

No Neutral Zone

I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. Slide2 REAL Tues - Ladies come out **this** Tues, 7-8:30pm. *Do-Nut Fall Apart* (how to live stress-free lives). Ladies of all ages...*worship, fellowship, & donuts.*
- B. Slide3 The Thrill of Hope. Ladies Xmas Celebration *this Sat 9-11am.* Harmony Dust. Mary Ives Band
- C. Slide4 Christmas Eve Services 9&11am, 3&5pm. All 4 same. *When Love Came to Town.*
- D. Slide5 Children's Ministry Opportunity - 10 Volunteers needed in Nursery once a month.
- E. Slide6 Martin Luther Video *The Idea That Changed the World this Wed night.* Just released last Tues. It's a full-length documentary, features thrilling reenactments of the 16th-century events, w/commentary from leading church-history experts. 6:30-8:30pm!
- F. Slide7 Prayer: In fighting the Invisible War...*we're not ignorant of his devices/evil schemes.*

II. Intro: No Neutral Zone

- A. I hope you enjoyed your Thanksgiving Thurs, your **Black Fri**, small bus **Sat**, but **Today** is **Sp Warfare Sun**...*maybe* to prep us for Cyber Monday?
 1. One of the most sobering facts about life is that **all humans** have a *supernatural enemy* whose **aim** is to use **pain & pleasure** to make us *blind, mindless, & miserable...forever.*
 2. Paul made sure we believers **recognized that as new people who** have been granted **new life in a new family with new relationships** that we still would *endure spiritual warfare.*
 - a) That we would **wage the good warfare** (Paul to Tim in 1Tim.1:18) which includes **the daily resistance** of this enemy, **the daily refusal** to give him an opportunity, **and the daily stand** against his schemes.
- B. Slide8a **The Neutral Zone** in football, can be described as **the length of the football**(11") from one tip to the other, when it is spotted. **Yet, in life...** Slide8b **There is No Neutral Zone**
 1. Even in Vietnam war there was a DMZ (demilitarized zone) **but not spiritually!**
 2. The question is not whether you **want to be** in this war. **Everyone is in it!**
 3. You are either **resisting** the devil, **or** you are **defeated by** & thus **following** him.
 4. **There is no Neutral zone!** You either triumph **by the blood of the Lamb and the word of your testimony**, **or** you will be enslaved by Satan.

a) Come to him as **willing soldiers of the Prince of Peace** and learn to say,
He trains my hands for war. Ps.144:1

C. Let's read vs.10-20. Paul's 8th *long sentence* in this epistle (vs.14-20).

D. Slide9a Conflict will come – Forces beyond mere human sphere *oppose God*. And they oppose the light that would expose them for what they really are & do.

1. But God uses his *other* creatures (angels & us) to war against them.

2. Slide9b 2 Tim2:3,4 *You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*

3. God intends that *part of our preparation for heaven* be a *life of warfare w/hell*.

4. God calls it *good warfare*, a *good fight*. Good, not because we might be killed in this fight (which we might), *but because these fire-fights refine the gold of Slide9c our faith, in life and death* [1 Pet.1:7 *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, & glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ*]

5. Slide10 Let's remember, **God is the great General in this warfare.**

a) He has given us the *walkie-talkie of prayer* to call for help (which we'll see in vs.18)

b) God sees behind enemy lines, and **knows exactly the strategies** that will be used against us, *and He has written them down in this wartime manual, so we would not be ignorant of his evil schemes.*

E. Slide11 The expression *the whole armor of God* translates the Greek word *panoplia*, which is *the full armour of a heavy-armed soldier*, *although the divineness rather than the completeness of the outfit is emphasized.*

F. Explain 1st 3 pieces of armor being *past* (14,15) & next 3 being *future* (16,17).

1. Note: *having* (3 x's) vs. *taking* (2 x's).

G. Remember **2 things** from our **intro** last week on spiritual warfare...

1. **The armor** really is a symbolic description of *the Lord Himself*.

a) The armor is Christ & what He is prepared to **be** & to **do** in each one of us (He is **Truth, Rt, Peace, Faith, Salvation, the Word**)

b) Each piece is *how to lay hold of Him* as our defense against our enemy.

2. **Stand** we are not to **attack Satan, or advance against him**; we are to **stand or hold our territory**, that **Christ** has conquered.

H. **Slide12** When do we Stand & when do we Flee? John Gerstner used to say, *When tempted to do wrong...Flee; When attacked for doing right...Stand.*

1. **Flee** – Like **Joseph** fleeing from Potipher's wife.

