

Ephesians 15-04-19b

We resume our study now in Ephesians chapter 6 and we step back just for a moment to remember that this is not just words on paper, it's not just an interesting metaphor. We are in fact engaged in a real, no kidding, conflict with actual, individual spirits who once dwelled in heaven, who followed Satan in rebellion against God, and have been kicked out of heaven and have been confined to this earth. We, as human beings, are also confined to this earth.

It's not an accident. Have you seen the estimates of how big the universe is, how many galaxies and how many putative, habitable planets there might be? I mean, it's just uncountable. It's like the number of atoms in a brick or something.

It's just an uncounted number. The Hubble telescope has pushed our visible observation of these things into just countless millions. And that's millions of galaxies.

And then within the galaxies there are billions of stars and planets allegedly around these. They don't actually know, but they think on the analogy of the ones we can see up close, that there must be just an untold number. Well, let me ask you this.

Out of the galactic collection of places where God could throw the rebellious angels, do you think He couldn't find one planet to put people on and another one to put the fallen angels on? Did He not have an available selection? Is it a coincidence in your mind that the kicked out spirits are on this planet and so are we? I think not. I think it's not an accident. I think they're here on purpose.

I think we have been put together in opposition on purpose. Do you think the Lord God in heaven couldn't have figured a way to keep the snake out of the Garden of Eden? He kept all of the meat-eating dinosaurs out of there. They didn't get snake-bit, did they? It wasn't like the serpents in the wilderness, was it? Did Eve get snake-bit and that's how she fell? She got talked out of her life.

She got talked out of her righteousness. She got fooled out of her obedience. There was no physical action on the part of the serpent whatsoever.

He spoke and the fall, capital F, happened as a result. We should learn a lesson from this. It's the lesson Paul is emphasizing here in Ephesians chapter 6. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, this is an imperative, having girded your waist with truth. Prevail against the enemy requires preparation in advance, having girded. 1 Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 8. 1 Thessalonians 3, just flip over there a few pages ahead.

Isn't it amazing how few pages the epistles of Paul take up? I constantly turn too far because it's just a tiny, you think, well, you've got Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1

Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Titus, Philemon. You think, well, it's got to be a big old site. It's like 12 pages and you go right past it.

1 Thessalonians chapter 3 verse 6. Now that Timothy has come to us from you and brought us good news from your faith and love, and that you always have good remembrance of us, greatly desiring to see us as we also you. Therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress, we were comforted concerning you by your faith. We are comforted concerning you, we know about your faith.

For now we live if you stand fast in the Lord. Faith, good news of your faith and love, good news, euangelio, euangelia. I started to say angelizo, but that's the verb.

Euangelia, the good news. It's good news of your faith and love. We are comforted concerning you by your faith.

For now we live if you stand fast. Stand fast. Flip over two pages to 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 verse 13.

We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. Remember Daniel 12.1, those who are written in the book, chosen, marked out. We are bound to give thanks for you.

You've been chosen from the beginning. Who does God choose from the beginning for salvation? Is it the inscrutable Calvinistic notions that God has that nobody knows and just threw a dart at the map, opened the phone book to a random page and stuck his divine finger down and there you are? Who is chosen for deliverance through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth? We, body of Christ. We in this dispensation.

We were chosen to be born in this age. We were chosen and we are chosen if we respond to the call. Everybody that responds to the call is chosen.

To which He called you by our gospel for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Haven't we talked about this the last two Sundays now? The whole purpose of this, the reason we're in this constrained environment, the reason we've been thrown in against the forces of darkness. Think of the egg on the face of Satan when his unseen forces of darkness with all their principality and power and rulership get thrown in with the weak nibblings, human beings, the little pathetic three-dimensionally limited creatures and the little pusillanimous creatures trust God and choose God and want to dwell with God for eternity and they in all of their angelic glory didn't.

And by the grace of God given to us we defeat them. It's David and Goliath all over again. I come to you in the name of the Lord God of hosts whom you have defied.

And I'm going to cut your head off buddy and I'm going to feed you to the fowl of the air and the

beasts of the field. So no fear. Confidence.

They can't take away what God has given you. They can't take away what the Lord Jesus Christ has given you. Peace I give you.

My peace I leave with you. It's what we stand on. It's coming up here.

2 Timothy 2.15. Therefore brethren stand fast and hold the truth, the traditions that you were taught whether by word or our letter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and our God and Father who has loved us. Notice if you need any help with Trinitarianism and the fact that there is a God the Father and there is a Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul had no trouble with Trinity doctrine. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and our God and Father who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work. Stand fast and hold.

