

It's good to be back again with you today, and we are in Ephesians 6 again, and chapter 6, and the passage on spiritual armor. As we come to the Word of God, let's pray and ask the help of the Spirit of God to help us. Father in heaven, We come before you this afternoon to pray for the help of your Holy Spirit, the Spirit, O Lord, who hovered over the earth, the darkness when it was formless and void, the lifeless emptiness there and surged into action by and with your word to create everything out of nothing. We pray this day, O Lord, he will come as your word is read and preached, and he'll nourish all of our hearts here, O God, giving us grace and strength to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles, and to run with endurance the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Help us, Father, to resist the devil, confident and sure that as we do, He will flee from us, and we offer these prayers in Jesus' name, amen. Let's pick up the reading in verse 10. I'm reading from the New American Standard again today because I've done memory work in this book in the past, and it kind of wigs my brain out if I read a different version, so please excuse me. But it should be fairly similar to the ESV, which I think you have printed in your bulletin. Ephesians 6 verse 10. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you'll be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. With all prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit. And with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints. and pray in my behalf that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly as I ought to speak. Well, we come today to hear the comforting message that when you face the devil, and face him you will, not the literal devil, we are far too low in the totem pole, I think, to garner his attention, but we do face his minions in the infernal legion of hell. And when Satan's underlings come

to you, and when they come to me, we need to remember that we don't stand in our own strength, and we don't stand in our own armor. We stand in the strength of God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And we stand in the strength, in the armor that God supplies. It's the armor of God, the armor

He creates, and the armor He gives. And this morning, or sorry, this afternoon now, we're gonna come and look at the first piece of armor, that foundational piece, which is the belt of truth. Stand firm, therefore, as you

hold the line against the devil. Christ has not called you or me to conquer the gates of hell, but to hold the line as we face the relentless charges of hell's minions. Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth." Now, Paul clearly has in his mind's eye the armor worn by a typical Roman soldier. That's the picture in our mind's

eye. And the belt was the foundational piece. Much like our police officers today, the belt they wear It kind of holds everything together.

They put their firearm and their flashlight and their handcuffs and their billy stick and their radio and so forth. It all attaches there. And you'll see that same thing

with our soldiers as well. The belt around their waist attaches to so many different things, even their chest plate and their armor will attach to it. And likewise, also with the Roman soldier, that belt was a foundational piece. When they would be in battle, they could gird up their longer cloak and clothes and tuck it into their waistband and so forth and be able to stand and fight unencumbered. So it's a foundational piece

of armor. It's the first one Paul mentions, the piece, you might say, to which everything else is connected.

Now, what does Paul mean? Well, lots of commentators will tell us that Paul means that Christians should be truth-tellers, right? That we should speak the truth, we shouldn't deceive, we shouldn't lie, we shouldn't bear false witness. And that undoubtedly is true.

Right, no Christian should be a liar. The devil is the father of lies. And we should not be. Our God

is the God of truth. But actually I think while that is true, I don't believe it is the truth that Paul is teaching here. The belt of truth doesn't just

simply refer to truth telling and witness bearing. The truth I think Paul is describing

is a much greater reality. That when it comes to standing firm against the devil who's the father of lies, the most important thing for you and me is to be well grounded in the truth of the Christian world and life view, what Francis Schaeffer called true truth, capital T truth, that which is true at all times, in all places, and for all people. that when you stand your ground against the devil, that devil whose opening salvo, you remember, against our first parents was, has God said, surely you will