2. **Stand** – Like **Daniel** before the decree of Nebuchadnezzar.

III. **Slide13a BELT OF TRUTHFULNESS (14a)**

A. **GIRD YOUR WAIST**

B. **Gird up** – pulling their robe up & tucking it into their belt. (Shan pants)

1. This symbolized readiness to fight.

C. **Why would this help in a battle situation?**

1. Able to move *unimpeded, unrestricted, unrestrained.*

a) **How would that relate to your personal walk? Or your ministry?**

D. **Slide13b THE BELT**

E. Before a Roman soldier put on his **armor**, he put a **belt** around his waist. This *held his garments together and* served as *a place on which to hang his armor.*

F. **What kind of belt did the Roman soldiers wear?** (had 3)

1. **A Leather Apron** to protect the lower abdomen.

2. **A Sword Belt** Ps.45:3 *Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty.*

3. **A Special Belt** that designated an officer, or high official.

G. **We need to wear these belts.**

1. To protect *our mid section* (sexual purity).

2. To attach the **Sword of the Spirit** (Word).

3. **Maybe you wear a special belt for your occupation?**

- a) A doctor dons his white coat. A police officer his utility belt. A construction worker his tool belt. A nurse in his/her scrubs. **What ever your special belt/uniform wear it for God's glory.**

H. Peter said, *Therefore gird up the loins of your minds.* 1 Pet.1:13

1. **Meaning?** – *Prepare your minds for action* NASB. Protect your mind. Let your minds be unencumbered.

I. **Slide13c TRUTH**

J. **What kind of truth is he talking about here?**

1. Most likely **not** speaking of the truth of God's Word...as that comes later (sword). **But it's actually speaking of truthfulness**, pointing to the individual's personal character. (i.e. *Living out the truth*)
2. As a soldier's belt or sash gave ease and freedom of movement, so **truth** gives freedom with *self, others, and God.*
 - a) If a person is not *living the truth*, & is weighed down w/his own sinfulness, he is like a soldier running through the battlefield w/a robe down around his ankles (you can do it for a time...*buuuuuut you're going to trip*)
 - b) **Which area of truthfulness do you personally struggle with most?** Falsehood, telling a fib, being a story teller. Is it fabrication, dishonesty, deceit, lie, deception, cheating, scam, fraud, exaggeration, embellishment?
 - c) **Truthfulness** needs to be at the core of *your character, your lifestyle, your ministry.*

IV. **Slide14a BODY ARMOR OF RIGHT LIVING (14b)**

A. **BREASTPLATE** [a 1st century Ballistic vest]

B. **It was a coat of mail, made of either:** [1] Iron Rings interloped [2] Bronze scale armor wired together [3] Molded metal chest plate [4] Overlapping metal.

1. 1 Kings 32:44 **Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel (Ahab) between the joints of his armor.** (Syria vs. Israel)

C. **Ballistic vest today** (Kevlar Body Armor, Tactical Vest) *help reduce or stop penetration to the body from a firearm-fired projectile.*

1. **Ballistic Plates** are added to protect the **heart**. **Also**, not good after a few years, as the Kevlar breaks down.

2. This was an important area to protect, as fighting was mostly *hand-to-hand combat* w/a short sword.

a) So it protected 2 vital areas **heart & viscera** (bowels/ intestines/ internal organs) **mind/emotions**

D. Slide14b RIGHTEOUSNESS

E. What kind of righteousness was he speaking of?

F. The bible talks about 3 types: *Self rt. Imputed rt. Imparted rt.*

G. Slide14c Self Righteousness

1. **Satan's ultimate goal?** To destroy men & women. Preventing them from becoming a citizen of heaven.

a) His #1 weapon is to have people believe they are going to heaven because of their *good deeds*.

2. **So, obviously not this one.** *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*

H. Slide14d Imputed Righteousness [or *Positional Rt*] Justification

1. This is God clothing a person in *the righteousness of Christ* at the moment of salvation.

2. This is described/contrasted in Phil.3:9, *and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.*

3. When you become a Christian, you are immediately covered with *Christ's Canopy of Righteousness*.

a) From that moment *on into eternity*, when God looks at you *He sees the rt of Christ*.

I. Slide14e Imparted Righteousness [or *Practical Rt*] Sanctification

1. **While Imputed** righteousness assures you of **ultimate** victory over Satan, **Imparted** righteousness enables you to win the **daily** skirmishes.