Hold the truth. Get your belt on. Gird your waist with truth.

Hang everything else on that. Galatians. Flip back before our passage Galatians chapter 5 verse 1. Remember the foolish Galatians? He has just talked about the two covenants about the advantages of living in this age.

We are church. We are not Israel. We are body of Christ.

We are not the wife of God. We are the new Holy Spirit defined people that God the Father is giving to His Son the Lord Jesus Christ as a victory gift. So Jerusalem above is free verse 26 of the previous chapter.

The mother of us all rejoice O barren you who do not bear. Break forth and shout you are not in labor. The desolate has many more children than she who has a husband.

The Gentiles are coming in and are going to be more fruitful than Israel who had a husband but failed. Failed to have that intimacy with God that would result in fruit. And so the barren is going to bear.

We brethren are Isaac. Like Isaac are children of promise. What does the scripture say? Cast out the bond woman and her son.

The son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. So then brethren verse 31 chapter 4 Galatians. We are not children of bond woman but of free.

Not of the bond woman. It's not legalism. It isn't restriction under the law.

It isn't operating without the full orb'd benefits and presence of the Holy Spirit. We are free. You shall know the truth.

The truth will set you. This is the truth of God. Free.

Stand therefore Galatians 5 verse 1 stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. Do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Don't think that your righteousness is going to be achieved by ritual, by repetition, by mere acts usually defined by others.

Don't smoke, don't drink, etc. Stand therefore and always be alert. You can't just take a stand and then fall asleep on your feet.

1 Corinthians chapter 10 going to the left again in our Bibles. 1 Corinthians chapter 10 talking in that chapter about the Israelites who came out with Moses, passed through the sea, ate the same spiritual food in verse 3, drank the same spiritual drink. They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them.

That rock was Christ. With most of them God was not well pleased. They were scattered in the wilderness.

These things became our examples to the intent that we should not desire evil things as they also desired. Do not become idolaters as were some of them. People sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.

Isn't that pretty much American culture? Sit down, stuff your face, get up, go do something fun. Nor let us commit sexual immorality as some of them did and in one day 23,000 fell. Nor let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted and were destroyed by serpents.

Nor complain as some of them also complained and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now how does a serpent and a destroyer get into the camp of the people of God? By invitation, by departure from the truth of God and from obedience to that truth. All of these things, verse 11, happened to them as examples and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

That's you and me. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. Just when you think you got it all wired together, better take one more walk around the aircraft, check all the rivets, check all of the pre-flight checklist.

Just when you think everything is good to go, you better give it one more check. Just when you think you've got your armor on, make sure everything is buckled. Anybody ever driven away having left something sitting on the car? I picked up a lady's purse sitting in the middle of the street one time.

I knew exactly what had happened. Something happened to distract her at the last minute. Oh, where are my keys? Ah, here they are.

Set the purse down, got in the car, drove away. Purse sitting in the middle of the road. Coffee

cup, Bible.

I've seen two or three people drive out from under their Bible. You know, got to set it down so you can dig in your pocket for your keys. Family's talking, you know, stuff going on.

Especially if your Bible's full of all kinds of loose notes. Oh, it looks like a confetti parade when that thing comes off. There was an episode of Mr. Bean where he took his, what did he do? He took his shoe off and set it on a car and the car drove away.

And then he spends the rest of the episode hopping around, you know, trying to get his shoe back. Be alert. Take heed.

If you think you stand, you know, some of us just say, well, you know, I really do think I'm doing well and praise God. But be alert. Jesus told the disciples, watch and pray lest you enter into temptation.

It's always present. Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation, no challenge is overtaken to you except such as is common to man.

We saw that in one of the other passages. Your brethren, 1 Peter talks about your brethren in the world are faced with like challenges. God is faithful who will not allow you to be tested beyond what you are able, but will with the test make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it, that you can stand.

God will never let something through that is unstoppable, that is unresistable. Anything He lets through is resistible if we know what we're doing, if we do what we're supposed to. Flip a few pages over to chapter 15 in that same book, 1 Corinthians 15.

Moreover, brethren, this is after He says you need good order in the worship service. Make sure things are done decently and in good order. Desire to prophesy.

Do not forbid to speak with tongues. This is in the days when there was no Bible and if you wanted fresh church age truth, God would impart it to somebody so you could get it. Now that the Bible is fully available, we don't need that provision.

