

**The Believer's Armor, Part 1: The Belt of Truthfulness**

Scripture: Ephesians 6:14

Code: 1955

It's great joy again this morning to have the wonderful privilege of studying the sixth chapter of Ephesians. I would just call your attention to that. If you'll take your Bible now and look with me at Ephesians 6. I feel like I cannot even begin to exhaust the depths of these tremendous truths that lie within the teaching of the armor of the Christian in versus 14 to 17, a teaching which we'll be looking at this week and several weeks to come. They're almost inexhaustible. They plumb the depths of so much Christian truth that we're going to have to build on some of your knowledge from the past and we'll anticipate even adding in the future to all these thoughts contain.

But we've learned this much. For the last few weeks as we have come to the final section of the Book of Ephesians we have noted that the believer is involved in a warfare, a battle. We have seen that this battle is against a formidable enemy, Satan and all of his host of demons. In fact we've been trying to point out to you that the committed Christian and Satan are on a collision course. It is inevitable that your life will intersect with the forces of Hell as you live for God. There is absolutely no question about that. It's only a question as to how that manifests itself and what specifics may occur. The collision is inevitable and, by the way, it's rather constant as well. The adversary works hard. He works effectively. He works powerfully against the child of God.

As we have learned in the Book of Ephesians the Christian possesses a tremendous resource. To begin with we are said to have received all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 3. What we have been given according to Ephesians 1 a place in the beloved one. We have been granted forgiveness of sin. We have been made a son of God. We have been given knowledge and understanding and prudence. We have been made a part of an incredible mystery that was planned before the foundation of the world. We have been given the Holy Spirit to seal us. We have been granted the power to do beyond what we can imagine. We have been given the capability of expressing that power through the end-dwelling presence and feeling of the Holy Spirit. We literally in this world represent the awesome power of God. In us exists the very power which raised Christ from the dead and set Him at the right hand of the Father and made all principalities and powers to be under His feet.

We have this tremendous resource and we are the people of God and we are set in this world to accomplish the goals and the plans and the purposes which God Himself has designed, to accomplish the ends which are the issues of His kingdom. And in such an effort we are to be withstood for sure, for certain by the enemy, the very enemy who endeavored to withstand God in His

own heavens, the very enemy who withstood man and his innocence in the Garden, the very enemy who tried to wipe out the nation Israel, the enemy who tried to stop the birth, the life, the death, the resurrection, the second coming and the future of Jesus Christ, the enemy who tries to destroy the Church, who tries to hinder the service rendered by believers, the enemy who will someday try to hold the earth against the power of Christ as He comes to take His rightful place.

So this formidable foe is pitted against the believer in this age. A Christian who doesn't recognize it, who doesn't understand something of its significance, a Christian who isn't ready for battle is going to be a Christian who is victimized. Not only does he lose in his own life but he loses his effectiveness which causes the loss of that which God would desire him to fulfill. So the Glory of God at least in his life is lost. So we must be ready for the war. We must be aware of the battle.

I guess it's a serious thing with anybody who really studies the Bible. I'm afraid it's not as serious as it ought to be with many of you. So God has really exercised my own heart to reiterate this morning as we look at the first piece of armor the tremendous importance of this particular battle and what God is really asking of us.

Now to begin with let me just give you a little bit of an introduction in this manner. Since the believer and Satan are on an absolute collision course – and by the way, it's a collision that constantly goes on – we need to understand something of how Satan attacks us. I just briefly mentioned this to you last time and I want to go into just a little more of an explanation though, not very long, of how it is that Satan approaches the believer. I want to give you a series of ways which I believe are not only biblical but I have seen manifest in my own life, in the Church and the lives of others that gives us an idea of how Satan attacks us. If you would like to jot them down because I think they'll help you to guard yourself in these areas.