not die? God knows that in the day you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you'll be like him. God is not to be trusted. His threats aren't real, and his character, his word is not true, right? He's the father of lies. And when you meet the devil and face him, you've got to be grounded. You've got to have your wits about you. You've got to have your mind, your heart rooted and grounded in the foundational truth of the Christian world and life view. What is really true about God, His word, His promises, His character? What is really true about me as a Christian, the world in which I live? What's really going on in the world? Are all these circumstances really against me as the devil whispers in my ear? Or can I say if God is for me, who can stand against me? What is right? What is ethically true in terms of my duty? An illustration I like to use sometimes is when I was a child, when you're a child, you do stupid things. I would spin round and round and round and round and round, right? Of course, when you stop spinning, the fluid in your ears doesn't, and it kind of plays hiccups, not, it plays havoc with your vestibular apparatus in your inner ear, and the whole world is like going, place your bets. But I remember as a child having this thought, as I'm kind of trying not to fall down, the world is spinning, but I know it's not. And so what I would do is I would try to get down as slowly as possible, or if not, fall down, but I would try to get onto the ground and hold onto the world, because I knew it was not spinning, even though it seemed to be. Right? Wanted to hold on to a reality that was sure and steadfast, even though my experience was topsy-turvy. And essentially, that is exactly, if you remember nothing else from our talk today at lunchtime, when the devil comes in like a flood, and with a lie on his lips and in your ear, you gotta get back to what you know is true. and root yourself in that and ground yourself in that and don't let the devil move you off the truth. Not what do I feel, not what's the devil saying, what is true? That is the foundational conviction from which we do all our spiritual combat and also from which we do all our spiritual living. It's got to be grounded in truth. The belt. of truth. Now, why do I say that? Why do I believe Paul is moving beyond mere truth telling and don't tell lies? Well, because of the way Paul uses the term truth in Ephesians, when you're unpacking books of the Bible, especially Paul's letters, it's always good to see how does Paul use this word, this idea in this letter and in other letters. And in Ephesians, you'll see the truth, the word truth comes up again and again and again, and by and large have to do with the foundational truth of the Christian life. Like, for example, Ephesians 4. 14 and 15, he's speaking about the church and the church's fellowship. As a result, we are no longer

to be children, verse 14, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, false doctrine, by every trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming. Lots of scheming going on there, trickery, craftiness, deceitful scheming. Right? It's not hard to see the devil's deceptive fingerprints over this kind of malarkey in the church. False doctrine, deceit, lies being spread, everything unraveling. And Paul says the answer is, the church is to speak the truth in love. We are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ. In contrast to the false doctrine the devil likes to spread, he wants the church to be speaking to one another true words. Not just words that aren't technical

lies, but words that are true, that comport with the truth of the Christian world and life view. It's part of Paul's description of a mature Christian. We know what we believe, we know who we believe, and we know how to live, and it all flows from the truth. In the next section in Ephesians

4, Paul continues. So this I say and affirm together with the Lord that you no longer walk just as the Gentiles also walk. Now Paul here is unpacking what

I call the three-step of Gentile living, or in our world, the three-step of worldliness. And Paul says there are three steps to living like a worldly person. Empty head, hard heart, filthy life, right? In the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them. Their heads are empty, Paul says. Of what? We'll get to that in

a second. Because of the hardness of their heart, and they have become callous, hardened, and have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. Empty heads, hard hearts, filthy

lives. There are three dominoes, but

there are three steps to living like a pagan. Empty head, hard heart, filthy lives. Now what's Paul say about the

church? But you, you did not learn Christ in this way. Notice the contrast, the emptiness

of the pagan mind is contrasted and combated with the education of the Christian mind. But you did not learn, Gentiles

are ignorant, but you did not learn Christ in this way if indeed

you have heard him and been taught in him just as truth is in Jesus. There's that word truth again,

truth is in Jesus. And so the problem with the Gentile

life is the Gentile mind and it's emptiness of Christ and

the truth that is in Christ. And so you see here Paul speaking

about truth in a much more expansive way than just not breaking the ninth commandment. He's speaking about the capital

T truth of the Christian world and life view. Just as truth

is in Jesus, verse 22, that in reference to your former manner

of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted

in accordance with the lusts of deceit. Lusts of deceit. You could translate that,

it's

being corrupted in accordance with your lying lusts. The lies, lusts whisper in your

ears. How do you combat lies being

whispered in your ears by your lusts? That's actually a very

powerful question to ask when you feel strongly tempted to

disobey God. Ask yourself, what lies do I

have to believe to comply with that temptation? The lies your lust whispers in your ears. What does Paul say? and that

you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new

self which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness

and holiness, literally, which comes from the truth. I think

the ESV says true holiness or true righteousness. The word

truth there has a different meaning, I think.

