

All around us rages a spiritual war that makes any earthly warfare look tame. There are only two sides. As much as some would like to paint this battle in shades of gray, it is only black and white. One side is goodness, righteousness, and truth. The other is evil, vile, and utterly deceptive. (John 8:44) The Bible does not tell us exactly when it began or how it developed, but we have hints in various passages.

In Isaiah's taunting poem about the fall of the king of Babylon, the theme seems to morph over into a poem about the fall of Lucifer. ¹² "How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of Dawn! How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low! ¹³ You said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; ¹⁴ I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.' ¹⁵ But you are brought down to Sheol, to the far reaches of the pit. Isaiah 14:12-15 (ESV) "O Day Star" is the Hebrew "helel" which means brightness. It is translated as "Lucifer" in the Authorized Version. From this passage we see that Satan is a brilliant being, "an angel of light", as Paul described him. (2Corinthians 11:14) We can also see that his downfall was his prideful will to take the place of God. In the Revelation we are told that when he fell he drew a third of the angels with him in his rebellion. (Revelation 12:3-4) He must have been such a glorious creation that even many of the angels thought he would succeed.

Having failed to overthrow God, he became an active opponent of mankind. (1Peter 5:8) Another of his titles is "the accuser of our brothers". (Revelation 12:10) We see this in the account of Job where Satan impugns Job's character and asks God for permission to destroy Job step by step. (Job 1:12) Jesus declared that this is typical of Satan who has come to kill, steal, and destroy. (John 10:10) But we also see that Satan is only allowed to go so far. In the end, Job is closer to God and doubly blessed. The temporary loss in this life is nothing compared to knowing God and possessing eternal life in Him. (Romans 8:18) Jesus contrasts His good nature that is here to give us abundant life with that of Satan's destructive intentions.

In the book of Daniel we are told that the angels of God meet resistance from the angels that followed Satan. (Daniel 10:13) Angels of God are sent to assist those who are to inherit salvation. (Hebrews 1:14) There are testimonies galore and even a TV program of people who believe an angel helped them in a desperate situation. We are told in the letter to the Hebrews that sometimes we entertain angels without being aware of it. (Hebrews 13:2) In other words, they can appear as a normal person. All of this is a battle of good versus evil. One side seeks your eternal damnation because God

Commented [notes1]: John 8:44 (ESV)
⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Commented [notes2]: 2 Corinthians 11:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Commented [notes3]: Revelation 12:3-4 (ESV)
³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.
⁴ His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it.

Commented [notes4]: 1 Peter 5:8 (ESV)
⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Commented [notes5]: Revelation 12:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

Commented [notes6]: Job 1:12 (ESV)
¹² And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand." So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

Commented [notes7]: John 10:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Commented [notes8]: Romans 8:18 (ESV)
¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Commented [notes9]: Daniel 10:13 (ESV)
¹³ The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days, but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I was left there with the kings of Persia,

Commented [notes10]: Hebrews 1:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Commented [notes11]: Hebrews 13:2 (ESV)
² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

loves you. The other is limiting the action of the evil one while allowing some of his destructive work to come through when it would work for your eternal good. At other times, we give permission to the forces of evil because we are deceived into thinking that we will receive some pleasure from it. God will not violate our will. And so the battle for souls rages on.

In our passage today, Paul is telling us to suit up in the full armor of God. The modern soldier has a quite different set of equipment, so we must explain just exactly what Paul was implying when he went over the typical Roman armor and the instruction to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, Paul has told us to stand in the full armor. He repeats this command to stand several times. A Roman soldier fought in units. The unit could be as small as four, and as large as groups of a thousand. There was a leader of each squad, a commander of a hundred, of a thousand, and over the whole battle array. The strength of the Roman army was its ability to hold its ground against an onslaught. Shield to shield they held their line against the enemy. If the line was broken, another soldier would quickly step into the opening and stand his ground.

As Paul sat in prison dictating this letter, he was probably chained to his illustration, a Roman soldier. He knew that soldier was standing as instructed by his commander. If soldiers do not follow their commander there is chaos and the result is defeat. Though Paul is not saying it directly here, we stand at the direction of our Commander, the Lord Jesus.

The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but they have divine power.

(2Corinthians 10:4) Our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the spiritual forces in the heavenly realms. (6:12) Some have taken this to mean that we should take on the demonic realms. We should be very careful in claiming to do anything like this. (2Peter 2:10-11) Let the angelic beings and the Lord Himself deal with them. Our struggle is to resist their influence in our life. As Paul said in a previous chapter, "don't give them any ground" (4:27). And that is the picture in the command to stand.