First of all, I believe the enemy attacks the believer to undermine God's character and credibility, to undermine God's character and credibility. This really is the heart of the matter in terms of Satan's effort. He desires to undermine God. He wants you to doubt God. That's the thrust. He did it in the Garden with Eve. "Hath God really said," and then he impugned God's motive by saying, "Well the reason God doesn't want you to eat that is because God knows you'll be like Him and God can't stand the competition." In other words, he wanted to ascribe to God a selfish ulterior motive. "You can't really trust God," he was saying. "You can't really believe God. He may say one thing but down deep inside means something else. So His Word is not believable."

In effect in the New Testament it says, "If you deny God His Word you make him a liar." That's what Satan wants to do. He wants people to think God is the liar and he tells the truth. So while God tells us He is truth and Satan is a liar Satan tells us he is truth and God is a liar. "You can't trust God. You have to doubt God. Doubt His Word, doubt His power." We do, you know? We're tempted in a difficult situation to worry and fret and fume and lose our control all because we don't really believe God can

get us out of it. We question His power.

We doubt God's grace sometimes and His mercy and His forgiveness which is nothing but a denial of His promise and His Word. We also frequently doubt God's love and we think to ourselves that God doesn't really love us enough to care for us and, "How would God possibly love me when He let this happen to me. My husband left me or my kids are turning out bad or whatever or whatever."

Satan pushes us to the place where we doubt the love of God. He invariably wants us to doubt God's love. He attacked Peter one time and caused Peter to doubt the truth of God. Jesus said to him, "Peter, be careful. Satan desires to sift you." So Satan attacks us to undermine God's character and God's credibility. As soon as you begin to doubt God at any point in terms of His character or His credibility consider the source.

Second thing, I'm convinced that Satan attacks us to make it hard to live the Christian life, to make it hard to live the Christian life. He doesn't want it to be easy. He wants it to be very difficult. To really live the Christian life he wants it to be hard and I think he attacks it three ways to make it hard to live the Christian life. One would be through persecution. That would be the most extreme way. Just living the Christian life is hard because some people are so antagonistic. A fellow was telling me this week that he was talking about his newfound faith in Christ to his brother and he took his Bible out and he showed his brother his Bible and began to talk about it. At that point the brother took the Bible and threw it across the room into a corner and said, "Don't ever push that book on me." That would be an illustration of persecution. There are a lot of other illustrations through the history of the Church, the persecution of those who have tried to live the live the Christian life, may come on the job, may come from your friends and so forth.

Second to that I would say he makes it hard to live the Christian life by a lesser kind of persecution in a way that I call peer pressure. Some people don't really want to come out for God because they don't want to lose their friends, they don't want to move out of the circle they're in. They don't want to be thought to be different. They don't want to have to change their relationships with people. They're very comfortable with the acceptance they have. They like being liked and they're just not ready to take a different tack which may alienate them.

This is something of what the writer of Hebrews was dealing with when he was writing to those who were sitting on the fence in the Jewish community never having committed themselves to Christ although they believed it was true for fear of what their friends and their family would say and that they would be ostracized. So Satan makes it tough in that area also as well as in the outright persecution such as Paul referred to when he said, "All that will have godly in this present world will suffer persecution."

There's a third way he makes it hard to live the Christian life and that's by making it easy to live the Christian life, if you know what I mean. I think sometimes the hardest place to live the Christian life is in the easiest place to live the Christian life. Here we are in America. Being a Christian is acceptable, respectable. Everybody is a Christian. Everybody's getting born again. Religion is the mood of the hour. Christianity is kind of the cool thing and it's all right.

It's so easy now there's no price to pay and maybe that's what makes it hardest of all to live the Christian life. It seems as though we can react to peer pressure, we can react to persecution. The tough thing is to react to acceptability. But Satan moves in and endeavors to make it hard to really live for Christ as well as undermining God's character and credibility.

A third thing that Satan does when he attacks the believer is he confuses the believer with false doctrine. He confuses the believer with false doctrine. I talk to Christians all the time who don't really understand what the Bible means by this passage or that. A fellow asked me yesterday, "What is sanctification? I'm so confused. I don't understand what it means to be sanctified." Yet he's been a Christian for a long time. The confusion of different books and different teachers. People say, "Why do so many people disagree?" Well I think it's partly a ploy of Satan to confuse Christian people, to frustrate them and so many people say, "Well you really can't be dogmatic about the Bible. You just kind of have to take it in general."

