

BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS POWER.
27TH AUGUST 2006

EPHESIANS 6:10-20 FINALLY, BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN HIS MIGHTY POWER. ¹¹PUT ON THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD SO THAT YOU CAN TAKE YOUR STAND AGAINST THE DEVIL'S SCHEMES. ¹²FOR OUR STRUGGLE IS NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT AGAINST THE RULERS, AGAINST THE AUTHORITIES, AGAINST THE POWERS OF THIS DARK WORLD AND AGAINST THE SPIRITUAL FORCES OF EVIL IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS. ¹³THEREFORE 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. ¹⁴STAND FIRM THEN, WITH THE BELT OF TRUTH BUCKLED AROUND YOUR WAIST, WITH THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IN PLACE, ¹⁵AND WITH YOUR FEET FITTED WITH THE READINESS THAT COMES FROM THE GOSPEL OF PEACE. ¹⁶IN ADDITION TO ALL THIS, TAKE UP THE SHIELD OF FAITH, WITH WHICH YOU CAN EXTINGUISH ALL THE FLAMING ARROWS OF THE EVIL ONE. ¹⁷TAKE THE HELMET OF SALVATION AND THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD. ¹⁸AND 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. ¹⁹PRAY ALSO FOR ME, THAT WHENEVER I OPEN MY MOUTH, WORDS MAY BE GIVEN ME SO THAT I WILL FEARLESSLY MAKE KNOWN THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL, ²⁰FOR WHICH I AM AN AMBASSADOR IN CHAINS. PRAY THAT I MAY DECLARE IT FEARLESSLY, AS I SHOULD.

AS JESUS WALKED HERE UPON THE EARTH WE ARE GIVEN A CLOSE LOOK AT THREE YEARS OF HIS LIFE. ONE THING WE SEE, ALMOST EVERY DAY HE WAS GOING TO FACE SOMETHING DIFFERENT. IT CAN BE THE SAME FOR US TODAY.

WE CAN PLAN FOR US AND OUR FAMILIES TO HAVE A SECURE, FULL

LIVE. BUT WHAT WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER IS THAT WE HAVE ONE WHO IS AGAINST US, HE IS AT WAR WITH US WHETHER WE ENTER INTO THE FIGHT OR NOT.

WE MUST ASK, WHAT HAVE WE OVERLOOKED. WHAT UNPLEASANT SURPRISES WAITS FOR US TODAY, TOMORROW OR NEXT WEEK.

THE TEACHING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT REVEALS TO US THAT SATAN AND HIS FOLLOWERS ARE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO GET AT US .

PETER WARNS, **1 PETER 5:8** BE SELF-CONTROLLED AND ALERT.

YOUR ENEMY THE DEVIL PROWLs AROUND LIKE A ROARING LION LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO DEVOUR.

THE FATHER KNEW THAT WE WOULD BE DEALING WITH THESE ISSUES, FOR THEY ARE THE SAME ISSUE THAT MAN HAS DEALT WITH FROM THE BEGINNING, FOR IT ALL STARTED IN THE GARDEN.

SATAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN JEALOUS OF MAN, AND WANTS TO DESTROY HIM. HE IS JEALOUS OF WHO WE ARE NOW AND WHO WE ARE BECOMING. **1 JOHN 3:2** DEAR FRIENDS, NOW WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD, AND WHAT WE WILL BE HAS NOT YET BEEN MADE KNOWN. BUT WE KNOW THAT WHEN HE [JESUS] APPEARS, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM, FOR WE SHALL SEE HIM AS HE IS.

WE MUST LEARN TO FOCUS ON THESE TWO THINGS. WHO WE ARE IN JESUS AND WHAT WE ARE BECOMING IN JESUS.

SO THE BATTLE THAT IS BEING WAGED AGAINST US IS THIS, TO GET OUR FOCUS OFF JESUS OR MAKE US DOUBT WHO HE IS. BECAUSE LOOKING AT JESUS AND LEARNING OF HIM TELLS US WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE ARE BECOMING.

OUR WEAPONS ARE TO DEMOLISH ARGUMENTS AND EVERY PRETENSION THAT SETS ITSELF UP AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, AND WE TAKE CAPTIVE EVERY THOUGHT TO MAKE IT OBEDIENT TO CHRIST.

WE ARE IN A SPIRITUAL WAR, NOT A WAR IN THE FLESH. OUR WEAPONRY - THE ARMOR OF GOD IS DESIGNED TO PULL DOWN

STRONGHOLDS. WHAT DO THESE STRONGHOLDS CONSIST OF?
DRAGONS AND VAMPIRES?

NO. ARGUMENTS, IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND DISOBEDIENCE.

