

Sermon 26: Preparing the Mind to Endure: Ephesians 6:10-14

Text: Ephesians 6:10-14 "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness..."

Introduction:

- **There are many pictures used to describe the Christian life:**
 - A walk
 - A wrestling match
 - A battle
 - A race
- **Paul pulled everything together into this final illustration:**
 - We must stand.
 - We must do it with His strength.
- **Each piece empowers us to stand:** Four powerful statements from familiar hymns capture this well.
 - **"Stand Up Stand Up for Jesus:"**
 - "Stand in His strength alone; The arm of flesh will fail you, Ye dare not trust your own..."
 - "Put on the gospel armor, Each piece put on with prayer..."
 - **"Soldiers of Christ Arise:"**
 - "Stand in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son..."
 - "Leave no unguarded place no weakness of the soul, take every virtue, every grace and fortify the whole..."
- **With these important reminders, let's examine the significance of the first two pieces:**

Summary: We must stand by His strength with a mind saturated with truth and a life that reflects the righteousness of Christ.

Interrogative: How can we do this?

Truth 1: Prepare your mind to face the conflict: 6:14 "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth..."

- **The importance of a prepared mind: 2 Corinthians 10:5** "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against

the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ..."

- **Satan's most effective weapon is deception.**
 - **His first recorded words in scripture: Genesis 3:4-5**
"Ye shall not surely die...For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil..."
 - **Once we become emotionally invested in a lie it will press our will: Genesis 3:6** "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat..."
- **He captures our attention with questions: Genesis 3:1**
"Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"
 - He exploits our emotions with seeds of deception.
 - He uses those emotions to drive our thinking away from the truth.
- **Paul's illustration:**
 - Girding the loins was the first step to prepare for battle.
 - It involved tucking a long tunic into one's waist band for unhindered movement.
 - It was done before any other piece of armor was put on.
 - Without unhindered movement, the rest of the armor was pointless.
 - This illustration is first, because it is the place we must start.
- **This first step of preparation has several layers:**
 - **First: Be sobered by your adversary:**
 - **1 Peter 1:13** "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober..."
 - **1 Thessalonians 5:8** "Let us, who are of the day, be sober..."
 - **1 Peter 5:8** "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour..."
 - **Second: Know who you are in Him: 2 Peter 1:3-5** "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him...by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature..."
 - **Third: Develop the discipline to focus your attention on truth: Philippians 4:8** "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things..."
 - **Fourth: Live with sincerity:**

- **2 Peter 1:5** "Beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue..."
- **James 1:8** "A double minded man is unstable in all his ways..."
- **The practical chain of preparation:** Our knowledge of truth must move from theoretical to experiential.
 - We can't be naïve about the nature of the Christian life.
 - We must understand who we are in Him and rest in that reality.
 - We can't afford to be undisciplined or distracted in our minds.
 - We can't live contradictory lives without painful consequences.
- **A painful case of injustice:**
 - We shouldn't be surprised that when people wrong us, it is very difficult to roll our burdens onto God's shoulders.
 - We must remind ourselves that God is bigger than our struggles, He will never abandon us, and that no painful situation can derail His purposes for us.
 - We must remind ourselves that His grace is available and we can endure and grow if we rely on this grace.
 - **We must move from theory to practice by embracing His word:**
 - **Promise: 1 Corinthians 10:13** "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it..."
 - **Warning: Hebrews 12:15** "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled..."
 - **Walking in truth: Genesis 50:19-21** "Am I in the place of God...as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive. Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you...and he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them..."

Truth 2: Live like the person you are in Him: 6:14 "And having on the breastplate of righteousness..."

- **The importance of consistency: Ecclesiastes 10:1** "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour..."
 - **Satan uses a cycle of deception to cripple us:**
 - **He undermines our understanding of our position:** He convinces us that we must constantly strive to earn God's favor, and that this quest is unattainable.

- **He distorts the connection between position and practice:** He convinces us that it doesn't matter how we live.
 - **He drives a wedge between us and other Christians:** He convinces us we are alone, no one understands, and that everyone would judge us if they knew the truth.
 - **He relentlessly accuses us:** He convinces us that God hates us, has abandoned us, and that it is impossible to live and struggle as we do and still be a Christian.
- **Each lie is rooted in thinking too little of Christ's righteousness:**
- **Paul's illustration:**
 - The breastplate was a piece of armor designed to protect the chest and vital organs from deadly weapons like swords, javelins, and arrows.
 - It was worn on the soldier's front and locked into his belt.
 - It was designed to protect a soldier standing his ground in the heat of battle.
- **Two foundational truths work together in perfect harmony to confront each of these lies:**
 - **We are righteous in Christ:** This alone is the basis of our position in Christ.
 - **Romans 3:21-22** "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested...Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe..."
 - **Philippians 3:9** "Found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith..."
 - **Romans 4:3-6** "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works..."
 - **Romans 5:19** "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous..."
 - **We must live out that position by the Spirit's power:** We can do this and long to do it because we have the Spirit.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:8-9** "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love..."
- **Ephesians 4:26-27** "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil..."
- **2 Peter 1:6-9** "To knowledge...temperance...patience...godliness...brotherly kindness...charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ..."
- **The practical link between the two:** Knowing our position must move from theory to experience.
 - We are forgiven and righteous in Christ and nothing can undermine or strengthen that reality.
 - Satan uses that cycle of deception to enslave and cripple us:
 - We must be firmly convinced that our position is solid, and we must resist any impulse to substitute our performance for Christ's perfect work on our behalf.
 - We must take seriously the responsibility to faithfully walk in the power of the Spirit and live out the position we have in Christ.
 - We must cultivate a grace saturated community where Christians are honest about their struggles and always apply the gospel to their practical interactions.
 - We must constantly look back at the cross and remember what it accomplished when we stumble in our walk.
- **Knowledge often becomes permanent through struggle:**
 - God can turn Satan's attacks into tools to strengthen our convictions, build our character, and strengthen our affection for Him.
 - He can cement the truth into our souls through the struggles we encounter.
 - **Job 42:5-6** "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent..."
 - **Psalms 119:71** "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes..."
 - **James 1:3** "The trying of your faith worketh patience...let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing..."
 - **1 Peter 1:7** "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ..."

Applications: We are called to stand in His power and might, but this command is not abstract.

- **First: Prepare your mind for conflict:**
 - Be sobered by your adversary.
 - Regularly reflect on who you are in Him.
 - Develop the discipline to focus your attention on what is true.
- **Second: Live out of what you know is true:**
 - Don't make excuses.
 - Don't compartmentalize.
 - Don't allow drift.
- **Third: Magnify His righteousness in your thinking:**
 - Rejoice in your position in Christ.
 - Walk in the power of the Spirit.
 - Live like the person you are in Him.
 - Cultivate edifying relationships with other believers.
 - Reject Satan's deception in these areas.