But this was basically pre-Scripture, Scripture spoken in tongues. And unless and until somebody in the Pentecostal Holiness Church stands up and presents something in a language I can understand that is Scriptural truth, I'm not going to believe that tongues persist down to the present day. Tongues are languages.

They communicate. Paul says, I don't want to hear gibberish. I'd rather hear five words that make sense than any amount of gibberish.

Decently and in good order. Let all things be done decently and in order. That's my job.

One of the few places where pastoral authority functions is making sure that the meeting is orderly and that we don't end up with some kind of a hootenanny. Moreover, brethren, verse 1 of chapter 15, I declare to you the good news which I preached to you, which also you received and, surprise, in which you stand, feet shod with the foundation of the gospel, the good news of peace. You stand on it.

It's the foundation. Any martial art, any hand-to-hand combat training begins with a good stance. You've got to have balance.

You've got to have your center of mass over your support. You've got to have your knees bent, flexible. You've got to be able to take a punch without falling over.

The good news I preached to you, which you received, is what you stand in and on. Good news. It's not just believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then thou shalt be saved.

It is the good news of who we are. It's the good news of why we're here. It's the good news of being in Christ.

It's the good news of having the Holy Spirit. It's the good news of the truth as the Spirit's sharp sword that is going to cut to pieces these allegedly superior, unseen, dark spirits. All they can do is talk.

Did you hear me? It's like the serpent in the garden. All they can do is talk. Are you going to get talked out of your inheritance? Are you going to get talked out of righteousness by faith? Are you going to get talked out of the victory onto the conflict, soldiers for the right, victory, victory? You can let somebody talk you out of that, talk you out of what Christ achieved on the cross.

All these guys can do is talk. They are not scary. They are defeated.

And what a shame, what a mortal shame for us to be defeated by concepts, by suggestions, by innuendos, by erosion of our confidence in God and in His Word and in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ because of these muttering and peeping spirits. It's what they're called in the Old Testament, those who peep and mutter. That's not very scary, I have to tell you.

One of the amusing things, I showed Ken a picture of this the other day, but Rebecca for Christmas three months late got a model of a Tyrannosaurus Rex. It's a big thing. It's taller than my Bible and as long as the Bible open.

And on one side it's got clear skin. It's like the visible man I put together when I was a child. You can see his bones and his muscles and his guts and things.

And so you turn it one way and he's all skin and he looks like a regular model. You turn him the other way and you get to see the insides and how they think that was all configured. It's really cool.

I like it a lot. And so I put it up on the mantle in the living room so that we can gaze upon it and be impressed. And I went in there sometime around Easter and there were two or three of those little puffball chicks at his feet and one stuck between his teeth.

Little Easter puffball stuck in there. So he's got prey. He's a meat eater.

Well, there's no reason that the devil roams about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, but you've got to stand there and let him devour you. You've got the tools. You've got everything you need.

Why would you stand there transfixed and let yourself be eaten? Why give away inheritance? Why give away standing in Christ? It's all a mental battle. In sports, most of it is mental. In combat, most of it is mental.

Most of it is mental. Yes, you need skills. Yes, you need practice.

Yes, you need training. But it's like with any presentation, those of us that have done piano recitals, you practice that thing, practice it, practice it, practice it. You get the hard part down.

You do that hard part. It's so boring. You go over and over and over trying to get the muscle memory, that little run you've got to do in the third page there.

You just work on it, work on it until you finally get it down. You play the thing through, play it through, play it through, play it through. Recital day comes.

It's a black and white keys, just like yours has got. Bench is at the same height. You're sitting at the same distance.

You're going to sit down and play the same song you've played 150 times, and you mess it up. Choke. Forget a part.

I'm supposed to play without music. I don't need the music. I played it 150 times.

You get to a certain point, and it's just gone. After an embarrassing moment of silence, you kind of go back a few measures and play up to that point, try to push through it. Again, I don't say that I've had this experience.

I've been told. The Methodist Church in Foyle, that's where we gave our recitals. But what is that? It's mental.

It's not like you don't know the song. It's not like you haven't learned the song. It isn't like the piano has suddenly risen up and attacked you.

It isn't like the bench. Now, I have seen this, where the bench breaks. I didn't see this live.

I saw it on film, but there was a guy playing, and the bench broke, and he went off the stage. That doesn't happen, typically. It hasn't ever happened to me.

What happens? It's mental. If there's one thing you remember from this section of Ephesians 6, the battle is unseen, and the warfare is spiritual, which means mental. It's in the heart.

