

## Jason Upchurch - Ephesians 6:10-13 - Spiritual Warfare - Part 2

As we continue to continue to look at this section on the Armor of God let me begin by saying that the Christian life is pretty mundane for the most part. It's not boring, but there's a lot about following Jesus that's simply routine and cyclical. Day in and day out sort of the same thing.

You think of the means of grace - reading your Bible, praying, going to church, taking the Lord's Supper, fellowship with other believers - these are all routine things. And many times they're hard routine things, that's why we call them disciplines. You have to discipline yourself to do them.

Video games takes no discipline. Scrolling social media, binge watching a show, doing something exciting really takes very little discipline.

But if you're looking to follow Jesus because you want some excitement in your life, I think you've picked the wrong path. You might need to take up rock climbing or motocross or snowboarding.

The only real type of excitement the Christian life invites is usually persecution. How fast can we flee from people trying to kill us? How long will we have to suffer from the pagans trying to force us to bake a cake, or take gay wedding pictures or let men into girls bathrooms.

Have you ever seen videos from the men's retreats from mega churches? They have monster trucks and fire works and power team stuff. Why do they do that? It's to attract men to something exciting. There's always this desire to make the Christian life be more exciting than it is.

But Jesus doesn't call us to excitement. The call to follow Jesus in the gospel is a lifelong call to continually find all of our hope and worth in him. In the gospel.

That our standing before God is not based on our efforts at all but on Jesus and what he did through his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave.

That the Christian life - where we are called disciples - is a continual learning process. Where we learn through immersing ourself in the Word day and night so we are like a tree planted by streams of water and we're fruitful no matter the situation. Or, as Jesus says, so that we abide in him. And it through learning about who he is and what he expects of us that we live lives that are fully devoted to good works.

I say all that because last week I critiqued both the reformed camp and the charismatic camp when it comes to how they deal with this passage. Reformed folks often times underemphasize the importance of spiritual warfare. Charismatics overemphasize it and often get kind of crazy with how they approach spiritual warfare, including using specific words or phrases or prayers essentially like incantations or spells.

And I think some of the reason for all that nonsense is because I think a lot of times what people are looking for is something more spectacular, more exciting than what the Bible says.

If I told you that maybe the reason your struggling with lust isn't because of some generational sin you forgot to renounce or demon you forgot to bind this morning but really just a matter of self control, that doesn't seem all that exciting.

If I told you that maybe the reason your immature in the faith is not because you need to loose angelic intensity but because you're not actually reading the Bible on a regular basis.

What if your depression and anxiety isn't really because you forgot to hedge up the evil spirits of sadness and was really because your faith just isn't very strong? You don't actually trust God to provide for you or trust God to protect you and that's why you live in anxiety?

Maybe there's a lot of drama in your life - you're like a magnet for Jerry Springer-level nonsense. It's not because you forgot to pray a hedge, maybe you're not walking around with the gospel of peace strapped on your feet.

What Paul seems to be getting at here is that there is a lot of spiritual warfare happening all around us but the solution is actually rather simple and mundane.

And so if we take this whole section and just summarize it, it goes something like this:

There are powerful spiritual enemies out there.  
We're commanded to stand strong against them.  
We stand strong by putting on the armor of God.  
We put on the armor of God by prayer.

That's it. It's not a complicated passage. It's not a mysterious passage or a passage where we need to squeeze out a bunch of weird incantations or practices that aren't there, like praying hedges and prayer mapping or anointing things with oil.

This is something of a mundane passage about how we think through spiritual warfare.

Let's just walk through this.

1. Command. There are several commands in the passage. **Read**

So have you ever seen that meme that has the sentence "Let's Eat Grandma" and it's written 2 different ways? One way is no commas. And the other way has a comma between "Eat" and "Grandma?" And the caption below is "Grammar saves lives."

If you get grammar right, you're eating with grandma. If you get the grammar wrong you're actually eating grandma. So grammar is important.

And that's true here. Grammar is very important here. On a simple read we could understand that we just need to toughen up, we need to be strong and get our act together.