We stand where God has called us to hold our ground. In the verse from 2 Corinthians 10 that tells us our weapons have divine power, it is followed by a description of how those weapons are to be used. *⁵ We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,* 2Corinthians 10:5 (ESV) You see, we aren't told to confront the supernatural powers, but to resist what they try to do through arguments, opinions, and in our own thought life. Jude had quite a warning for those who would blaspheme angelic beings and wrote

Commented [notes12]: 2 Corinthians 10:4 (ESV)

⁴ For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.

Commented [notes13]: Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Commented [notes14]: 2 Peter 2:10b-11 (ESV)

... they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, ¹¹ whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.

Commented [notes15]: Ephesians 4:27 (YLT)

²⁷ neither give place to the devil;

that they are messing in realms they don't understand. He warned that it will end in their own destruction! (Jude 8-10)

So when the Scripture commands us to stand, it means to take a stand in the realm of arguments and opinions. We don't waste our time arguing with those who do not have ears to hear (2Timothy 2:23), but we are always ready to give an answer for the hope that lies in us. (1Peter 3:15) We should work at answering the world's slander that is inspired by the demonic realm.

One example of that is the recent attack on Christianity at a gathering of aspiring young journalists. A prominent gay leader was asked to speak on bullying. Instead, he bullied the Christians that were present with a profanity laced tirade against the Bible. He knew exactly which chapters denounced homosexuality but said they didn't need to listen to that (curse word). He justified his stand by saying the Bible also promoted slavery.

If you listened to the last few weeks' sermons, and were one of the young people at that assembly, you could have stood against his argument with truth. Yes, the Bible condemns homosexuality. It is destructive to the human body, and verifiable statistics tell us of the increased rate of physical and mental disease from that lifestyle. And as far as slavery goes, it was a way of life at the time, but Christianity was way ahead of the culture commanding masters to be kind to their slaves. Christianity gave slaves a freedom in their heart. Rebelling would only have meant their death. The force behind the abolition of slavery was none other than Christianity. It is Christianity that ascribes dignity to every human life because we are all made in the image of God, not an accident of random events. (Genesis 2:27)

That is using the spiritual weapons of warfare! That is standing our ground. Speak the truth in love. Don't allow people to get away with distorting the facts.

The Bible doesn't tell us to bind the spirit of homosexuality or of lies or anything like that. When it tells us that what we bind on earth will be bound in heaven, it is referring to a judgment made toward an unrepentant person in the church. (Matthew 18:17-18) Delivering someone from demonic oppression is a whole separate situation, something the Lord can empower his people to do. (Matthew 12:28-29) There is too much distortion of the context of Scripture and a neglect of taking the whole counsel of the Word of God.

In taking our stand, we need to fasten the belt of truth around our waist. A week ago on the National Day of Prayer I was asked to pray for education. The verse the Lord gave me was from Psalm 51:6. *"Surely You desire truth in the inner parts; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place."* We should always be found on the side of truth. In

Commented [notes16]: Jude 1:8-10 (ESV)

⁸ Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones.

⁹ But when the archangel Michael, contending with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you."

¹⁰ But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

Commented [notes17]: 2 Timothy 2:23 (ESV)

²³ Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels.

Commented [notes18]: 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

Commented [notes19]: Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

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

Commented [notes20]: Matthew 18:17-18 (ESV)

¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸ Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

Commented [notes21]: Matthew 12:28-29 (ESV)

²⁸ But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.

the example I gave, the question isn't how does that person feel, but rather, what is the truth about the subject? The Word is truth. (John 17:17) Truth is what God desires and what Scripture proclaims.

Commented [notes22]: John 17:17 (ESV)
¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

In England there is a request before Parliament from the Archbishop of Canterbury to teach The Lord's Prayer in public school. England still has prayer in school. It just may pass. They have yet to deny the fact of their Christian history unlike what we are doing in the USA. Truth is powerful. Truth will always line up with the word of God. We never need fear the truth. In fact, we should always be looking for truth, as truth will always align with the Word. We should be lovers of truth. (Zechariah 8:19) When truth conflicts with our understanding or interpretation, we need to correct our viewpoint. Just be sure it is truth and not some distorted interpretation of the facts.

Commented [notes23]: Zechariah 8:19 (ESV)
¹⁹ Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace.

The belt of the soldier could hold his sword and dagger. It connected his upper and lower body armor. It supported his back as well. Truth is the essential starting point for our spiritual defense and offense. It helps us stand the Lord's ground! (Psalm 25:5)

Commented [notes24]: Psalm 25:5 (ESV)
⁵ Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.

