

PP This is War!-Belt of Truth

Part 2-Ephesians 6:13-14a (p. 979 pew Bible)

4/28-29/2018

In Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy, Theoden, King of Rohan says to Aragorn, *"I will not risk open war"*. Theoden had fallen under the lies and counsel of Wormtongue and would not, could not any longer see the truth. So Aragorn replied, *"Open war is upon you, whether you would risk it or not."*

Christian, open war is upon you, and the question we should ask is this: *Have I learned to "take up the whole armor of God, that [I] may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm?" 6:13*

And Ephesus, as well as ourselves, desperately needed to learn how to take up this armor!
 Spiritual warfare is not constant and unrelenting, it ebbs and flows
 There are times when you are walking closely with God, in His Word, enjoying such friendship with Him in prayer, and the enemy waits...for they are not witless...they are cunning
 But then you are hungry, or tired, or invited to a friend's party, or fail a test, or get turned down for a promotion, and suddenly the enemy strikes!
 Before you know it, you're in a fight with your spouse wondering what on earth happened?
 Or awash with regret at looking at those websites beating yourself up for falling again, even while you erase your web tracks
 Or dealing with the hangover from the party the night before, filled with regret
 Stricken with guilt that you gave away your innocence even while wearing that purity ring!
 The enemy is cunning, watching our seasons and cycles, waiting for us to be at our weakest and then unleashing their strategies and those come fast and without warning

Knowing this, we have some motivation to do take up the whole armor of God, starting with the very first piece...*"Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth" 6:14a*

PP 1-The Roman belt

Ephesians is a prison epistle written by the Apostle Paul during a 2-year house-arrest in Rome
 Possibly chained to a soldier day and night, Paul saw Roman armor up close and personal
 A soldier wore a tunic for his primary clothing, which was basically a large square cloth with holes for his head and arms, draped loosely over the body down past the knees
 But it interfered in fighting, so soldiers would take the bottom hem on both sides, bring it through the legs toward the back, and tuck it into a heavy leather belt on both sides
 It was how the soldier prepared himself for a fight, by girding up his loins
 The loins include the lower back, lower stomach, and pelvis...the entire hip area
 The six-inch wide belt, also called a girdle, held the soldier's armor together
 Made of leather, it was the first piece of the armor he would put on, often including a breechclout, or apron that protected the reproductive organs
 It protected the lower body and strengthened the back of the soldier for close fighting
 The belt carried the soldier's weapons and when it was fastened, it signified the soldier was on duty, while off duty they kept it slack
 Paul tells us that we must have this belt *'fastened'*, not only on us but cinched and ready for war
 But what does it signify in a spiritual battle?

PP 2-The significance of the belt of truth

The belt was the foundation of the soldier's armor, and it operates the same in the armor of God
But note it is called *'the belt of truth'*

Theologians are divided over what Paul meant with the word *'truth'*

It is not as simple as what one might think at first: *Are we to buckle on the objective truth of
God's Word, or the character of truthfulness?*

In my view, it is both, and both are incredibly needed for this world that is being deceived

PP *"And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and
Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his
angels were thrown down with him."* **Revelation 12:9**

Friends, I love living here, and I've been here since 1996, and one thing that has been clear to me
is this: it is a spiritually dark place

One could say, *Isn't every place like this?*

There are places on this earth where the forces of Satan have massed their power and schemes

PP *"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write... 'I know where you dwell, where
Satan's throne is.'"* **Revelation 2:12-13**

Pergamum was in modern-day Turkey and then was the seat of Satan's power

It would seem ignorant to believe that he does not concentrate his power in different places at
different times, and just knowing the incredible atrocities of evil being perpetrated in the
Democratic Republic of Congo reveals his hand at work

We are on the ground there through Restoring Hope Ministry for precisely this reason

Years ago, I was in Haiti on a mission trip in a village when our entire group sensed the spiritual
forces around us like static electricity in a lightning storm

Our own area of Easton has a darkness and deception that is evident in higher than national
average single-parent families, prostitution, drugs, crime, etc.

An incredible number of churches that have let go of the authority of God's Word

It's why we have chosen to grow by multi-siting, birthing more worship campuses

We are in the first stage of planning a campus launch in the Slate Belt area, to bring a house of
worship centered around God's truth to an area in a chokehold of spiritual opposition

Forces are arrayed against you, me, our church family...do you have the belt of truth *fastened?*

Paul intentionally used here a grammatical device that says no one can put this belt on but you

I can preach this sermon, and tell you what the belt is for, what it signifies, but I cannot put it on
for you, I cannot make you walk by truth, or in truthfulness

Parents, we can instruct our children all about the belt of truth, but we cannot put it on them

PP *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."*
Proverbs 22:6

Literally translated, Train up a child to the mouth of the path of wisdom...