But the grammar is actually different. It's passive. The idea is not "go get strong" like we need to just toughen up and hit the gym. The idea is "go be strengthened" in the power of the Lord and in his might. We're not called to go do battle in our own strength, we're called to do battle in the strength of the Lord.

I mean there are all these evil demonic powers and principalities and rulers. These are strong, strong spiritual forces.

We see angels doing some powerful things in the Bible. A destroying angel killed 70,000 people in Jerusalem after David did the census. An angel killed Herod with worms. One freed the apostles from prison, rolled the stone away from Jesus's empty tomb, shut the mouths of lions. The only Archangel we know of - Michael - seems to be in constant cosmic battle with Satan. And if you look at angelic activity in Revelation they're often destroying things and people.

And every time we see an angel appear to John in glory in Revelation the angel's power is so great and mighty he falls down like a dead man in idolatrous worship. These are powerful beings.

And those are just the good guys. It seems clear that Paul tells us what we're battling are the bad guys. Who presumably have equal power for evil.

**Look** over a **Jude 8-11**. This is a very unusual reference that Jude makes here talking about false teachers. One problem with false teachers is that deal with evil spirits in the wrong way. **Read**

What does it mean to blaspheme the glorious ones? It sounds odd, but the glorious ones, in context here, are evil spiritual beings. And it seems as though the false teachers are speaking to them in derogatory ways. Even evil spirits have a type of grandeur - wicked grandeur - that we need to be careful talking about.

And Jude says even Michael - the archangel - was fighting with the devil. That's wild. And he was arguing with him over the body of Moses. We have no idea what that means at all. But Jude's point here is that even Michael - as powerful and glorious in his own right - doesn't blaspheme his spiritual adversary, the devil. What's he do?

He says, The Lord rebuke you. He leaves it to the sovereign power of Jesus. Michael lets Jesus take care of the devil. He's an archangel. Arch angel means ruler of angels. He has some kind of spiritual authority over the other angels, we don't even really know what that means. But he understands the spiritual world and battles Satan in ways we can't possibly know. And even Michael is like: Jesus is going to take care of you.

What do the false teachers do? **Read 10-11**

The false teachers try to do it on their own. They have no idea what or who they're dealing with and yet in pride they assume they know how to battle demons. Bad idea. They're just like the worst offenders in the OT.

Here's the connection I want to make: Michael does exactly what Paul is telling us to do. Michael doesn't battle in his own strength, which is significant. He defers to Jesus and Jesus's strength. **Look back to Eph. 6. Read 10**

Be strengthened. That's the command. Don't use our power, use the Lord's power.

How do we do that? **Read 11**

We put on the whole armor of God. So it's putting on this armor that actually equips us to do spiritual battle.

It's funny, because it's invisible armor to fight an invisible battle. Or we could say spiritual armor to put on a spiritual battle.

Now, again, this isn't something we do in our own might. Think about a seat belt. You put on a seat belt and it's the seat belt that keeps you safe. You put it on, but the idea is that you put it on so it will protect you by its power.

Or if you're an X-ray tech you put on lead stuff to guard you. And it protects you by its own power. That's what the armor of God is like. We put this stuff on and it protects us because it's God's power.

So stand strong. How do we do that? By putting on the armor of God. How do we do that? By prayer. Paul's going to describe the armor - and we'll work through that - but after that there's this huge emphasis on prayer. **Read 13-19**

So follow this. We've got the command to be strengthened. Be strong. We do that by putting on the armor of God. And then grammatically, we do that by prayer.

So let's walk through the armor and what this looks like.

1. Belt of truth. **Read 14**

This is our first piece of armor. And it's truth. This is what grounds everything else, truth. Where do we find truth? We find it in the Word of God. Why is this a spiritual issue? **Turn to John 8:42-47**

One of the reasons we need truth is because Satan is a liar. So if we're going to stand against a spiritual being who lies, then the way we protect ourselves against lies is truth. **Read 42-47**

So there is absolutely no truth in the devil. The things that the devil says are lies. And many times lies are almost-truths. They're mostly truths but have a sprinkling of error. That sprinkling of error is like a little bit of spiritual poison sprinkled in.