I have people say to me, "You're so dogmatic," all the time. "You can't be that dogmatic about the Bible." Well I believe if you study it it isn't that tough. Frankly folks, I'm not the smartest person around. I'm just very average intelligence. I hate to admit that. Some of you thought I was smart all this time but I'm not. I'm just a person who knows where the Bible is and knows how to dig in a little bit and find out what it means. It isn't that tough. But Satan confuses believers one way by presenting a plethora of interpretations that leave everybody kind of baffled. He also confuses believers by having false teachers move in and sowing all kinds of wrong doctrine. There are many Christians tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine. There are many Christians who are deceived by the false teachers who come in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves.

There's a problem today because the doctrines of demons are so rampant and Satan confuses the Church. There are many Christian people sending millions of dollars to the wrong causes. There's just confusion about what's true in the Bible, a confusion of false teaching. So Satan tries to undermine God's character. He tries to make it hard to live the Christian life. He tries to confuse Christians with false teachers and false doctrines.

Fourthly, he tries as hard as he can to hinder our service to Christ. He wants to stop effective service. He wants to stop Grace Church. He wants to stop my ministry and your ministry and the ministry of any one who is serving Jesus Christ. He wants to do all he can and stop it and prevent it as we see throughout the Old Testament. He tries to hinder those who were the prophets of God, as we see

how he tried to hinder the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul says in 1 Thessalonians what proves to be a wonderful insight into this particular problem in chapter 2 verse 8. He says, "Being affectionately desirous of you we were willing to have imparted unto you not the Gospel of God only but also our own souls because you were dear to us." In other words, to the Thessalonians he says, "We wanted to give you not only the Word but our lives and so we endeavored to minister." How was it, he says? It was labor and it was travail. "We labored night and day preaching to you the Gospel of God." To the Ephesians he said, "We labored night and day with tears presenting to you the truth." Why? Because it's so hard. It's so resistant. It isn't easy.

Young men sometimes say to me, "The longer you minister does it get easier?" No, it doesn't get any easier. It just gets different and string of victories get more wonderful and you have a better past history upon which to build your faith for the future but it never gets any easier because he hinders our service. Roadblocks. So Satan attacks God's credibility. He attacks the Christian making it hard to live the life. He confuses us with false doctrine and hinders our service.

Number five, I believe Satan does all he can to cause division in the body. He works hard causing division in the body, fracturing us. That's why our Lord was so explicit when he said as we read last week in Matthew on Sunday night that if you have anything against your brother go and be reconciled before you come back to worship him. So he causes division.

1 Corinthians 1, 1 Corinthians 2, 1 Corinthians 3 talks about the division in the Church. In Ephesians 4 Paul says, "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. Do all you can to maintain unity." Paul exhorts us in that because Satan rips us apart, brings friction and faction into the body of Christ.

Sixth and this is another area where Satan really hits us hard. He urges us to trust our own resources. This is subtle. 1 Chronicles chapter 21 tells a story about David. David wanted to find out how strong he really was so he counted his soldiers and God says to him, "David, that's a terrible, evil sin. Your strength is not dependent upon the number of your troops. It's not dependent upon the number of your people. Your strength is dependent on God."

It's easy, you know, even in a spiritual area for the believer to count up all of his knowledge. You know, "I've memorized this book and I've mastered that and I've got all these principles and look what I know and I've been to seminary and I've got all this data in my mind. I'm really ready and I'm able to handle the problems." What happens is his prayer life becomes non-existent. The depth of his devotion is lost and he becomes shallow and theological. Very dangerous.

There are some people who think that because they go to church all the time they're all right. We can become so confident in our resources, so easy for us to lean on our own understanding, depend on

our own knowledge, wisdom, insight, erudition, education. We fail to cast ourselves upon the power of God with the sense that Isaiah had when he said, "Woe is unto me." He knew he had no resource apart from God.