We can get a child to the mouth of the path of truth, but we cannot get them to walk on it in life

Fastening on the belt of truth is a constant choice to be live by what God says and has done

PP *"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the
grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;"* **1 Peter 1:13NKJV**

The more you know God's Word the tighter this belt is, and it holds the entire armor together

Do you know the truth that has been revealed in the bible?
 Are you content in its authority over your life?
 Are you able to discern between what is true and what are lies?
 I used to work in a lumber yard, and would have some contractors tell me to pick out straight boards for their finish work
 What I needed is a board that I knew was perfectly straight, and then simply place the ones I selected next to it and immediately I knew if it was straight or not
 The more you study God's Word, the easier and quicker you will be able to discern what is a lie
 Not only lies from outside of you, but areas of deception and lies within your own life
 Those who have fastened on this belt love God's truth revealed in His Word, and live by it
 They will not be easily deceived and they will be able to see the strategies of the devil
 The belt of truth knowing, loving, yielding to God's truth, and living it out in truthfulness

Did you know that unforgiveness, resentment and bitterness is a strategy of Satan in us?

PP *"Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. Indeed, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs."* 2 Corinthians 2:10-11

The belt of truth reveals the forgiving heart of God and His grace to enable us to forgive others
 But to leave the belt slack, to justify waiting awhile to forgive someone, or not forgive someone because they haven't earned it, or asked for it, is to be outwitted by Satan

It is the unforgiving that finds himself in an emotional prison, right where the devil wants you
 You see, even for God's children, being outwitted by Satan is not unusual if we do not love God's truth and live it out in truthfulness

And to see how easy that is, we can begin at the third chapter in the entire Bible

PP 3-How does the Belt of Truth function in the life of a Christian?

Jesus said of Satan, **PP** *"He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* John 8:44

He and his forces move people to the same, sometimes in extreme ways

PP *"[Winston Churchill adopted, as a working thesis, the assumption that any given foreign policy statement by Hitler was the exact opposite of truth." The Last Lion, Manchester*

But who is Satan and why does he and his horde of demons hate us?

His given name was Lucifer when he was created by God as the most beautiful of all angels
 The name means shining one and he was the light bearer reflecting the light and glory of God
 From Ezekiel 28, we learn he was created as the anointed cherub to direct worship to God
 But he began to want to that worship for himself, and Isaiah 14 outlines his plan to get it

PP *"How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'"* Isaiah 14:12-14

PP i. *'I will ascend to the heaven';* Lucifer was not content to stand before the throne in heaven, he wanted full access to the place where God rules over all

PP ii. *‘Above the stars of God I will set my throne on high’*; stars were symbols of angels in Job 38:7, and Lucifer wants to rule over all the angels as they serve him at his throne

PP iii. *‘I will sit on the mount of assembly’*; In Isaiah 2:2, mountains were symbols of kingdoms and nations, and Lucifer wants to rule over them all

PP iv. *‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds’*; the glory of God was seen in the clouds in Exodus 16:10, and Lucifer wants his glory to exceed even that

PP v. *‘I will make myself like the Most High’*, his final goal made clear...he wants to be God

PP *“Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.”* Revelation 12:7-8

Cast to the earth in his failed bid for the throne, he and his legions of fallen angels furiously seek to destroy the very people made in the image of God

PP *“Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*
1 Peter 5:8

And his first victims were a married couple in the garden of Eden, Adam and his wife

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, ‘Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” Genesis 3:1

One of the greatest strategies of the devil is to create uncertainty about God’s Word

And he does it by asking the first question in recorded history...Did God actually say...?

If he can deceptively lodge in our minds suspicion, we tend to change God’s Word to suit us

“And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” 3:2-3

Her defense against the strategy of Satan was on her own authority, not God’s, for He never said do not touch the tree...she just lost this battle and wasn’t even aware yet

Not only did she not rely on God’s truth, there was not truthfulness in her

Satan began to devour her, infecting her with her own ambitions: *“But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”* 3:4-5

Her heart followed her eyes: *“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”* Genesis 3:6

If our first couple had fastened on the belt of truth, they would have clearly seen the lies of Satan That tree had been placed there to test their obedience to God, and instead of passing, they failed

Are you susceptible to the schemes of Satan, being deceived by he and his forces?

Are you convinced it’s okay to cheat a little on your taxes or withhold a little from your giving?

That it’s okay to have sex before marriage, after all, you do love that person, you plan to marry

That little white lie is, well, little, and no big deal

Christian, do you love God’s truth as your highest authority and delight to live it out in your life?

The devil’s strategy is to get you to lose confidence in truth and truthfulness, to loosen that belt

Cinch it up, learn God’s Word, and invite Him to show you where you do not have truthfulness

Amen? Pray