ALL THE PIECES OF THE ARMOR OF GOD ARE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF WHO JESUS IS TO US. TO WEAR THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD IS TO PUT ON JESUS, TO BE IN JESUS, TO FOCUS ON JESUS. EACH PIECE HELPS US TO DEFEND OURSELVES AGAINST SATAN, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, ADVANCING US EVER FURTHER TOWARDS BEING MORE LIKE JESUS CHRIST. THIS MORNING WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT THE FIRST TWO PIECES OF THE ARMOR.

HOW OFTEN WHEN OUR FOCUS IS OFF OF JESUS, WE SEE IT IS EASY FOR US TO SPEAK WORDS OF CRITICISM, SLANDER, GOSSIP AND ANGER THAT ARE SO DESTRUCTIVE TO OTHERS. ALSO OUR CONDUCT WILL NOT BE “WALKING IN THE SPIRIT”, BUT WALKING IN THE FLESH. AND THAT CONDUCT IS DESTRUCTIVE TO OURSELVES AND THOSE AROUND US.

WHEN WE ARE SPEAKING OF THE ARMOR OF GOD, THE FIRST THING I HAVE COME TO REALIZE, TO PUT ON THIS ARMOR, WHICH IS CHRIST, IN MOST, CASES WE MUST FIRST TAKE SOMETHING OFF.

THE FIRST ITEM THAT WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT IS THE BELT OF TRUTH. I THINK THERE IS A REASON FOR THIS BEING THE FIRST OF THE ARMOR, WE DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THE OTHERS UNTIL THIS ONE IS IN PLACE.

THE GREEK SAYS THAT TRUTH IS THE OPPOSITE OF FALSEHOOD, IT IS THE OPPOSITE OF HYPOCRISY AND WE KNOW THAT THE ULTIMATE TRUTH IS JESUS CHRIST, AND THE WORD OF GOD.

WHEN WE BEGAN TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD AND LEARN OF JESUS WE MUST MAKE A DECISION.

ARE WE GOING TO TAKE OFF OUR BELT, THAT IS OUR TRUTH AND PUT ON HIS TRUTH, OR ARE WE GOING TO DO LIKE MANY TODAY, TRY TO WEAR THE BELT OF TRUTH OVER OUR OLD BELT.

WHEN THE TRUTH IS IN US THROUGH THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT, THEN OUR HABITS BEGIN TO LINE UP WITH THE TRUTH, AND OUR WORDS AND ACTIONS ALSO BEGIN TO EXPRESS TRUTH. HOW MUCH TRUTH DO WE NEED TO BE FULLY GIRDED WITH THE BELT OF TRUTH?

AS MUCH TRUTH AS GOD HAS REVEALED TO US.

THINK ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED IN THE PAST. I CAN THINK OF YOUTH LEADERS, MUSIC DIRECTORS, CHURCH LEADERS, AND SOME LARGE MINISTRIES THAT HAVE TAKEN SOME LARGE HITS BECAUSE SOMEONE HAD LOST THEIR BELT OR IT WAS IN NEED OF REPAIR. AND WHEN THEY LOST THEIR BELT THEY WERE EXPOSED. HOW EMBARRASSING IT WAS FOR THEM AND THE ENTIRE BODY OF CHRIST.

FOR A PERSON TO BE CAUGHT WITH HIS OR HER PANTS DOWN! TO BE SEEN IN A MOMENT OF HYPOCRISY OR CAUGHT IN AN IMMORAL ACT IS VERY EMBARRASSING.

IF WE START THINKING THAT THE WORD OF GOD DOES NOT APPLY TO US, THAT WE CAN LIVE OUR LIVES OUR WAY, HOW DANGEROUS OUR LIVES BECOME.

THE SCRIPTURE SAYS **1 COR. 6:9-10** DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT THE WICKED WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD? DO NOT BE DECEIVED: NEITHER THE SEXUALLY IMMORAL NOR IDOLATERS NOR ADULTERERS NOR MALE PROSTITUTES NOR HOMOSEXUAL OFFENDERS ¹⁰NOR THIEVES NOR THE GREEDY NOR DRUNKARDS NOR SLANDERERS NOR SWINDLERS WILL INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD. IF WE DO THESE THINGS, THE INHERITANCE THAT WE LOSE HERE AND NOW, IS THIS, WE ARE NO LONGER WALKING IN THE SPIRIT, BUT IN THE FLESH, DOING THESE THINGS WE ARE NO LONGER IN CHRIST, SO OUR “BELT OF TRUTH’ IS IN NEED OF REPAIR. IT IS NO LONGER OF VALUE TO US. THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THE EDGE OF TRUTH IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES HAVE MADE THEMSELVES VULNERABLE TO ATTACK. ALL

SATAN HAS TO DO IS TO WAIT FOR THE MOMENT WHEN THE BATTLE IS AT ITS HOTTEST, AND THEN AIM AN ARROW OF ACCUSATION AT THE SPOT WHERE THE BELT OUGHT TO BE, AND THEN, DOWN COME THE TROUSERS!