It's in the mind. It's in the soul. It is your attitude.

It is your confidence. So how are we going to be attacked? Mentally. Erode your confidence.

Deflect you from thinking the thoughts you should think, and knowing the things that you know, and applying the things that you have learned. That's the conflict. We wrestle not against blood and flesh.

These darknesses suggest darkness. Now, how do they get past the armor? Well, as I have mentioned to you innumerable times, Liddell Hart's seminal work on the strategy of the indirect approach there is no harm in me watching suggestive material on television. It's kind of fun.

I'll wait for that undressing scene. I'll just wade on through it and get back to the plot here momentarily. I'll read this viewpoint.

I'll listen to this music. I will put up with the evil that is in this particular thing. I know that.

I recognize it. It's okay. Well, look, can a man take fire in his bosom and not be burned? I'm not saying that we must needs go out of the world.

I'm not saying that any time anything other than a wholesome family material is present, we must flee in shock. What I am saying is that there is a limit. How do we know where the limit is? The limit is you will know that there is too much.

You will know that there is too much exposure to the thoughts of the world and to the material that the world enjoys, especially by way of entertainment and pastime. You'll know that it's too much when you start failing and the two don't seem related. Well, suddenly I don't seem to have patience.

Suddenly I don't say, did you ever notice why people in, uh, in education endeavors when they're trying to get a degree, get cranky, especially in higher levels of education. It's because of the constant daily exposure to the world. And you think, well, but they're talking about this or talking about that has nothing to do.

You watch somebody and you say, well, it's the stress. It's, it's a, no, it is the, I will tell you, it is the exposure to the thinking of the world. It's the indirect approach that stuff gets in and darkness seeps out of it into areas you would have never fought for.

You would have never expected. And that's when you know it's too much. That's when you know you've got to get back to fortification.

You've got to get back to the essentials. And that's what Paul is talking about in these passages. Stand firm in the faith.

We're still in first Corinthians. Look at the next page. Uh, chapter 16 verse 13 watch, stand fast in the faith.

Be brave, be strong and let all that you do be done with love. When you start having trouble in the love area and this is horizontal love. When you start having trouble in that area, you say, well, I've really got to try to be more loving.

No, you've got to go back and find the source where the darkness is leaking in. The fact that the rug is wet in the living room doesn't mean there's a leak in the living room. It means that down the hall, the bottom has fallen out of your hot water heater and that's where the water's coming from.

So don't stand in the living room constantly using the wet vac to get rid of the water. Go find the source. The source is down the hall in the hot water closet.

How do you know when you're not standing? How do you know when your armor's not working? Love. That's why the breastplate of righteousness, Paul says, is the breastplate of faith and love. If stuff is penetrating and getting into your chest, that's where to look.

Faith and love. Watch. Stand fast in the faith.

Be brave. Be strong. Let all you do be done with love.

By the way, we have this armor of God right after wives submit to your husbands, children obey your parents. Remember all of that? Look down a few verses here in 1 Corinthians 16. I urge you, brethren, you know the household of Stephanas, firstfruits of Achaia.

They have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints that you also submit to such and to everyone who works and labors with us. Acknowledgement that we are part of a larger group, the brethren. And there is an order.

There is organization. There is hierarchy. It is necessary.

Don't fight it. Implement it. Be a part of it.

Make it work. You also submit to such. Everything be done with love.

And with love there is submission. You can flip over to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. Of course, chapter 1 is going to be introductory. Verse 19, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was preached among you by us, by me, Silas, and Timothy.

The gospel is not yes and no. In Him the good news is yes. All the promises of God in Him are yes.

And in Him, amen. To the glory of God through us. Now, He who establishes us with you in Christ, in Christ, and has anointed us, is God, who has also sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Moreover, I call God as witness against my soul that to spare you I came no more to Corinth, not that we have dominion over your faith, but our fellow workers for your joy. For by faith you stand. This is the role of submission.

It's not domination. It isn't dominion. Fellow workers.

But fellow workers have an assigned function. Some of those fellow workers have authority. Other fellow workers are under authority.

Somewhere in the middle. Authority above and having authority over those below. It's not a matter of dominion.

It is a matter of getting the work done decently and in order. For by faith you stand. These are the interactions, the interrelationships of faith and love all motivated by that confident expectation.

Our names are written in the book. The book not just of salvation, but the book of life, the book of fruitfulness, the book of function. This is how we get it done.