It's saying righteousness and holiness which comes from the

truth, of the truth. But the of means origin. Because

truth is the source of the Christian life. just as emptiness and lies

are the source of pagan darkness. Therefore, laying aside falsehood,

speak truth, each one. Now, again, Paul isn't, Paul

isn't, simply saying, don't lie. That's part of it as of a subsection.

But he's talking about, you meet somebody and you're discouraged,

and they say, oh, these things are against me, everything's

gone wrong in my life, and it's all a mess, and what they need,

that's a false ideology. They need to be remembered that

nothing can separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Can a mother forget the baby in her breast? Have no compassion

on the child she has born. Though she may forget you, God

will not forget you. He's engraved you in the palms

of your son's hands, right? You gotta remind them, speak

truth, and that's one of the benefits of times like this,

not just when you have a pastor preaching truth to you, but at

your tables, you're reminding one another of what is true.

And you might have friends here, everything's topsy-turvy, upside

down, the world is spinning, and you gotta remind them, the

world's not spinning, there's a rock beneath your feet, and

that rock is Christ. And that's how you fulfill, that's

the power of Christian fellowship. We speak truth to one another,

we remind one another of what's really true. Like, you're watching

Fox News, and you're hearing all this chaos in the world and

chaos in the government, and you think, oh, what's going on? And then your friend

says, but

isn't it wonderful that Psalm 2 says, he who sits in the heavens

laughs. that God sits, God's not stressed

out. He's not having a panic attack.

He's not asking the angels to run down to the CVS and get him

some Tums or some Zantac. He's sitting in a posture of

calm, unflapped, unflappable, unimpeachable sovereignty. He has the world in his

hands,

and we hear thoughts like that, and we feel our spiritual heart

rate beginning to drop, and we start feeling there's solid ground

beneath our feet, and we need to remind one another of that. That's what Paul is saying. And then in chapter five, verse six, Paul says, let no one deceive you. Now notice again the term deception. Let no one deceive you with empty words about living in the darkness. That's been the context, right? For because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. When the devil says, you will not surely die, and the world will not surely be judged, don't let him deceive you. Do you know people, take us with them, Paul says, for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. The answer to the darkness of the devil's deception is to live in the real world flooded by the sun of righteousness and goodness and truth. And that light illumines the mind and produces life and light in our lives. For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, a benevolent, kind-hearted disposition toward others. Righteousness, upright behavior that lives in accordance with God's precepts, principles, and examples. in his word, and then truth, someone who can be trusted to be true, to speak truth, and to take their lives back to the standard of God's truth. We live in the light, our lives begin to blossom with goodness, righteousness, and truth. It's much more than just truth telling. That's a subset. People who live in God's real world don't tell lies, because God is the God of truth, right? But it's much more than just a ninth commandment issue, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. So, if you put a bow on all this this afternoon, let me ask you the question, when do you need the belt of truth? Well, a shorter answer would be, when do you not need it, right? You need it all the time. three particular seasons, when you meet the deceitful devil, right, he's going to lie to you. He's going to lie about you. He's going to lie about your heavenly father. He's going to lie about your brothers and sisters. He's going to encourage you to view everything that's said to you in the worst possible light. He's gonna ask you, he's gonna tempt you to judge the intentions of your brother or your sister. You knew what they were meaning when they said those words. And you think, oh I do, I really do know, I do know. And before you know it, you're off to the races, right? He's gonna lie to you. And when you meet him, he tries to persuade you that the darkness looks bright. You should hate this person who hates you. That's the way to life, hate them. Now don't listen to your pastor when he tells you that bitterness is the poison you drink hoping others die. It's not poison, it's the water of life. Doesn't it feel good? You know, it's like the dark emperor in Star Wars. Feel the hate, he

