

Truth Where It Counts

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the critical role of truth in spiritual warfare and the necessity of wearing God's armor to stand firm against the enemy's attacks.

Duration: 31:32

Scripture: Matthew 26:14

Topics: "Truth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher talks about his three-year-old granddaughter, Charlotte, who is described as a terror. He also mentions that his daughter, who is Charlotte's mother, was similar when she was growing up. The preacher then shifts to discussing his grandson, Luke, who is heading back to California to work for the Lord. The sermon emphasizes the importance of being genuine and real as Christians, and not being hypocritical like actors, athletes, and politicians. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the need for Christians to ask God for forgiveness when they fail.

Transcript

One of the unspoken disillusionments that many times new Christians go through is that they put their faith in Christ, they are born again, they're so happy, they're filled with joy, as the Bible says, unspeakable. They are filled with a new peace, they know their sins are forgiven. But what wasn't pointed out to them so strongly was that when you become a Christian, you have a new heightened awareness of spiritual warfare, and you feel a downward pull, and you feel spiritual attacks, mental, emotional, spiritual, and you say to yourself, whoa, what is this? I thought when you receive Christ, you live happily ever after and then go to heaven.

But how many Christians here know exactly what I'm talking about, spiritual warfare? That there's an enemy, that there's a drawing, a temptation to sin with a goal of destruction and pain. And I want to address, as Ephesians 6 gives us the armor of God, we're familiar with that, I just want to talk about one part of that armor, which is many times the most overlooked of all. Let's look at Ephesians 6, shall we? A final word, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Put on all of God's armor so that you'll be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh and blood, enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places. Notice, by being strong in the Lord, it's assumed you could be weak in the Lord.

Otherwise, there wouldn't be a command to be strong in the Lord. So there's that option that you could be a Christian and not be strong, and in his mighty power, the Holy Spirit working through our lives. Then he says to put on the full armor of God so that you can stand firm against all the strategies of the devil.

So now we have first our arch enemy, the adversary of both God and us, which is the devil, Satan, Lucifer, the accuser, the liar, the murderer, many names for him, the God of this world. That is who is opposed to us. But we notice here that since he is a created being, most people believe this is Lucifer, who was a high-ranking angel at one time, and then mysteriously, with no one to tempt him, but his own pride.

Talk about the power of pride. With no one to tempt him, his heart was lifted up in pride against almighty God. That didn't even intimidate him.

And he was cast down and now has become our adversary. Since he's a created being, he does not know everything. He is not everywhere at once.

He has to learn things like any created being. He's not omniscient, doesn't know everything, not omnipresent, everywhere at once. If he's here, he can't be there, so on.

And he is not omnipotent, he doesn't have all power, but he has tremendous power, and that's why to speak lightly of him is not a wise thing, because this is our adversary. And the Bible tells us here that he has a host of minions underneath him in some spiritual order that we don't totally understand, but there's hierarchy, there's captains, lieutenants, majors, they're sent on assignment, they attack believers, they're roaming about somewhere it seems in heavenlies, the atmosphere, that's their habitat, and they're moving about to do harm and mischief everywhere they go. They're unseen, they're mighty powers in this dark world and in the heavenly places.

Notice also one last thing, strategies. This devil has strategies, he has schemes. And he knows enough about us by observation and experience that a strategy he might use against my brother, he wouldn't use against me, and vice versa, and throughout the choir, but he's there, and he has schemes, he has a will, shall we say, he has a plan for all of our lives.

You know, I thought about that this past week, that just like God has a plan for our lives, we're not aware and conscious that Satan has a plan for every one of our lives. Just like God's plan is a precious plan, a good plan, perfect plan for our lives, Satan takes nobody's backseat to no one. He has a plan, he has a strategy to fulfill and carry out that plan.

Notice also there in that passage that the goal is to stand firm, not to attack or conquer territory in this passage, but after everything, after the battle, we're standing firm so that after the assault is made, we might even be rocked, but at the end of it, we stand firm. How many wanna stand firm, be standing? Not fallen, not knocked over. All of these things must be possible or these verses don't mean anything.

So stand firm. The Bible there says, for we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, and the word in the Greek there that's used for fighting is wrestling, and it's close contact. Although later it talks about fiery darts being sent by the enemy, the original picture is wrestling, is wrestling, close contact.

Next passage, therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so that you'll be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Every piece on it, which is another way of saying put on the Lord Jesus Christ and resist the enemy in the time of evil, the day of evil. It seems as if the Bible's indicating that while we're susceptible to temptation and assault at any time, and if he tempted Jesus, he obviously is not overly impressed by any

of us.