That's why this armor is so important. That's why our waists have to be girded with truth. Romans 5, Paul says, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

What's the good news wrapped around our feet? We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand. And we exult in hope of the glory of God. Not only this, we exult in our trials, knowing that tribulation produces patience, patience, proven character, and proven character, hope.

Hope does not disappoint. The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. It's a consistent message, isn't it? Armor is just one picture of the relationship between our faith, our hope, and our love.

But this preparation, this foundation of the gospel of peace, the good news of peace, peace with each other, we don't have to be at odds, we don't have to be contentious. We recognize that God has assigned some to be over others. It's not dominion.

It is fellow working. It's getting the job done. Somebody's got to organize.

Companies that have tried to get rid of vertical structure have dismally failed. Some of you all have been in those companies where they said, oh, it's all going to be a collective. Look, even in a collective, even in a beehive, there are bees that have different functions.

And some of the bees tell the other bees what to do. Bees that are scouts come back and tell the other bees where to go and get the pollen. They don't all just fly around figuring out for themselves what they're going to do.

Communism is a failed system, a failed form of government. Everybody level. And you know, all times they've tried communism, there's inevitably somebody up there saying, well, I've got to make sure you guys are good communists.

So you hoi polloi out there, we're the big cheeses here, and we're going to make sure that you all are level while we live in our dacha and ride around in our yachts and eat our caviar and drink our fine vodka. All the rest of you guys are out there in the mills and in the factories standing in line for bread. Oh, yeah, communism.

We're all comrades. Some people never learn. That stuff is still alive and its little cancerous malignancies are spreading.

And there's people in this country who couldn't wait to implement communism. Some of them are already in office, hopefully not for much longer. Hope does not disappoint.

The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us. So gird your waist with truth. That's what the shield rests on on one side.

That's where you keep your sword of the spirit that you pull out in the evil day that you pull out in the time of battle. And the rest of the time we keep it sharp, we keep it shiny, and we keep it at the ready. We've talked about those sandals.

And interestingly, if you look at that, he talks about these implements, your waist girded about with truth, your feet shod with. But he doesn't say put on the caligula, put on the boot of the gospel of peace. He says your feet are shod with it.

The focus is on your feet and what's on your feet. It's not like a magic boot. He doesn't say put on the boot of peace.

He says your feet need to be standing on the foundation of the gospel of peace because the focus is on your feet, not the magic boots. The guy that had the seven league boots, I can't remember how long the league is, but that's way too, I don't want my feet separated by seven leagues. I have a feeling I might be in two sections at that point.

You know, you need a seven league stride if you're going to have seven league boots, otherwise your foot's just leaving your body and you'll never see it again. We stand on this good news, but

it's about peace. If we lose our patience, if we lose the function of our love, our active ongoing love for one another, darkness has seeped in.

It has talked its way past the guard. The biggest incursions against security in IT, your compromise of sensitive data and so on, you know how hackers, their favorite tool for getting past password security and 128 bit encryption and all the rest of it, you know how they get past? They talk their way in. They call somebody up, an impersonated employee.

Oh Marge, I've got a presentation. I'm here in Milwaukee and I can't get into my machine. Can you give me your password or can you give me your boss's password? I just need in long enough to download this presentation.

They talk their way in. That's what the unseen forces of darkness do. They talk their way in.

Don't be fooled. Be watchful. Be ready.

Stand on the foundation of peace with God, peace with one another, waist girded with truth. To talk somebody out, you've got to deceive them. Talk somebody out of their security.

Talk somebody out of their stance. Satan lied to Eve and she bought it. Waist girded with truth.

Put away deception. Put away lying. Speak truth with one another.

Well, I've got a lot more to say about this armor as we draw toward the conclusion of our study of the book of Ephesians and we'll pick it up next time. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the wonderful provisions that you've made for us.

These tremendous gifts and provisions that you have made that enable us, even though we are limited and material and fleshly individuals, we are able to heal. We are able to heal. We are able to humiliate the unseen superior forces of darkness because of what you have made us, because of where you have stood us and what you have given us.

We pray that as we reflect on these truths, that God the Holy Spirit will make them meaningful and show us the outworking, the practical application of them in the specific circumstances that each of us face day by day as we work together, as we stand together in the faith motivated by the wonderful hope of the soon return of the Lord Jesus, our gathering to Him, our presentation before you, our future environment and opportunities for function and for service in the Kingdom of the Son followed by your own Kingdom. We wait for that day with great anticipation. We pray for it just as the Lord Jesus instructed us and we ask you to bless us and to keep us mindful of our privileges in Him before you.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.