But the nature of the devil, and all demons, is lies. You remember in **1 Kings 22** when there's this evil spirit who is going to entice Ahab to go to battle? It's an interesting description. Like God's there and there's this heavenly court of angels and demons all around and God's like "Who's going to entice Ahab?" And this evil spirit comes forward and says "I'll do it!" And God asks how. How will the spirit entice Ahab? And the evil spirit says "I'll go be a lying spirit in his mouth."

Lies are just one of the many attacks Satan and evil spirits have. And here in John Jesus doesn't say this is metaphorical. He doesn't say this is theory. He actually calls the Pharisees the children of who? The devil.

**Read 44-47**

The key feature of the devil is that he lies. The key feature of Christians is that we are of the truth.

And this isn't some pie in the sky thing. How spiritual attack happens is through people lying. Ahab died because an evil spirit went into a false prophet and lied to him.

Adam ate the fruit because Eve ate the fruit because Satan entered into a serpent and lied.

Lies are all around all the time. And these lies come through people. They come through people who claim to love God. The Pharisees claimed to love God, but they in fact hated him.

False teachers, the world our own sinful flesh often buys into lies.

That's why Jesus prays for us in **John 17:17**: sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth.

Love - which is the chief command - does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. **1 Cor 13:6**

We don't yield in submission to falsehood even for a moment, Paul says, so that the truth of the gospel might be preserved **Gal 2:5**

Jude calls us to contend for what? The truth. That was once for all delivered to the saints.

Several times in his short epistles the apostle John rejoices to find out that his spiritual children are walking in the truth.

As believers, our lives revolve around the truth. Everything we do, everything we say has to be grounded in truth.

Well, in order to put on truth we have to be grounded in the truth. We can't just talk about truth and how truth is good and truth is essential, we need to actually equip ourselves in the truth.

So buckle up for a "you need to be reading your Bible" application. And a "you need to be memorizing the Bible" application - hiding the word of God in your heart.

**Deut 6:4-9** talks about how we need to be teaching and immersed in the Bible from sun up to sun down and everywhere we go.

And we need to be taking in the Word of God prayerfully. "God help me know and understand your Word." "Help me behold wondrous things from your Law."

If you want to put on the belt of truth you actually need to be taking in the truth. Not just sermons, not just podcast or books. Those are good things and I encourage them all. But you need to take in the pure milk of the Word of God, long for it like a baby longs for milk like Peter says.

And you need to long for the Bible for you. You ever read the Bible and think "Man, So-and-So really needs to hear this verse?" Or "Man, here's another verse I'd use to show this - insert pet doctrine - is true."

You guys, that's not how we should read our Bible. When we read the Bible we need to ask how the truth of the Word of God should change me. How does this affect me? Impact me?

That's where prayer comes in. Prayerfully reading the Bible. Having a conversation with God. Him speaking through the Word and us asking for wisdom and guidance and understanding.

Christians need to be immersed in the truth.

Many self-professed Christians have no idea about original sin or why it's important. They have no idea how to talk about the Trinity or whether the Holy Spirit is a person or a force. Many people think the Bible is filled with errors and that there are multiple ways to heaven. Most people think God loves all people the exact same way - news flash, he doesn't.

Most don't know what the Bible says about social issues or how a church operates or who is qualified to lead.

**Isaiah 5:13:** My people go into exile for lack of knowledge.

God hauled Israel off to Babylon because they didn't know who he was or what he wanted them to do. And I think there's a lot of that today.

And I know it's hard to be immersed in the Word of God. I get it. Distractions, busyness, excuses. I know everyone feels guilty when I tell them to read the Bible more. So wallow in that guilt for a minute, then ask Jesus for forgiveness, and then go read your Bible.

Because in the battle we're in this is not optional. This is the very first piece of armor you have to put on.