A seventh way in which Satan attacks us and I think that this is also common is that he causes us to play the hypocrite, to be hypocritical. Satan has literally populated the church including this one but he populated every church with people who are phony, not real. Even Christians can do that. We can go on smugly, glibly, with the smile, the mask, spirituality letting the whole world think that we're fine and all we do is pollute the fellowship and all we do is mask ourselves so well that we never deal with the real problem, we never let anybody see what we're really like, we never open up and tell the truth so that nobody can ever come and wrap their arms around us and help to deliver us from the problems, you see.

We hide behind respectability. We hide behind our hypocritical so-called spirituality like Ananias and Sapphira. We want to lie to the Holy Spirit because Satan has really entered our hearts. Satan has come and played something on us and told us it's better to be thought respectable than be respectable. It's better not to face your sin and deal with it, it's better to mask it and cover it and play a game. Satan is so subtle and he fills the church with hypocrisy. He can come. First of all, he works on us to undermine God's character to make it hard to live the Christian life, to confuse us with false doctrine, to hinder our service, to cause division, to urge us to depend on our own resources and to cause us to play the hypocrite.

Only two more. Number eight, Satan attacks us to make us worldly, to shove us into the mold formed by the world. I mean he is so successful at this, people. The Church today is so worldly, affluent, materialistic, self-indulgent, self-satisfied, smug, so much like the system around it that it's hard to even separate the two. And yet does John say to us, "Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. The world passes away and the lust thereof but he that doeth the Will of God abideth forever." He's saying, "Look, you have no business having anything to do with the world. The world is passing and you're eternal. The very dimensions of life are incoherent, incongruous and can't come together. What are you doing with the world?" Yet the Church gets engulfed because Satan constantly pushes us into the world.

Final thing, I think Satan wants to cause us to act in disobedience to what we know is God's word. This maybe is the pinnacle of it all. Satan wants us to act immorally. If God is moral and God sets the moral law then any act against God's law is immorality whether it's sexual or social, whatever it is. Acting immorally is acting against the moral law and God is the one who established it. So he wants us to disobey God. That gives Satan an opportunity. That gives him an advantage.

Well there you are people. These areas Satan works, undermining God's character, making it hard to live the Christian life, confusing us with false doctrine, hindering our service, causing division, forcing us to trust our own resources, to play the hypocrite, to become worldly and to act in disobedience to God. That's how it's going to come. That's where it's always come. That's where the battle lies.

Now you say, "Well how do I deal with it?" That's a pretty big order of attacks. Well the wonderful thing, people, and this is what I'm so thrilled about is that all nine of the things I gave you can be dealt with in one simple way. Look at verse 13 of Ephesians 6. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand." How are you going to resist all of these in all of their complexity and with all of Satan's subtlety and with all of his cleverness and with the wiles of the devil and the cunning craftiness and the deceitfulness being what it is how can you deal with these? Simply you don't concentrate on what he's doing. You concentrate on what you're doing. It doesn't matter that you can categorize those attacks. It doesn't matter that you know the definition of each one. It doesn't matter that you spell out every subtlety of what he is doing. You can't do that. That world is too sophisticated, too remote, too superhuman for you to deal with or me either. What does matter is that we get our armor on, you see. So that when the battle starts whatever the attack might be we're defensible. It doesn't matter where the enemy comes from. It doesn't matter how subtle his attack is at a war if when he gets there you're ready for him. That's all. It doesn't matter what tack Satan takes. It doesn't matter what path he comes on. It doesn't matter whether he's crawling on his belly or flying over head. It doesn't matter how subtle his attack or how blatant it is. If you're ready when he gets there that's all that matters. The believer with his armor on will stand whatever the attack. So having said all that I've just said to let you know where he comes from be aware of those areas but the major issue is not whether he's coming or what the attack is but are you ready? Are you ready? Because if you have your armor on you can handle it.

