

The Standing Advance

I get 1 verse this morning.

Ephesians 6:11 (NIV)

“11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.”

What I want to do this morning is put the messages for the next few weeks into a context of application for all of us. We're going to stay away from making this a study about something God says and make it into an exploration into new territory of living out God's mission for our lives.

PRAYER

PUT ON THE ARMOR

This is a time and a place where, unlike here in the U.S., wars were much closer to home. Pearl Harbor was essentially the only time a war took place on US soil in the last 130 years, and even that's five time zones away from here.

What Paul is doing is giving a fantastic physical illustration to help these people understand the vital importance of what he was about to say. With these people, however, the language he's using quickly and clearly puts a picture in their head of being thrown into a war zone. “Put on armor” is war language. “Take a stand” is war language. The New Living Translation says “strategies of the devil.” The world of Paul's time was steeped in war. In fact, Paul himself was a POW as he wrote this letter. When he talks about putting on armor, they could look out their front window and see a soldier - “oh, yep... there's the breastplate – of righteousness... sweeeet....”

We need to get what it really means, in a practical way, to put on the armor of God. That is my entire goal this morning. That's what this entire “Stand” series is all about.

It really is an awkward statement. “Put on the full armor of God”.

Regardless of what we're talking about - salvation, righteousness, truth, whatever - I want us to throw aside the typical view that the church can portray of this part of scripture, and really ask the question: how is this going to change my life?

“When we are born again, we are dropped not into a maternity ward, but into a war zone. Our birthplace is less mother's womb and more battlefield earth. Maybe the first word we hear should not be ‘welcome,’ but ‘jump.’ There is no trial run, no practice life.”

UNDERSTAND AND WALK OUT THE TRUTH

This is what I believe it means to put on the full armor of God:

“Put on the full armor of God:” Understand and walk out the truth of who you are in Christ.

Let me just insert that into this verse and see if it might not make you see it in a bit different light.

“Understand and walk out the truth of who you are in Christ, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.” I'm not trying to make my own version of the Bible, or add anything to it, but I think in Paul's heart that's what he's saying.

I'll never forget the day my dad and I were talking, and he had been correcting me on my posture. He said “the way I carried myself started changing a lot when I realized that I'm a child of the living God. I'm a prince, and I need to carry myself in a way that shows it.” I sat back and thought to myself, “wow... my dad actually said something semi-cool.”

Isn't it true, though, that realizing who we are begins to change the way that we live? That's what my dad was saying; once he realized who he was, the decisions that used to be complicated really became simple.

Let me also say that my dad is now a grandpa, and so the whole “princely demeanor” thing has turned into “pull my finger”.

To take that to another level, let me say this – if you want to stand, doesn't it make sense that you'd stand on understanding? Solomon talking to his son says in Proverbs, “Though it cost all you have, GET UNDERSTANDING!”

He's not saying “Spend all your money on more good books and Bible studies”, he's saying “Son, I don't care if it hurts, where it hurts, or how much it hurts; you go live what you know.”

Welcome to the battle ground.

STOP WANTING

If there's one piece of advice that I would give you for gaining understanding, it's this; STOP WANTING.

Do you know what the original meaning of “want” is? It means “to lack”.

If a man was tested and failed, it would be said that he was “found wanting” - he came up short.

When I say I want a million dollars, all that really means is I don't have a million dollars.

If you want to come to an understanding of this armor that Paul's talking about, you need to stop wanting, and START PRESSING.

He who hears a truth can repeat it
He who learns a truth can teach it
He who understands a truth can share it
He who lives a truth can impart it.

God gives understanding to change lives, and when you change your life, he will give more understanding. Many people get stuck spiritually because they think God gives them understanding so they can act smart, get a big head, and be lame in general. Understanding the truth of who we are, though, takes work.

There are a lot of verbs that seem to go with getting prepared for war. The thing is, those verbs don't come down to an event – they are ongoing journeys. We want a nice neat point to put on a timeline, but it simply doesn't work like that

“Put on the full armor”

The armor is made up of Salvation, righteousness, truth, the news of Christ, faith, and God's word. But listen to what the Bible has to say about these things. In Philippians, listen to what Paul writes:

Philippians: “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling”

when I hear “work it out” I think of when my brothers and I would all run to dad trying to tell our version first. I have two older brothers, so usually when we ran to dad, I was the one bleeding. Then dad got the look in his eye that says “you're all going to get whipped if this isn't REALLY good” and said “work it out”.

“Daaad, Adam took my screwdriver and killed my hamster” and Adam saying “Kellen threw the hamster at me and it bit me” and dad giving them THE LOOK and saying “Work it out.”

So let's take salvation as an example, and take the frame of this verse and put some flesh on it.

When he says work out your salvation, that is a proactive verb. You work it out.

I have a few distinct memories regarding my salvation. I remember as an

11-year-old, sitting at a gas station in El Paso, Texas while my dad was filling up the tank. It was 7:30 in the morning, we had left Carlsbad really early to run some big-town errands. I remember realizing that I wasn't sure if I was “saved” and told God “I know you're real, and I know I want you. If I'm not saved, I just ask that you would forgive me and let me know that I'm saved.” That memory sticks out in my mind. Then there was

Easter Sunday my Junior year of high school, when I thought I wasn't doing enough to be saved, and had questions, seeing an ad that a church had put in the newspaper that said “if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” God just spoke to me in that moment and helped me realize it's that simple. Then there was

My freshman year of college, when I had a lot of doubts about my faith. I remember sitting on the RTD bus 3 days a week going back and forth to college, and every time battling with these thoughts of whether or not God was real. God showed me that the armor of salvation was the helmet – which protects the head. For about 6 months I had to keep coming back to that truth. Those were real battles, but after every one there was more understanding, until now, when it's not been a struggle.

Putting on your armor is fighting today's battles to make your identity a reality.

Let the identity of your Christian walk be found outside the church.

Matthew: “Hunger and thirst after righteousness”

Acts: “Preach the gospel”

John: “Practice the truth”

James: “Act out your faith”

A team of people from the youth ministry has taken a lot of time to prepare something to give us all some more understanding in this area. I just want you to take it in and let God speak to you this morning.