

## **Armor of God: Belt of Truth**

**April 21, 2024**

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This is the day that the Lord hath made; let us rejoice and be glad in it! Good morning, Church! I want to read a passage of Scripture. This will be the third Sunday in a row that I have read this passage of Scripture, and Pastor Aaron or I are going to read the same passage for eight Sundays in a row. It will become familiar! This is Paul's "armor of God," talking about God's armor that He gives us. The first two sermons were about the big picture of the armor of God. Today, we're going to start talking about the individual pieces that God gives us to help us in the living of life.

"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For 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. Therefore 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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And 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."  
May God bless the reading of the Word.

I have never been accused of being a fashion expert. There is nothing at all wrong with keeping up with the latest fashions and dressing fashionably. There's nothing wrong with that at all. But somehow or another I got caught in a time warp as far as fashion is concerned, in the late 70s, early 80s, and I haven't been able to get out. Truthfully, I haven't tried to get out; and at this point in my life, I probably won't get out. So, I am not an expert on fashion. But as far as I know, when you want to dress fashionably, you don't go to your closet and grab a belt, and say, "Now, what goes with this?" You don't start putting on your clothes or designing your get-up for the day with a belt, right? That's not a thing, is it? I really don't know, but I haven't heard of it. But when Paul begins talking about the armor of God that God gives us to help us cope with life, he begins with the belt. So, there must be something very special about the belt of truth. And we're going to talk about that today.

But I first want to talk about truth. That word is thrown around a lot. It is misused and abused a lot. And I want to begin by saying: Ultimate truth is the domain of God and God alone. God is the only possessor of ultimate truth. I think back on my life and the arrogance of thinking I knew the truth. I remember after I got my degree in psychology and my degree in counseling and my degree in theology, I thought I had it pretty much together. And I can remember arrogantly telling couples that I was counseling with, "There are two sides to every story." Hogwash! There are many sides to every story, and only God knows the whole story. Now, we may have enough truth, gain enough truth, to make intelligent, informed decisions. But don't ever get so arrogant as to think you know it all and you know all truth. That is God's domain and God's domain alone. One of the greatest sins of humanity, in my opinion, is what I would call willful

ignorance. Willful ignorance: We learn what we want to know and we neglect what we don't want to know. We look at what suits our own agenda and our own opinions and neglect the other side. In other words, we go something like this: "I know what I believe. Stop confusing me with the truth." I say all that to say this: Be humble about the truth, because only God knows all truth. Because I have, on many occasions, and you have, too, been absolutely, positively, unequivocally sure you are right, only to find out you were wrong. So, be careful about that word "truth."

Today is our third in a series of eight sermons about the armor of God. Paul said, "Put on the full armor of God." And the armor that we put on, we stand not in our own strength. We don't put on our own armor. It's God's strength and God's armor that we put on. We don't have to depend on our own. We all have our own weaknesses; we all have our own failings. And we must put on the whole armor of God to protect those. Our preparation must be consistent and persistent and perpetual. Why? Because we never know when the evil day comes; when four or five days attack all at once; when there's a lightning bolt out of the clear blue sky; when there's a conversation that changes the course of our lives. We never know when that's going to happen. So, we must be perpetually prepared. Put on the full armor of God.

Today we're going to start talking about the individual tools that God gives us. And Paul begins with the belt of truth. If that is where Paul begins, it must be very important. For our purposes today, I am going to contend that the belt of truth is not a "what" but rather a "who." I am contending that the belt of truth is none other than Jesus Christ himself. That is the belt of truth. Jesus is the ultimate truth about God. Humanity has been groping in darkness trying to figure out who God is, and God has given us glimpses, but in the fullness of time, when humanity was ready, God sent the Son to show us exactly who God is and has always been. Jesus is the ultimate truth about God. All we need to know about God, Jesus taught us with his life and with his message. Jesus told his disciples, "If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." What we need to know about God, Jesus taught us. I think the description that a little child gave of Jesus Christ was probably the best ever. She said, "Jesus is God with skin on his face." I like that, because I can relate to people with skin on their face. Jesus is the ultimate truth about God, so much so that he could say to His disciples, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." So, Jesus is the belt of truth. Jesus is the truth about God. And oh, by the way, Jesus is also the truth about humanity. In Jesus Christ, we see what our potential is as human beings. We see what God intended us to be. In Jesus Christ, we see all that God has always been and what God designed us to be. Jesus is the truth.

But it gets "gooder." I will be forever grateful for Pastor Aaron using that word because I like it. It gets gooder. Jesus not only is the truth, but he promised to send the Spirit of truth to be with us always. I've been using that children's sermon that I did a moment ago for years now. I wish you could see the kids' faces when I say, "God is right there, (next to me.)" They go, "Really?" Yes, the Spirit of God is with us always. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would lead us into all truth. In fact, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would teach us all things and remind us of what we already know. He will remind us of what we already know, if we will train ourselves to listen, if we will train ourselves to hear. One of my favorite passages of Scripture is John, chapter 16, verses 12-14, where Jesus says, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can bear. But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth." If you live to be 140, there will be more truth than you

can bear. But when you are ready for it, the Spirit of Truth will give you what you need. And if you are going through a crisis, God is not going to dump everything on you at that moment. He's going to give you what you need, as you can bear it, as you can receive it. God is going to give you what you need as you are able to understand it. Now, think about this. Some of you have been Christians longer than I have been alive. Are you the same as you were back then? Hopefully not. As you have grown, as you have developed, God has given you what you needed, if you will just listen. "I have much more to say to you, more than you can bear now. But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth."

So, the belt of truth is where the spiritual armor of God starts. Jesus is the starting point. That mandates that we learn who Jesus is. That mandates that we learn who he is. That mandates that we learn how to listen and how to follow the Holy Spirit. I cannot overstate the importance of learning, training, teaching ourselves to listen to the voice of God, to listen to the Spirit of God in our life, expecting God to speak. You know that name that pops into your head at an odd time? And you go, "Where did that come from? I wonder." You know that idea for something that should happen that pops into your head? And you go, "Whoa, where's that from?" Perhaps, just perhaps, God is speaking to you. Perhaps God is trying to get your attention. Perhaps God has something for you to do, if we will just train ourselves to listen. The spiritual armor of God begins with Jesus Christ, who through the Holy Spirit guides us and directs us and helps us on a daily basis if we will train ourselves to listen.

Do you believe that God is with us always? (I didn't intend that to be a rhetorical question!) Do you believe that God is with us always? All right, then we need to act like it. We need to act like it. That means that we should be in conversation with God, continually, perpetually. I do some of my best conversing with God as I'm driving. (When I am driving, other people are praying, too!) Most of us pray. But do you expect God to talk back? Do you expect to hear "Kol Yahweh," Hebrew for "a word from God." Perhaps you are, and you're blowing it off. You're not paying attention. That voice, that name that pops into your mind, that circumstance that comes to your mind--maybe, just maybe, that is the Holy Spirit trying to get your attention. The first and foremost piece of equipment God gives us to help us cope with life is Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God to lead us. Jesus said, "The Holy Spirit will take what is mine and will give it to you." That's a promise. So, start with the belt of truth, which is Jesus Christ: the truth about God and the truth about you. Let's pray.

O Lord, too often we talk to You, but we do not listen, and we do not expect to hear. But God, give us eyes that see, ears that hear, hearts that perceive. And Lord, help us to expect You to speak to us in Your own unique way in our own unique lives, and speak to our unique needs. In Jesus' name, amen.