Now this morning I want us to look at just the first piece of armor. It's very simple but very, very important. The first one is in verse 14, "Stand therefore - " and that takes us back. The end of 13, "Having done all to stand," the middle of verse 11, "That you may be able to stand." The idea is to stand against the attack of Satan, to be first against his onslaughts, to be victorious when he comes. Therefore if you're going to stand against those things you must have your loins girded about with *altheia*, truth or truthfulness.

Now let's talk about this. The word *altheia* can be translated truth as content, truth as opposed to falsehood, truth as defined as the Word of God, the revelation of God, the content of truth. Or it can be defined as an attitude of truthfulness or non-hypocrisy or sincerity or honesty or integrity or commitment. Let's take the first element. Let's say that latent in the thought here is the concept of truth as content. If Satan attacks me it is incumbent upon me first of all to have the belt of truth. Why? Well in the first place Satan is going to come with his wiles verse 11 says and wiles is the same word translated cunning craftiness in chapter 4 verse 14. There it refers to winds of doctrine. The word

doctrine is teaching. Now he says this then, "Satan will come and he'll blow along certain teachings which are cunningly deceiving which are wily, crafty doctrines of demons. Here comes these false truths. They are the wiles of the devil. The only way you can resist the falsehood and the lies of the devil is to have the truth. That's why it is so important for us to teach and teach and teach the Word of God. Paul talks about the doctrines of demons and seducing spirits who come to deceive.

In 1 Corinthians 10:20 and 21 Paul looked at the Corinthian society and he said the Corinthians have this big worship structure and they go to their pagan temples and they worship their pagan gods and they exercise themselves in all of the rituals and the ceremonies and the rites of worship but he says the things the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not unto God. In other words, behind their whole system are demons. Their whole worship is demonic. Their whole system of religion is demon inspired. It is the doctrine of demons and seducing spirits. What I'm saying is that that gives us an insight into all false teaching. It comes from Satan.

Jesus said in John 8:44, "He is a liar as I said and the father of lies." So the basic thing that Satan does is come with lies, with untruths and the believer if he's going to war must know truth. Now that's basically behind this concept here in a sense. Let me describe the belt so you get the imagery a little.

In Paul's day a roman person, even a soldier wore a tunic. A tunic is a big, square piece of material for the most part. Had a hole in it for your head and two holes for your arms. That was about it. You just threw it on and it was kind of a non-gathered piece of material. But if you were going to go into a war you wouldn't go into a war with that thing flying around. In fact you didn't even take a journey in that situation.

For example, it says in Exodus that when the children of Israel were called upon by God to leave for the Promised Land in the 12th chapter of Exodus and the 11th verse God said to them in effect, "Gird up your loins. We're leaving Egypt." So we learn then that that was a common phrase for a person taking a journey.

In Luke chapter 12 our Lord in verse 35 is talking about his second coming and he says, "Be sure you have your loins girded and your lamps burning." In other words, girding your loins was gathering up all this loose material so that you could get ready to go. What that means then is readiness, preparedness. That's the idea. The belt was preparedness. A Roman soldier wouldn't go into a battle with his dress flapping in the breeze. Somebody's pull it over his head and woo, that would be the end of it.

You wouldn't fight a battle with that flopping all over the place. I remember from and you see it too on television when you watch football games how tight all the uniforms are because they don't want anybody grabbing anything. The thing that used to make you mad is you'd be running with your shirttail in the breeze and you'd be off and gone and some guy would grab your shirttail and yank you

down from the back.

Finally they invented what they call breakaway shirts. You see them nowadays in the colleges and they just keep ripping them off people and they'll run down there with their shirt gone. A guy will have a handful of shirt and that's it. That's because they don't want anything that's flopping around in the combat. The same thing is even more important in a warfare. You want to make sure in hand to hand combat – those wars weren't fought from bunkers 200 yards apart. They were fought in hand to hand combat and you did not want something tangling you up and wrapping you up.