He tempted Jesus not just once in the desert after 40 days of fasting, but it says he waited to come back a more convenient time. So now we learn that there's convenient times and strategies and so on and so forth. So therefore, it says, put on the belt of truth, or therefore, put on the girdle of truth, or, New Living Translation, have your loins girded with truth.

The belt of truth, the girdle of truth. Then it goes on to talk about the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. But I just wanna talk to all of us now, straight, total transparency, that we can learn something and be encouraged.

Put on first the belt of truth. Now, some people believe that when Paul was writing this letter to the church at Ephesus, or possibly it wasn't to Ephesus, there's no personal references to people there, and he had spent three years there, and that would be odd. It might have been to the churches that actually we read about in Revelation, which were in Asia or our Turkey today, and it was a circular letter that was sent around.

But as he was writing that letter, he saw a Roman soldier, and as he saw that Roman soldier, he was looking at how the soldier was dressed, and God gave him a spiritual counterpart, and he began to say, oh, he wears a helmet, and he has a girdle and all of that. And he then made those into a spiritual lesson for us as the Holy Spirit inspired him. And the first piece of armor or dress that he mentions is this girdle or belt of truth.

So it's not a belt like a man wears a belt, or a lady wears a belt, but it was something like a girdle that you were wrapped in, covering your loins, your point right here, and it braced up the back, and it kept all your other garments under control so that everything was not now free-flowing where you could be tripped up, but the girdle kept everything in place. Other pieces of weaponry or armor were connected to it, the breastplate on top of it, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, connected to it. But it braced up, got the soldier ready for battle, and made sure he was unencumbered by all the loose-flowing stuff that he had on because it was all tied down by this girdle.

And he says that this girdle that we all have to wear to be able to effectively withstand the enemy is the girdle or the belt of truth. Now, what does truth mean there? Because truth has several meanings in the Scripture. This can't be the truth of the Word of God, like the truth, the gospel, the true doctrine, because that comes under more the heading of take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, which is the Word of truth.

No, this first thing that's mentioned is truth, as in sincerity, no lie, openness, transparency, nothing hidden, no secret. What he's saying is you can't fight the devil successfully unless you start without the girdle of truth, sincerity. The moment you step into unreality, hypocrisy, acting towards someone in a different way than you just talked about them, you are now giving place to the devil because he's the ultimate liar, actor, always covering.

One of his names is he's a liar from the beginning, Jesus said. So the believer who wants to be like Christ and be victorious has to understand anything secret, anything not transparent, hidden friends, hidden this, hidden things you look at, you say, or anything else, you are now whistling and saying, come and get me, because that's his whole realm of operation. You can't obviously use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, which is the Word of truth, if you're not practicing truth.

I'm not talking about perfection. I'm not talking about never failing God. I'm not talking about any of that, that none of us could stand.

How many are happy there's mercy with God? Wave your hand at me that there's mercy with God. Now, how many times we fail? The righteous man falls six times, but he gets up seven. I'm talking now about fake stuff, hidden stuff, hidden anything, so that, let's just take an example.

I don't like him, and I talk bad about him, and I have a vendetta against him. Anytime Todd's name is mentioned around me, I bristle. I don't like him, I think he's done me wrong.

I think he's a threat. He wants to take over my job as the pastor, and he wants me to be a tenor in the choir. You can take it over right now, brother.

So I talk bad about him to my wife. I blacken his name to other people, but when I meet him, yo, Todd, you're my man. Come on, Todd.

That's no belt of truth. That's no girdle of truth. Anything hidden, covered up by another face, anything that's deceptive and all of that, you are now stepping on the ground of the ultimate deceiver, Satan.

The Bible says in a place in the New Testament, and let's not give a place to the enemy. Seems that as believers, one of the warnings is don't get involved in a situation where Satan gets a place, he gets a foothold. He makes a landing on the beach.

Don't let that happen. One of the ways that can happen is when we practice his nature. His nature is deception, his nature is deceit, and here's what happens when he makes those inroads into our life.

It becomes very, very difficult to fight him in other areas because he's made a beachhead. So thus, even believers are overwhelmed by temptations and feel no strength against them, and they're calling on God, and they're wondering what's happened, but they don't realize that what's made all of this possible is that there's been a beachhead made. There's something they're practicing involved with that is not truth, it's not open, it's not transparent.

One of the meanings of that word can also mean simple, like a child. And I have a granddaughter, three years old, Charlotte. Charlotte has no pretense.

What you see is what you get. This is the best example. Oh, I'm so happy it came to me.

Thank you, Lord. She is three years old, and she's a terror. She's a terror, truth be told.

My wife kind of favors her, but she's a terror anyway. And a lot like her mother, who's my daughter, was when she was growing up. Well, Charlotte's just bad.

