

# BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

## Standing Strong - Part II

Ephesians 6:14-15

1999

### Introduction

Throughout Ephesians Paul has highlighted the privileged position that we have as believers in Christ. We've been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

God, in His love and grace, has chosen us, predestined us, adopted us, redeemed us, and forgiven us. He has included us in Christ with all the connected rights and privileges. And finally, he has marked us with a seal of the promised Holy Spirit as a down payment of our coming inheritance in Christ.

So, the Christian life should be clear sailing -- one long succession of blessings and a life of uninterrupted happiness! Well, not exactly. That time will come. But in this life we will have, as Jesus said, "tribulation" -- difficulties of various kinds.

Paul tells us that we are not to consider life's difficulties as merely struggles against people and circumstances. There are unseen **spiritual forces of evil** which are bent on unraveling and finally destroying the plans, purposes and possession of God. And you, my friend, are his most treasured possession.

So Satan schemes and deceives -- attempting to entrap the believer into doubting God, into disobeying God, into forsaking God. He can't take us away from God, but he can entice us to abandon our faith of our own accord.

1 Pet 5:8-9 "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith ..."

We are not to be ignorant or unaware of his "schemes" or to allow him to outwit us  
(2 Cor 2:11)

As we discussed two weeks ago ...

There are two extremes the Christian must avoid:

- 1) Being ignorant and unaware of Satan's work  
Living and behaving like civilians when the Bible tells us that we are at war.
- 2) Placing too much emphasis and attention on Satan's work.  
Living in fear of an enemy that the Bible tells us is already a defeated foe.

## **I The Believer's Source Of Strength**

- A. Be strong in the Lord - 1 Cor 16:13
  - 1. Love God and abide in Christ - Jn 15:4-6
- B. Be strong in His mighty power - Acts 1:8
- C. Put on the full armor of God - 1 Thess 5:8; 2 Cor 10:4-5
  - Put on (endysasthe)*** = "Be clothed in"
  - Put on*** = "Take up, assume"
  - Full armor (panoplia) = "It is a complete outfit"
  - Vs. hopla = pieces of the armor
- D. Stand your ground victoriously - Isa 40:28-31; 1 Jn 4:4
  - 1. Against the devil's schemes - 2 Cor 11:14; 1 Pet 5:8-9
    - And what are some of His schemes?
    - 1. Persecution - 1 Pet 5:8-9; Matt 10:22; 5:11
    - 2. False doctrine - Mk 13:22-23; 1 Tim 4:1-2
    - 3. Temptation - Gen 3:1; Matt 4:1; 1 Cor 10:13; Jam 4:7
    - 4. Trials - Job 1:9-11; James 1:2-4; 1 Pet 5:10
    - 5. Personal conflict - Ps 109:1-5; Eph 4:26-27; 2 Tim 2:23
    - 6. Unresolved sin issues - 1 Jn 1:9; Matt 5:23-24; 18:15-17
    - 7. Discouragement - 1 Kings 19:1-4

Over and above all these deadly strategies of Satan, one of his most effective tools in his arsenal is deception and psychological warfare ...

### **Illustration: Psywar Terror Tactics, by Jon Elliston**

Fear is a weapon just as surely as is a rifle or a tank; if you frighten your enemy enough, you may defeat him without having to fight. Such is the logic behind psychological warfare -- a combat weapon that targets the mind. In full-fledged wars and quiet covert operations around the world, U.S. military and intelligence specialists have long practiced the art of intimidation through propaganda. Some of the most productive (and some of the most fanciful) psywar operations have sought to exploit ideas about the supernatural.

But Paul tells us that we have an adequate defense against every one of Satan's schemes!  
**The armor of God!!**

## II The Believer's Source Of Protection

### A. The belt of truth

**Belt (zone)** = The belt was much more than an ornamental accessory to the Roman soldier's uniform. It served several essential purposes. 1) It gathered and held the tunic in place 2) It supported the breastplate 3) It held the scabbard in which the sword was sheathed.

It was a somewhat hidden piece of the armor, but essential because everything else hung on the strength of the belt.

Likewise, our ability as believers to stand strong in the midst of spiritual warfare depends on the strength of God truth in our life.

#### 1. Satan's scheme: To entice you to doubt God

John 8:44 "[Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

He attempts to shake our confidence in God's Word

Gen 3:1-5 "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.''" "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Satan's primary strategy is to entice you to voluntarily walk away from the truth. To walk away from the blessing and safety of your relationship with God.

He can't make you do it, he can't force you to do it.

***Instead, he demoralizes us by getting us to believe that ...***

**Satan says:** You're worthless -- no one wants you!

**God says:** You're my treasured possession

Deut 7:6 "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession."

**Satan says:** You're ugly, too fat, too thin, etc.

**God says:** You're created in my image

Gen 1:27 "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Ps 139:14 "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

**Satan says:** You're dumb

**God says:** You have the mind of Christ

1 Cor 2:16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

**Satan says:** You'll never overcome sin

**God says:** If you belong to me, you will overcome the world

1 Jn 5:4 "for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith."

**Satan says:** You will never amount to anything

**God says:** I have a good plan for your life

Jer 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

**Satan says:** You're just a number to God

**God says:** You are always on my mind

Ps 139:17-18 "How precious are you thoughts of me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand."