In fact in 2 Timothy chapter 2 the apostle Paul says, "You must endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ and you must not become entangled with the affairs of this life." What he's saying is you can't fight if you're all tangled up in your robe and the affairs of this life will do that. You've got to cut the cord with civilian life. You've got to break with the world.

When a guy's drafted into the service they don't say, "Now we've drafted you and it certainly would be nice if you could join us. It would be wonderful if you could wear our outfit, our kind of clothes because then you'll match everybody else. It would be so nice if you could take orders from us and eat our food and live in our place." They don't ask you that. You just do that. When you're drafted you cut off yourself from your girlfriend, your wife, your home, your family, your car, your job. Civilian life is gone and you do what they say and that's how it is if you're going into a war. It's serious.

So when a soldier went into a war - if a man on a journey would do it you can imagine a soldier would. He would take a belt. He would cinch it around his waist. It could be made out of a sash material. Most likely a soldier's would be out of leather. He would tighten that leather belt up, take the four corners of that tunic, pull it up through that belt making it into kind of a mini tunic. He would have mobility, flexibility, be able to move and it wouldn't be in his way. That's really the imagery that's in the mind of the apostle Paul.

Now further on that same belt it was common for a Roman soldier to have a strap. It would come down connect to the belt, go over his shoulder and connect in the back. He would attach his sword to it so that later on we'll see the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God is attached to the Belt of Truth. In other words, truth is revealed in the Word. You have the truth as it were. You take it out to fight the battle, right, so that the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God is attached to the Belt of Truth.

But over this shoulder was this strap and on this strap were emblems and insignias of previous victories. Just like decorations. You see a soldier, he's got all that stuff all over him from the battles he's fought and the things he's done and the accomplishments. Well that's where they put them on a Roman soldier. All of the medals and the awards of his accomplishment were placed there. It connects with the Belt of Truth. Beloved, this is it. When you wear the Belt of Truth and you draw the

Sword of the Spirit you're going to win the battle and get the medals. You see? This is where it all begins. It became the emblem of accomplishment in battle. A fitting combination. Only those ready, girded up, only those with the Sword of the Spirit hanging on the side were the ones who won the medals and went into battle as having been victorious.

So this is the heart of the term. Now listen to me. It does refer to truth. I think you can take *altheia* in the sense of content but that's not the primary thought here because that's dealt with in the Sword of the Spirit. That will be dealt with in that last piece of armor. The main thrust here is the idea of truthfulness which the word also could mean and there it is speaking of attitude, not content. What he's saying is, "Put your belt on." That shows an attitude of readiness, an attitude of commitment, an attitude that says, "I'm ready for the battle. I'm dressed. I'm alerted. I'm ready." See? Now that's the issue I want to share with you for a few closing moments. What it means is you fight without hypocrisy. It means you're going in serious.

You know, frankly, most Christians never get the belt on. They just sort of flop through their life blowing in the breeze. There's little commitment, never sash on that truthfulness. Never get committed. Listen, when a soldier put on his belt, put that strap over, hooked on his sword he was saying, "I am ready to fight." I think that most Christians lose because they don't care that much. They don't care that much. They'd just soon flop around. They're like Hebrews 12, "Seeing we compassed about by so great a cloud of witnesses. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us and run the race." Right?

Can you imagine a guy in a track meet running in an overcoat and combat boots? That's absolutely stupid. Don't do that. Those guys wear so little it's embarrassing. They're out there running around with as little on. They're going to be mobile. They want all the flexibility there is. Yet there are Christians trying to run the Christian race with combat boots and an overcoat and they wonder why they get so tired. "Boy this is tiring. I never seem to get very far." Five years later they're ten feet from the starting line. That's because there's no commitment.

I think the greatest synonym for truthfulness is commitment. What Paul is saying here is, "Look, you've got to realize this is war and get serious. You've got to go in without hypocrisy, sincerely with a right attitude having a heart for the battle. I am a soldier. I will endure hardness for the cause of Jesus Christ – " as 1 Timothy 2:3 says " – I'm willing to pay the price that I may please the one who chose me to be a soldier. I have a heart for battle."