THAT ATTACK COMES IN THE FORM OF AN ACCUSATION. THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF ACCUSATIONS: THE TRUE ONES WHICH INCLUDE HALF TRUTHS AND THE FALSE ONES.

A TOTALLY FALSE ACCUSATION COULD CHANGE PUBLIC OPINION ABOUT US, AND IT WILL HURT US, BUT BECAUSE WE HAVE THE BELT OF TRUTH ON JESUS WILL SEE US THROUGH IT. . IT WILL NOT DO REAL DAMAGE TO US BECAUSE WE ALSO HAVE ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND WE KNOW IN OUR HEARTS WE ARE RIGHT AND HONEST BEFORE GOD . THIS IS WHEN GOD CALLS US TO STAND. A TRUE, OR A HALF TRUE ACCUSATION HURTS WHEN WE'VE BEEN TRYING TO HIDE SOMETHING, OR SAY THE WORD OF GOD IN THIS MATTER DOES NOT APPLY TO US. WHEN OUR UNTRUTH IN A MATTER, **LIKE NOT LIVING THE LIFE THAT GOD** HAS CALLED US TO, SUDDENLY COMES TO LIGHT, WE'VE BEEN SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. FOR A TIME WE ARE NO LONGER ABLE TO DO THE THINGS GOD HAS CALLED US TO DO WITH HIS POWER AND HIS ANOINTING.

IN THE CASE OF A HALF-TRUTH, WE ARE FOREVER ON THE DEFENSIVE, ARGUING AGAINST THE HALF OF THE ACCUSATION THAT'S FALSE, WHILE ON THE OTHER HAND, CONTINUING TO HIDE THE PART THAT IS TRUE.. IT'S LIKE HOLDING ONE'S TROUSERS UP WITH ONE HAND AND FIGHTING WITH THE OTHER. AS FAR AS SATAN IS CONCERNED, WE'VE BECOME PART OF THE WALKING WOUNDED IN GOD'S ARMY.

HOW DO WE AVOID THIS? HOW DO WE KEEP OUR BELT REPAIRED AND IN GOOD SHAPE. STAY IN JESUS, FOLLOW ALL THE TRUTH, UNDERSTAND IT IS ALL FOR US. GO TO THE WORD OF GOD, WHEN WE FAIL, CONFESS OUR FAILURE, BE WILLING TO LINE OUR LIVES UP WITH THE WORD OF GOD, BECOME COMPLETELY TRANSPARENT BEFORE

GOD AND MAN, ADMITTING TO THE WEAKNESS. THEN THERE'S NOT MUCH POINT IN SATAN AIMING AT THINGS ALREADY CONFESSED AND ACKNOWLEDGED FOR THEY ARE COVERED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS. HE MAY AIM, INSTEAD AT THE HEART OR SOUL THAT IS COVERED BY THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND THAT BRINGS US TO THE NEXT PIECE OF ARMOR.

THE BREASTPLATE IS A VERY BEAUTIFUL THING TO SEE, IT CAN BE SO POLISHED THAT YOU CAN SEE YOUR OWN IMAGE IN IT.

THE BREASTPLATE REPRESENTS HOW WE SEE OURSELVES AND HOW WE WANT OTHERS TO SEE US.

THE FIRST PERSON THAT I NOTICED PUTTING ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES FROM GOD, WAS JESUS.

WHEN PEOPLE TRIED TO CALL HIM GOOD, HE SAID THERE IS NONE GOOD BUT ONE.

WHEN THEY TRIED TO PRAISE HIM FOR WHAT HE WAS DOING, HE SAID, I AM ABOUT MY FATHERS WORK, I DO WHAT HE TELLS ME TO DO.

I SEE MANY BREASTPLATES TODAY. MANY IMAGES THAT PEOPLE WANT OTHERS TO SEE WHEN LOOKING AT THEM. THOSE IMAGES COULD BE THAT OF A "GOOD GUY", "BAD GUY", "COOL GUY", "SO WHAT GUY", "BEEN THERE AND DONE THAT GUY", OR ANY ONE OF AN ENDLESS NUMBER OF DESIGNATIONS.

BUT I THINK THAT THE APOSTLE PAUL SHOWS BEST WHAT OUR ACTIONS SHOULD BE.

HE POINTED OUT THAT HE COULD TALK ABOUT ALL HIS ACCOMPLISHMENT, THE GREAT THINGS HE HAD DONE AND THE PLACES HE HAD BEEN. BUT HE SAID THAT WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THE APOSTLE PAUL REALIZE THEY MEAN NOTHING.