said, hate. And you can see young Anakin's soul becoming benighted as he gives himself over to the hate. When he comes and tells you that God's word's not true, God's heart is not good, you shouldn't trust him, God's promises are a lie, in those moments, you gotta hold on to the truth and not let anyone budge you off it. Deceitful devil. The second time you need the belt of truth is when you meet difficult situations. Never take counsel from your fears, Robert E. Lee said. They'll lie to you. Never doubt in the dark what God has told you in the light, somebody else said. And there's stacks of examples like that. Like remember Psalm 11. When David is being told to flee like a bird to your mountain. How can you say to me, flee like a bird to my mountain, David says, in the Lord I take refuge. And then his counselor, it could be the devil, it could be a friend, it could be an enemy trying to manipulate him. It could even be his own heart. Sometimes our own heart is only too willing to tell us why we should forsake the post of duty and flee like a bird to our mountain. Well, the wicked bend their bow. They shoot in the darkness at the upright of heart. They've made their arrow ready on the string. You can't see them, David, but they can see you, and they're out to get you. They're gonna snipe at you. The question is only a matter of when, not if the arrow thuds into your heart. You can feel the panic rising in David's heart, can't you? And then that awesome line, when the foundations are destroyed, David, what can the righteous do? Don't you realize, David, the world's in free fall? Everybody in the office is out to get you. The boss, your colleagues, they're talking about you. About to get fired, what are you gonna do? There's no foundation beneath your feet. When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? David probably wrote this when he was working for Saul, and he knew that Saul was trying to kill him. And that's a difficult situation. No foundation. You've got both feet firmly planted in midair, David. What are you gonna do? What is David saying? The Lord is in his holy temple. The Lord's throne is in heaven. His eyes behold. His eyelids test the sons of man. The Lord tests the righteous and the wicked. And the one who loves violence his soul hates. Upon the wicked he will rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a burning wind will be the portion of their cup. For the Lord is righteous, he loves righteousness. The upright will behold his face. What's David doing? He turns away from the lies, the temptation to disbelieve and to panic. And he lifts his mind up to the foundation truth, who God is, where God is. He reminds himself of God's throne. Someone is in control. He reminds himself of God's eye. Just like Jimmy Stewart's dog,

sometimes I feel his stare, and sometimes I don't. I'm not always aware that God's watching me, but God is always watching me. His eyes, he knows exactly what's happening, he knows exactly what's going on, and then he reminds himself of God's hand. God will deal with my enemies, I don't need to. I can trust him. Whatever happens in this world, When I close my eyes at the end for the last time, I will see his face. The upright will behold his face. The wicked may kill me, but the worst they can do is open the door of heaven and let me in. And that's a textbook example of a man tightening the belt of truth around his waist. Just like when you lift heavy weights in the gym, or a long time ago maybe for some of us, but when you lift, you put that weight belt on to support your back, and the belt of truth supports your back. It stops it giving way when you're under pressure. So when you meet the deceitful devil, you need the belt of truth. And when you face difficult situations, you need the belt of truth. Lastly, when you face difficult people. Jesus faced a difficult person in Simon Peter, his friend. Get thee behind me, Satan. So when your spouse, and forgive me for using a technical term that'll be better off in one of Josh Squire's counseling textbooks, but when your spouse loses their mind, now, let me quickly say, I don't have a spouse like that. My spouse never loses her mind, and I'm sure your spouse never loses her mind or his mind either, but not all of the people in this church are so fortunate. So let me speak to them for a second, okay? Your spouse loses their mind. When they lose their mind, you'd better find the belt of truth. Hold onto it with both hands. And it's the little things. You leave a cup somewhere, anywhere, but the somewhere it's supposed to go, right? And your spouse has that helpful way of pointing it out to you. What's this doing here? And you think, I don't know, let's ask it. What are you doing here? And it says to you, mind your own business. That's what it said, so I suggest you do the same, love. Then the top of her or his head blows off, and you're off to the races. Now in such moments, and it's the little things, right, but it's those little things that make or break a marriage. But you have a choice in those moments when you see the cup or when you're interrogated about its location on the table and not in the dishwasher, you face a choice to drop the belt of truth and your trousers with it or to hold on to it. And even to ask yourself the question, why do such things matter to me so much? Like why does it bug me? when my husband or wife asks questions like that. And the reason, of course, is if you're a woman here, it's because when your husband asks you questions like that, it feels remarkably unloving. You think, if he didn't love me, he wouldn't say those kind of things. And if you're a man here, when your spouse asks you questions like that, we interpret