Listen, the true Christian loves the fight and the true Christian loves the Lord so much he won't lose. He won't give up. Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 9. I can't relate to a Christian who is content to be defeated all the time, to just flop through his life falling to temptation, falling to all the sins that come to the flesh and the mind. I don't understand that, how you can give in so easily.

In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul says, “Don’t you know –” in verse 24 “- that they who run in a race all run.” When the race starts everybody runs but only one receives the prize. So run that you may win. Look, he says, “If you’re going to get in this deal win it. Who wants to lose?” What Paul is talking about here is desire. What we used to say in athletics desire is 90 percent of the issue. It’s true. If you want it bad it’s there.

Our coaches used to say, “If you want it bad enough you can get it. If you want victory bad enough you can get it.” You know something? That was a good thought but it always wasn’t true. Sometimes I’d get across from a guy who was tougher than I was and I wanted it bad. In fact I wanted it worse all the time but nothing I did ever worked. I was eating dirt all day just because I couldn’t get it. Some of the greatest effort was against the worst adversary and I couldn’t win. But you know, in the cause of Christ if the desire is there the victory will be there because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. Right? So it’s always available.

So Paul is saying the desire has to be there. He says in an athlete he runs and a lot of people run but only one gets the prize. So if you're getting into this deal win it. Win it. Oh God give us people with this commitment. God give us people who want to win in the Christian life not so they can stack up their own crowns but so they can give them to Jesus Christ, so they can say, “This is my act of love. This is my act of worship. This is my act of praise that I gave, my life, my living sacrifice.” That’s what he’s after, commitment.

He says, “Every man that strives for the mastery” – he uses the Greek verb *athle*, athletics, every athlete is temperate. In other words, he disciplines his life. He’s careful what he eats and how he trains and he does it to obtain a corruptible crown but we an incorruptible. He says, “If these guys can work that hard to win a corruptible crown can’t we have the desire to be victorious in our lives for God’s glory?”

So he says, “I run not as an uncertainly. I don’t flip-flop all over the track, running half speed, three-quarter speed, one-quarter speed, resting awhile. I run full bore down the track. I fight not as one who beats the air. I’m not just bouncing the ring, punching around the air. I’m hitting my opponent right in the chops.” “I’m going after the fight,” he says. “And in so doing I keep under my body, I bring it into subjection.”

See, here is the disciplined life of a winner. This is what God wants. Frankly, people, in the spiritual area God’s given us the resource to win. In Romans 12 Paul says, “I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God,” and what the mercies of God are the first 11 chapters of Romans. In the first 11 chapters of Romans he says that God has set us aside from the evil world. God has redeemed us in Christ. God has given us the righteousness of Jesus Christ. God has through our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ called us into His family and adopted us as sons. God has given us love and joy and

peace. God has granted unto us the tremendous power of the Spirit of God in resurrection life. God has given unto us all the resources we need set apart unto an eternal plan which is unchangeable and undeniable and all of these wondrous mercies of God have been given to you. Therefore present your body as a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God which is only your spiritual service, only you're reasonable. It is any great thing. It's just what you ought to do.

Then he says in the next verse, "And be not conformed to this – " what " – this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect Will of God." Now first your mind is renewed and when the Word is in your mind and you have the truth then you can live with commitment and make a sacrifice of your life. Frankly, most of us don't know the meaning of living sacrifice. We haven't got the faintest idea what it is to sacrifice our lives. We might be able to be burned at a stake and die for Jesus. It's just tough trying to live our whole live for him sacrificially. Most of us wouldn't mind if they took it away in death. We just want it while we're alive. What kind of a dichotomy is that? We are to be committed and that is what the scripture is saying.

Look at Philippians 1 verses 9 and 10 for just another thought. Listen to what it says. Philippians 1:9, "And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more." Now Paul isn't saying the Philippians don't love and I'm not saying you don't love. You do love. But I'm saying I pray that'll abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. I want you to have knowledge. I want you to have more. You have discernment. I want you to have more discernment with the purpose that you may test things that are excellent. I don't want you to be satisfied with what's good. I don't want you to be satisfied with what's better. I don't want you to be satisfied with anything but what is excellent.