WHY DID HE SUDDENLY SEE HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS NOTHING, BECAUSE HE GOT A GLIMPSE OF HOW GOD SAW HIM. WE CAN MAKE EXCUSES, RATIONALIZE AND FEEL GOOD ABOUT OURSELVES, BUT IN

THE END, IT'S ONLY HOW GOD SEES US THAT COUNTS.

PAUL DISCOVERED IN A REAL BATTLE YOU NEEDED A BREASTPLATE THAT'S BIG ENOUGH TO COVER YOUR WHOLE CHEST AREA.

AND THAT BREASTPLATE COMES ONLY WHEN WE TAKE OURS OFF.

AND PUT ON THE ONE THAT GOD PROVIDES. - THE "RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS FROM GOD BY FAITH".

PAUL CHOSE TO FORGET HIS PAST - BOTH THE GOOD THINGS AND THE BAD - AND ONLY REGARDED THE RIGHTEOUSNESS HE RECEIVED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS. THE OLD JUST WOULDN'T DO.

WHEN JESUS DIED ON THE CROSS, AN EXCHANGE TOOK PLACE, THE FATHER MADE JESUS WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN JESUS

WHEN WE DECIDE TO TURN OUR LIVES AROUND AND ACCEPT WHAT HE'S DONE FOR US (HIS DEATH AND HIS RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD), WE AUTOMATICALLY GAIN THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS.

WE SHOULD NO LONGER WORRY IF WE'RE GOOD ENOUGH FOR GOD, OR IF OUR PAST RECORD OF WRONGDOING WILL KEEP US FROM ANY OF GOD'S BLESSINGS. ALL THAT HAS BEEN PUT ON JESUS IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. HE BECAME SIN WITH OUR SIN - WE BECOME RIGHTEOUS WITH HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS. THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING WE CAN DO TO IMPROVE ON THAT.

WHEN WE WEAR HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AS A BREASTPLATE BY FOCUSING ON HIM, AND BEING IN HIM, GOD DOES NOT SEE US AS A SINNER. BUT, AS A CHILD OF HIS. EVERYTHING THAT WAS A PART OF OUR OLD LIFE; ALL THE BAD THINGS, OUR FAILURES, AND ALL OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS, EVERYTHING IS FORGOTTEN - AS THOUGH IT NEVER HAPPENED.

WHEN JESUS WALKED THE STREETS OF JERUSALEM HE HAD A GROUP OF PEOPLE THAT WERE AGAINST EVERY THING HE DID AND SAID.

THEY WERE CALLED PHARISEES. JESUS CALL THEM CHILDREN OF SATAN. THEY WERE ALWAYS THROWING DARTS AT HIM.

HE DID NOT ALLOW ANYTHING THEY SAID, TO STOP HIM FROM DOING WHAT HE WAS CALLED TO DO. ALL HE DID WAS POINT OUT THAT HE WAS DOING THE “WILL OF HIS FATHER WHO SENT HIM” HOW DO WE KEEP THE BREASTPLATE IN GOOD REPAIR AND IN PLACE. WE SHINE IT EVERY DAY, LIKE THOSE IN THE MILITARY SHINE THEIR BELT BUCKLES. WE WANT IT BE LIKE A MIRROR, SO THAT WHEN WE LOOK INTO IT, WE SEE OURSELVES AS WE REALLY ARE, WE WANT TO SEE CHANGE, WE WANT TO START SEEING THE IMAGE OF JESUS CHRIST TAKING SHAPE. WHEN OUR HEAVENLY FATHER, OUR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND SATAN LOOK AT THE BREASTPLATE THEY START SEEING THE GLORIOUS IMAGE OF JESUS STARRING BACK AT THEM . WE MUST DECREASE, HE MUST INCREASE.

WHEN YOU AND I PUT ON THE “BELT OF TRUTH AND THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS” WE WILL NO LONGER ALLOW THE ARROWS THROWN BY OTHERS TO STOP OUR GROWTH IN CHRIST OR THE WORK THAT GOD HAS CALLED US TO DO.

WHEN THE ACCUSATION COME, AND THEY WILL COME, WE WILL SAY “THERE IS ONLY ONE THAT IS WITHOUT SIN” AND I AM HIDING IN HIM, WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT HIM. FOR YOU SEE I AM ABOUT MY FATHERS WORK.

LET US PRAY

HEAVENLY FATHER WE KNOW THAT WHEN WE ARE IN CHRIST WE HAVE THE STRENGTH OF CHRIST. HELP US TO PUT ON AND WARE PROUDLY THE ARMOR THAT YOU HAVE PROVIDED FOR US, YOUR SON JESUS CHRIST.

A MEN