those kinds of questions as disrespectful, as if we're not really up to the job of being head of the home. Just the little things. And it's hard to soar with the eagles when you're being pecked to death by the mosquitoes. But in those moments, and I'm serious now, joking aside, in those moments, right, you gotta remind yourself, there is something more important than your hearty feelings. How you feel. No, what's most important is what has God said. My identity isn't bound up with whether my wife thinks I'm doing a good job. Because why that hurts so much whenever my wife questions my competence in such a tiny thing. Why that bothers me is deep down in my heart there's the fear and the insecurity that I'm really not up to the job and that there's so many areas that I'm dropping the ball. And she's just noticed one. And that's a sign that as a man I'm a failure. and them fighting words. And as a woman, when your husband says those kind of things to you, there's that fear in your heart that maybe your husband doesn't love you because you're unlovely. And there's that fear, and fear has this awful way of bringing hesitation, and then hesitation makes our worst fears come true as we fight or flight. But we've got to remind ourselves that my identity is not found in my husband's assessment of me or my wife's assessment of me. My identity is found in Christ, and he has forgiven me all of my sins. And we can only take our spouse's criticism seriously, I mean, in a way that really hurts us, if we forget that we've been justified all of our sins. There's a wonderful essay that Spurgeon wrote, and I may have mentioned it before, I can't remember here, but it's called One Blind Eye and One Deaf Ear. And he says, you're walking past the Sunday school room and you hear the nice Sunday school teacher criticizing you as a pastor. And you think, oh. And probably it's half truth told as a whole truth that becomes a whole untruth, but it's painful and you hear it. And Spurgeon says, you need one blind eye and one deaf ear, and remember and thank God that she doesn't know the full truth about you, because if she did, she'd have much more ammunition to spread. But in those moments when we face the deceitful devil, difficult circumstances, and difficult truth, it's those moments in life you gotta get your feet under you and on the truth of God. And there's no better way to do that than by hiding scripture in your minds. Scriptures that address your individual struggles. Scriptures that fortify you against the devil when he comes in like a flood. And so that's the lesson today, my brothers and sisters. When you're fighting an unseen enemy, and trying to find an often unseen God, nothing is more important than truth. Like the invisible man, I remember the child watching that show, and how do you see the invisible man? He stands in some footprints, in some paint or water, and you see his footprints walking across the tile floor in the kitchen. And likewise, When

we open the Bible, we see a book that unveils the footprints and the fingerprints of God and that reminds us that when we're afraid, we really can trust him. He'll not let us down. He'll not cast us off. That he's with us. And that nothing, neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing can separate you from his love. And you'll not find that in the darkness of the devil's counsel, and you won't often find that in the darkness of your own heart, but you will find it if you open your Bible. and say with Martin Luther, to all of Satan's malicious, hellish insinuations, here I stand. I can do no other. Where else can I go? He alone has the words of everlasting life. Let's pray together. Father in heaven, How easily we are upturned by difficult situations and difficult people. And sometimes those difficult people are our nearest and dearest. Sometimes it's us and the poor soul who's being upturned is our spouse. And we need your grace in those moments, oh God. to master our emotions by mastering our minds. And the only way to master our minds is with the truth and never with a lie. And so I pray for myself, I pray for these dear folk gathered here, oh Lord, that you would fill us up so much with the light of your truth that there'd be no room for the darkness of the devil's deceptions to enter and have sway. And we offer these prayers in Jesus' name, amen.