I know you have love and I want you to have more. I know you have knowledge. I want you to have more. I know you have discernment but I want you to have more that you can prove the things that are the most excellent and that you will be sincere. That means committed, truthful, without hypocrisy, genuine, committed and thus without offense till the day of Christ. The result of living a committed, truthful, sincere life is in verse 11. "You will be filled with the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God."

I've been preaching a lot on commitment because it keeps coming up in the passages. You know why I want you to be committed? Not because I have some personal ambition. Not for your sake. It's right there in verse 11, to the glory and praise of God and He will be glorified when you are filled with fruit and you will be filled with fruit when you approve what is excellent and you will approve what is excellent when you are genuinely committed to Jesus Christ in the deepest part of your life.

So the call of the armor of the believer is for commitment at the very start. You're not going to beat Satan. He's going to come at you in all these nine ways and a few others that I haven't even figured out yet. He's going to come at you in all these combinations of ways that you're not going to know

what to do unless you really are ready to fight. Commitment. Oh beloved, only one thing matters in this world and this life and it's the dimension of the spiritual. All the rest of the stuff doesn't matter a bit.

I'm concerned with a lot of things in our world but frankly I could care less about most of the things. Unless they relate to the things of God I'm not even interested because only the spiritual matters, only that God be glorified. We need to get our focus on the right things. How badly do you want to win? How badly? Do you really want to win?

I've been in athletics all my life and I've seen people that didn't care about winning. We talk about that a lot when we work with pro athletes, the fact that you can lose the desire. You've been there. It's not that hot. You just go through the motions. If that can happen in the world it can happen to use because Satan pumps it into us all the time.

You can be content with mediocrity. You can be content with lethargy. You can be content to just keep your life the way it's going. You come week after week, go home. Nothing changes. Nothing's different. Attitudes are the same, reactions are the same, you home stays the same. Nothing ever happens. You just come and go, come and go, come and go and the commitment never changes. God help you and help me if that happens. We must be committed to fight. So the apostle says the first piece of equipment is the Belt of Truthfulness. It's based on content but it's an attitude he's after.

Let me close with the words of John Monsell who wrote this hymn. Listen to it. "Fight the good fight with all thy might. Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right. Lay hold on life and it shall be thy joy and crown eternally. Run the straight race through God's good grace and lift up thine eyes and seek his face. Life with its way before thee lies. Christ is the way and Christ the prize. Cast care aside. Lean on thy guide. Lean in His mercy will provide. Lean and the trusting soul shall prove Christ is its life and Christ its love." Then he said this, "Faint not nor fear. His arm is near. He changeth not and thou art dear. Only believe and thou shalt see that Christ is all in all to thee."

The love of the victory is there. It's ours to the glory of God no matter how sophisticated Satan is if we have the Belt of Commitment. I pray God it's so in your life.

Father, thank You again this morning as we have gathered to worship Your holy name, as we have sung Your praises, that we have thought of Your virtues, as we have listened to Your tremendous truths out of the Word. Father, we feel we've been drawn into Your presence. We sense that You're here and that the message is not my message, it is not a human message. It is not simply a message of paper and ink anymore than a message of a human voice but it is the breath of God.

The call to commitment is not from us, it's from You. The consequences are not to be dealt with by us but by You. Oh Father, help us to hear Your voice, somehow drop aside all of the human elements,

all of the physical factors and may we know that God has spoken through His Word calling us to commitment. Oh Lord Jesus, make us the kind of people you want us to be that you might be glorified, that we might stand as a beacon light in the midst of a wicked and perverse generation holding forth the Word of Life, that we might so live to silence the critics, that we might not be of those who use Jesus and abuse Jesus but of those who give Him glory. Lord, help us to win the battle because more than anything else we want to win and we depend upon Your power for it. In yieldedness we pray for Christ's sake. Amen.

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