing my part in this the best I can.

Go to the pages on our web site that have links to what we teach, what we believe. Besides the 13 years of scriptural exegesis from this pulpit, there's quite literally a banquet feast of teaching from other people who are far better at it than I am.

It's really never been easier and more available to get sound in this book than it is right now. And it's free. And yet the church has never been dumber than it is right now. Sounds like a perfect storm time to me. The christians are asleep on the beach and a tidal wave is a half mile out moving our direction.

Peace initiatives have failed. The enemy is ready and marching our direction. We don't have much time to gird on our armor. Ask 1000 so called christians what the armor of God is and 998 of them will say Huh?

At the beginning of Jesus ministry, what was the weapon that Jesus used every time during His testing in the wilderness when Satan had Him mano a mano? Remember? It is written, it is written, and finally, get lost Satan, it is written.

Truth is the weapon we must have available to do battle with Satan. What was Jesus method with the pharisee's? Keep in mind now that the pharisee's are the tip of Satan's spear coming at Jesus. Satan's dupes. Asking Him stupid questions, trying to entrap Him. What is His response?

Have you not read? Over and over. Have you not read Moses and the prophets?

Beloved, if you don't have a solid foundation in the truth, the doctrines of this book, none of the rest of the armor is going to help you any. All of the rest of the armor has a connection to truth. This book. Let's do a quick review of the rest of the armor pieces and see how the truth of this book makes them viable.

14 Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,

What is and is not righteousness. How is it defined? What's the basis for whatever we would define as righteousness? The book. The moral law of God. Walking according to the doctrines of what? The Word of God. Truth.

15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

What defines the good news? The gospel? What is it and where can it be defined. Delineated. The book. The whole book from genesis to revelation is the good news of how God redeemed lost sinners owned by Satan. It's the whole point of the book. We were condemned. Why? It's in the book. But God reached down and designed and executed a rescue. What does that look like? It's all in this book.

16 In addition to all, having taken up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one,

Faith in what?? Faith in faith? That ridiculous song. I believe, I believe . . . You believe, what, exactly? You have to understand and believe the right things, or it's useless believing. Faith in what? The truth's of this book.

17 also receive the helmet of salvation,

What is salvation? What am I saved from? What am I saved to? How did it happen? How is it gained? Oh, it's by faith. Back to the previous section. Faith in what? Truth. This book.

and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

We ultimately go on the offense. Defense is under full control and we've got enough left over to go on the offense. What is the sword? Who is the Spirit? It's all directly connected to the truth of this book. Satan responds to this book. The truth of this book dis-arms him.

Everything begins with a knowledge of the truth. And that's why when the battle is inevitable, and it is, and we're girding ourselves for battle engagement, and we had better do that, our basis for warfare begins and ends with the truths of this book.

Listen, the battle we're in, with Satan and all of his forces for evil, began with 3 little words in the garden of Eden 6000 years ago, and the tactic today is still the same. 3 little words. ***Hath God said ?***

We've been in a mess for 6000 years over words from God's mouth. Truth is the bottomline. Satan wants us to rebel against God's words, against God's truth.

How vulnerable are you if you don't have a clue what God said? If you don't have a foundation of truth, deep inside your being, a knowledge of what God said and what He didn't say, you're nothing but a tasty fat sheep that wandered off, helpless against the roaring lion.

Get serious about truth, or prepare to be eaten.

I've ordered the teachers guide for a 20 week crash course called Fundamentals of the Faith. If you often feel that I'm talking over your head, you need to have the foundations in place.