2. We **stand** in the **imputed** righteousness of Christ, **and** We **walk** in the **imparted** righteousness of the Holy Spirit.

3. **Practical righteousness** is *living a holy life*.

4. Dr. Ryle spoke of spiritual warfare as, *an inner struggle for personal holiness*.

- a) This seems to be **our battle today** *more than* personal confrontations w/demons.
 - b) We need to protect our **thinking & emotions**. How? By *holy living*.
 - c) Rom.13:12-14 *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day.*
5. This part of God's armor is holy living, for which **God supplies** the *standard* & the *power*, **but** for which we must supply *the willingness*.

V. Slide15a **BOOTS – OF PEACE (15)**

A. **BOOTS ARE ESSENTIAL**

B. Imagine a soldier clad in armor from head to foot...**but w/no shoes on?** [A barefooted soldier?]

C. **Do you remember the legend of Achilles?** who seemed to be invincible.

The Legend goes...when he was a baby his mother, *Thetis*, dipped him in the river *Styx* which coated his entire body w/an invincible shield. **But** when she was dipping him, she was holding him by *one of his heels* (thus not covering that spot). It was there that in the course of a great battle in the Trojan War, Achilles was struck in the heel by an arrow & was slain.

D. Slide15b **SOLDIER SHOES**

E. *Caliga* – A strong & heavy shoe worn by the Roman soldiers.

1. Paul has in mind the *caliga* (half-boot) of the Roman legionary which was made of leather, left the toes free, had heavy studded soles, and was tied to the ankles and shins with more or less ornamental straps. These equipped him for long marches and for a solid stance...While they did not impede his mobility, they prevented his foot from sliding.¹

F. **Today warfare is so computerized & mechanized.**

1. Back then, a single most imp dimension of warfare was **The March**.
2. In the ancient world they moved by foot, thus called **foot soldiers**.
 - a) So if the protection was inadequate, they couldn't carry out their mission.

¹ Markus Barth, Ephesians, II, p. 798

3. **Story** - In 1950, 51 of *the Korean Conflict*, *frostbitten feet* became a problem for some of the foot soldiers. Areas were damp, so when the temperature lowered, *shoes froze*, *next* the *feet froze*. The worse enemy became their **shoes**, *not* their enemy **guns**.

G. **Slide15c** GOSPEL OF PEACE

- H. Near Athens, in Greece, is a plain called *Marathon*. It's 5 miles long, 2 miles wide. In 490ad a great battle ensued between the Greeks & the Persians. When the Persians were defeated, a Greek soldier named *Pheidippides* ran *from the plain of Marathon to Athens*, a distance of slightly more than 26 miles, to deliver a message to the magistrates. As he delivered the message *he fell over dead*. **What was the message? That the war was over & victory had been achieved.** Today's Marathon race commemorates the faithful soldier who announced *the good news of peace*.

1. Our *battles* are not yet over, *but* our **ultimate victory** has already been won.
Col.2:15 *He (Christ) disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross.* [the decisive blow was struck *at Calvary*]
2. **So this peace** does not refer to *feelings* *but* to a **relationship**.
3. **Peace w/God** means we aren't *on opposite sides anymore*. [Our war is over w/God]

- I. **Slide16** **So**, this **peace** we *already possess* as believers, is a **peace** to help us to **stand** in facing our warlike conditions.
1. Like Gideon, when his 32,000 was whittled down to 300 [vs. 120,000]
 - a) **Why was Gideon willing to wage this war with these incredible odds?** Because he knew **God** was on his side.
 2. **We** then ought to *gain a confidence* in knowing **we are at peace with God**, & **thus able to stand** against any *wiles/schemes/methods* of the enemy.
- J. The **Gospel Peace-Boot** *covers* our feet, *protects* our feet, *stabilizes* our feet, & *mobilizes* our feet...in the battle against evil.

K. **Slide17**

- L. **This morning we're reminded of 3 pieces of equipment** followers of Jesus *already possess*
1. Continue to live out **truthfulness** in your life.
 2. Remain standing under Jesus's canopy of **righteousness**.
 3. **And remember**, you already possess **peace** with God. (you're on the same side)

- M. Are you a follower of Jesus this morning? This is not a *close of a sale*, but instead an opportunity to **begin** a new life, *transformed & protected* by God.
- N. Prayer: *May* God make us a mighty warrior. *May* He train our hands for war & our fingers for battle.