The next piece is the breastplate. It protects our vital organs against the blows of the enemy. The Greeks thought that emotions came from these organs. (Jeremiah 31:20) Paul called it a breastplate of righteousness, a description he gleaned from Isaiah. (Isaiah 59:17) In the Isaiah passage it was the LORD that put it on. Since we are in Christ Jesus, and have put Him on, then our protection is His righteousness. Remember I told you that one of the names of Satan is The Accuser? Well, this attack against our righteousness can really affect our emotions. That is why this righteous armor must be the righteousness of Christ that we have obtained by faith in His substitution on the cross for our sins. (Isaiah 61:10)

Commented [notes25]: Jeremiah 31:20 (ESV)
²⁰ Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he my darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do remember him still. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, declares the LORD.

Commented [notes26]: Isaiah 59:17 (ESV)
¹⁷ He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in zeal as a cloak.

If you have on Jesus' righteousness, and the enemy of your soul comes and accuses you for some sin that you gave in to, then you can remind him that he is a liar, because your sins were nailed to the cross, and you have vicariously received the righteousness of Christ. (2Corinthians 5:21) He wants you down in the dumps and defeated emotionally because then you are ineffective at influencing others for Jesus. Put on the breastplate of righteousness!

Commented [notes27]: Isaiah 61:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Commented [notes28]: 2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)
²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

I'm not saying you are free to go on sinning. I am saying that if this breastplate is of your own righteousness, then there will be times when the enemy can deal you with some serious blows. Make sure you are relying on the Lord's righteousness. At the same time, we should be living a righteous life by the power of the Spirit so as not to give the enemy an opportunity, as well as to be a witness of the power of God to transform our life. (4:27)

Commented [notes29]: Ephesians 4:27 (ESV)
²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil.

¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

My grandfather grew up in Oak Creek Canyon and seldom had shoes. His feet developed tough callouses. In World War 1, the podiatrist that was assigned to his company examined his feet. Everyone had their feet examined regularly because the army traveled on their feet. If their feet were bad they became slow and even ineffective. The podiatrist told him he wished the whole army had feet like these because they'd be undefeatable. (no pun intended) Feet and footwear are vital to an army.

The Roman army was ready for action when they put on their sandals. They were then ready to march into battle. A wounded foot would put the soldier off balance. He would be slow and unable to attack or retreat to fight again.

Paul says that our footwear is the readiness given by the gospel of peace. The good news of peace with God comes through the cross of Christ. (Romans 5:1) It is because He bore our sins in our place and the wrath of God upon them. Why does that make us ready? Once again we must go back to the source in the Torah. The Jews were told to eat the Passover with their sandals on. (Exodus 12:11) They were experiencing redemption and were about to escape from the hands of their enemy. The gospel of peace makes us able to escape the clutches of the enemy of our soul.

Here is that readiness to give an account of the hope that we have. The life of the believer that stands his or her ground, with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, and their feet shod with the readiness given by the gospel of peace is quite different from that of the world. They shine with the light of the Lord. (Ecclesiastes 8:1) They are ready to not only to withstand the enemy's attacks, but to rescue others as well by sharing what the Lord has done for them.

When we stand His ground with truth, and righteousness, and readiness, we are proclaiming that there is abundant life for those who seek truth. The truth we proclaim matches the reality we see in the world. Our righteousness from Jesus gives us an abiding joy. The Gospel of Peace makes us ready for anything the enemy throws at us.

We'll see next Sunday that all this armor is really something of Jesus. He is truth. He is our righteousness. He is the good news of peace with God. Live in Jesus. Suit up in Jesus and stand His ground! (Romans 13:14)

Questions

- 1 What is Satan's origin?
- 2 Contrast the two spiritual forces.
- 3 What does it mean to "stand"?

Commented [notes30]: Romans 5:1 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Commented [notes31]: Exodus 12:11 (ESV)

¹¹ In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover.

Commented [notes32]: Ecclesiastes 8:1 (ESV)

¹ Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.

Commented [notes33]: Romans 13:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

- 4 What is the warning to those who would attack the spiritual realm?
- 5 How does Paul tell us to use our spiritual weapons?
- 6 What does the belt of truth teach us?
- 7 What is the breastplate?
- 8 Why must it be the Lord's righteousness?
- 9 What do the shoes do for us?
- 10 How do these 3 articles help us stand?
- 11 Have you taken a stand lately? How?