**Satan says:** You'll never be accepted

**God says:** You already are accepted in Christ

Rom 15:7 "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."

**Satan says:** Your unlovable! Who could possibly want you?

**God says:** "For God so loved the world ..."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

**Satan says:** You can't trust anyone including God

**God says:** Trust in the Lord with all your heart

Prov 3:5-6 "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."

**Satan says:** You'll never change

**God says:** He goes to finish the work He started in you.

Phil 1:6 "... Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

2. God's armor: The truth

**"Stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around your waist"** -- that is always the place to start whenever you are under attack. Whenever you feel discouraged, defeated, uncertain, confused, downcast, depressed, or indifferent, this is the place to start: "with the belt of truth."

***What is truth?***

a. Jesus is the truth

John 14:6 "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

b. The Bible reveals truth

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."

c. The Spirit guides us into all truth

John 14:16-17;16:13 "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--the Spirit of truth ... he will guide you into all truth."

The Christian's most fundamental garment of defense is the belt of truth. If it is not securely buckled around your spiritual life, you will be demoralized into surrender by Satan's psychological warfare.

B. The breastplate of righteousness

**Breastplate (thorax)** = Usually made of bronze and designed to protect the body from the neck to the waist. Polybius tells us that it was known as a "heart-protector."

**Soldiers had to help each other put it on and lace it up.**

Breastplate of righteousness --- What does that mean?

Well, that is Christ as the ground of your righteous standing before God, your acceptance before him. If you have that on you can rest secure that your heart, your emotions, are securely guarded and adequately protected against attack.

1. Satan's scheme: To entice you to a works-based faith

Righteousness is based on good works

This is perhaps the most frequent ground of attack against Christian faith. Christians, by one means or another, through one circumstance or another, often feel they lack assurance. They feel unworthy of God. They feel they are a failure in the Christian

life and that God, is certain to reject them, or that he is no longer interested in them. They are so aware of their failures and shortcomings. Growth has been so slow. The first joy of faith has faded, and they feel God is angry with them or that he is distant, far off somewhere. There is a constant sense of guilt. Their conscience is always stabbing them, making them unhappy, miserable. They feel God blames them. This is simply a satanic attack, a means of opposing and destroying what God intends to do.

If Satan can get you to believe this lie -- that you are not secure in your righteous standing before God, then he has gained a great advantage.

Titus 3:5 "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit ..."

Eph 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-- and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast."

## 2. God's armor: A righteousness based on faith alone Righteousness is based on faith in Christ

Rom 3:21-24 "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Rom 4:4-8 "Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: "Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him."

Phil 3:8-9 "... that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith."

So how do you answer an attack like this? You are to remember that you have put on the breastplate of righteousness. In other words, you do not stand on your own merits. You never did. You never had anything worthwhile in yourself to offer to God. You gave all that up when you came to Christ. You quit trying to be good enough to please God. You came on his merits. You came on the ground of his imputed righteousness - - that which he gives to you. You began your Christian life like that and there is no change now. You began by faith in Christ and you must finish by faith in Christ.

This is why Paul begins his great eighth chapter to the Romans with the words,  
"There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,"  
{Rom 8:1 RSV}. No condemnation! You are believing a lie when you believe  
that God is angry with you and that he rejects you. Remember, you stand on  
Christ's merits, "accepted in the Beloved," {Eph 1:6 KJV}.

If you are to survive the deceptive trickery of Satan, you must decide once and for all  
to receive and believe that your righteousness before God is not based on the  
uncertainty of your spiritual performance, but on finished work of Christ.

#### C. The footwear of peace

**Shoes** = Soldiers wore heavy, high-laced, shoes thickly studded with sharp nails" to  
ensure a good grip.

Shoes are absolutely essential to fighting. Imagine a soldier clad in armor from head  
to foot but with no shoes on, a barefoot soldier. Imagine how quickly the rough  
ground would tear his feet and bruise them. Soon, despite the fact that he had all  
the equipment he needed otherwise, he would be out of combat. His feet would  
render him unfit to fight. But with a strong pair of shoes he would be ready and  
equipped, able to fight. That is what this phrase means. *Equipment* here is really  
the word "readiness" in Greek: "Your feet shod with the readiness produced by  
the good news of peace." It is peace in the heart that makes you able to fight.

Bottom line: The right equipment for the right job makes all the difference.

**Illustration:** Gardening in slippers and stepping on metal rake.

1. Satan's scheme: To entice you to anxiety and fear

2. God's armor: Peace resulting from reconciliation with God

Rom 5:1-2 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace  
with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by  
faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the  
glory of God."

Isa 32:17 "The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be  
quietness and confidence forever."

The gospel of peace is the sure foundation from which the Christian gains a sure  
foothold in the campaign in which he is engaged.

"You can go through anything if you have peace"

"Peace consists not in the absence of conflict or difficulty, but in the knowledge of a  
reconciled relationship with God."

**Conclusion:**

1. The Belt of Truth: The ultimate answer to life is Jesus Christ.
2. The Breastplate of Righteousness: We stand solely on the merit of Christ and His finished work on the cross.
3. The Gospel of Peace: We now that we have a right standing with God that leads to peace.