This is a cosmic battle and if you aren't putting on the belt of truth you're going to get destroyed by authorities and rulers and principalities. You have no chance against Satan because without the truth you're trying to stand against spiritual forces in your own strength.

You have to put this on.

2) Breastplate of Righteousness. **Read**

So a breast plate is like your bullet proof armor. It protects the vital organs from critical damage. And so what is guarding us from critical damage? It's righteousness.

But the righteousness that protects us from Satan's schemes and attacks and discouragement is not our own righteousness. It's not our own ability to do good things or to earn God's favor.

If that was our protection, we'd all be dead. All of our righteousness is like filthy rags. John says if we say we have no sin we make Jesus a liar and his truth is not in us.

So there's no protection in looking at ourselves.

By this is what most people in the world look to for hope: their own righteousness. "I'm a good person" "I'm not that bad" "Well I'd like to think I contribute to society" so on. It's all about them and what they've done. That righteousness won't help you at all because at the end of the day we all know just how much we fail on a daily basis. We know our actions, our hearts, and our sin.

No, the righteousness we need to put on to protect ourselves is the righteousness of Christ. We talk about this often when we're talking about the gospel but here's why it's so important to put on practically.

When we talk about the gospel, we usually talk about how Jesus died for our sins. He was our substitutionary sacrifice and on him was placed all the sin and guilt of all the people who would believe in him. So that's part of the gospel.

The other part is that Jesus - the God-man - also earned righteousness for us. He obeyed the Law perfectly in our place, he was always obedient to the Father, he said and did and thought only righteous things.

And so when someone believes in Christ, it's not just that their sins are imputed to Jesus - though they are. It's also that his righteousness is imputed to us. And so for Christians our standing before God is that we are forgiven, and we are perfectly righteous.

Now here's the deal. In the Christian life there's this tension. On the one hand we know that God has forgiven us for all our sins - past present and future. We know that. But we still ask God for forgiveness when we sin, don't we? Why? It's not because if we forget somehow we'll go to hell. No, it's a relational thing - he's our Father and we don't want to offend our Father and at the same time we need to be reminded of the forgiveness that Christ gives us.

The same thing is true with righteousness. **Turn to Phil 3** for a minute. For the Christian, we often need to be reminded that not only are we forgiven, but that in Christ we are completely righteous.

You ever do something wrong and you confess and people forgive you but you still feel bad? You burned dinner, you missed sending in a check and got a late fee, or whatever? I'm coaching baseball and these kids will make a mistake in the game and even though the play is over and we're on to the next play they're still beating themselves up from the last play?

We do that in our Christian life too. This is why prayerfully reminding ourselves of the righteousness of Christ is so important. Because our standing before God is not about our performance, but Jesus's performance.

Here in Phil 3 Paul is talking about this struggle. How in past life - before he was a Christian - he would point to his own performance. But he gave all that up. And now he looks continually to Christ. **Read 2-6**

So before Paul was saved he was the model follower of God. He had everything going for him. **Read 11**

So what's Paul focused on now? It's not his righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ. His only hope now is the righteousness of Christ.

And did you notice that this wasn't a one time thing for Paul? It's a continual thing. Paul understands his need for Jesus through pain and suffering and loss because it makes him look to Jesus.

He's putting on - as it were - the breastplate of righteousness. He's constantly remembering his need for the righteousness of Jesus, not his own. And look at this. **Read 12-16**

What's he saying? He's saying that the righteousness of Christ that is his only hope is still something he has to remember. He has to be reminded of it all the time. That his standing before God isn't in who he is or what he does, but who Christ is and what he's done.

He presses on, he strives to find his hope in Christ.

That's the Christian life. A lot of times were depressed because we think God's view of us changes by our effort. It doesn't. We need to be prayerfully reminded that God views us through the righteousness of Christ.

If you're struggling with pride you need to be reminded that it's not your efforts or achievements that matter to God, it's Christ's.

If you're feeling guilt or hopeless or anxiety, look to Christ. Who has provided all things, that we need for life and godliness.

**Pray**