She says bad, she's mean, she pulls on Levi's hair, she does all kinds of things sometimes. So they're in the car, and my grandson Luke just came back from California. He's heading back there to work for the Lord, working, serving Teen Challenge, not finishing his final year of college.

He's gonna do it online. He's gonna go back and just be involved in ministry. Hands on, he's gonna learn a lot.

He already is. So he comes back, and he'd been away for Charlotte for a while, but he saw that she was regressing, and she wasn't getting nicer, she was getting worse. So she's in the car, and she's pulling Levi's hair, and she's acting mean, talking mean, doing all kinds of stuff, and Luke can't take it.

He's 21, and he puts his finger in her face, and he says, that's it. You're gonna stop. You're gonna stop right now.

That's it. You're not gonna be mean. You're not gonna be mean anymore.

You're not gonna pull Levi's hair. Do you get it, Charlotte? You're not gonna be mean. And she kind of broke a little bit, and put her head down and said, please, could I be mean? That's the belt of truth.

It's not good, but it's true. Ah, you get older, and you get corrected. You don't say, please, can I be blank.

You find out another way to do it. We become weakened against other assaults of the enemy. You can almost feel like you're losing control, because the hypocrisy, the beachhead, has not been dealt with, and thus, that gives Satan access.

There can be physical results of that. In other words, if you're not real, the one thing that Jesus was was real. What a Christian is supposed to be, not in the world.

Obviously, we're finding out all these actors are actors. These athletes are actors. The politicians, they have one public face, and now you unfortunately learn what's going on, and who they really are.

Am I correct? How many get it? Say amen. But not for us Christians. What we're supposed to be is what we're supposed to be.

Not perfect. When we fail, we ask God for forgiveness. But we don't have another agenda going on.

We don't have two faces and two hearts and three minds. I've watched this since I was a little boy. I remember my heart being wounded because I had a favorite aunt and uncle who lived out in Flushing at the time, and I had two cousins.

Whenever we would drive out there to visit, I loved that. I went there, and I was going with my mom and dad, and another aunt and uncle. We all were in the crowd in the same car, and we got there, and everything was fine.

The meal was great. Oh, this is such a nice meal that my aunt made, and we were all together and nice, and everything was good, and I played with my cousins. We get in the car, and we're driving home.

I remember hearing, not my mom. My mom wasn't like that. I'm so thankful for that.

Neither was my dad. He had other problems, but this other aunt said, was that real food or dog food they served us? There was something along those lines. And then, you know the way that she's decorated that house? You know, it looks like a barn.

My little heart said, no, but that's not how you talked when you were there. You didn't say that. That's my aunt.

I love her and my uncle, and I love my cousins. Why would you say that when you didn't say it to her? Why would you say it? See, that kind of behavior is fatal. That gives a place to the enemy.

That strips us of the belt of truth. Now, we can hardly reach for anything because the belt of truth that binds everything together and strengthens us has been cast off. It's almost impossible to pray without the belt of truth because, in fact, it's hard to even go into God's presence because you're afraid of what he'll say because he is pure, he's light.

He shines in there. That's why a lot of people avoid the word of God and they're Christians. Or they'll avoid reading in certain places because they know God is on their trail.

He's gonna come because he loves us. And he's saying, I want you to be strong. You gotta have the belt of truth on.

So I'm gonna try to prick your conscience and all of that because you're violating your conscience. When you violate your conscience, how can you stand firm against the devil? Just think of that, brothers and sisters. How many get it? Lift your hand high.

If I'm violating my conscience, if I'm living without the belt of truth, openness, transparency, and all of that, then it's so hard to pray. It's so hard to read the word. And listen, people can tell you positional truth and you're seated with Christ in the heavenly places and all of that, and that's true.

Positional truth is important, but it's so overdone today and there's so little preaching about what's really happening at ground zero. See, Paul is not talking about only positional truth, positional truth. The church at Laodicea were chosen by God.

Name anything about Christians, that's what they were because they were a Christian church. And Jesus said, you're neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm. I'm gonna vomit you out of my mouth.

But I thought they were this and I thought, yeah, they were, but they were also lukewarm. In other words, God is interested in reality, where I am. It's having like another persona that no one knows about.

And God says, you'll never be able to stand against the devil because he's the master at that. In fact, one of his names is the angel of light. He's the prince of darkness, but he comes as an angel of light, always looking to fake and so on.

Now, Christians battle with this. I've counseled enough people, know enough about life that Satan tries to make a beachhead and we repent and we say, I don't want that. I shouldn't have said that, shouldn't have looked at that, shouldn't have whatever and all of that.

And then he doesn't stop. He's trying to get it accepted, make a treaty with compromise. You're compromised, but accept it.

Don't you be fighting against it, just accept it because this is one of his strategies. Now, just think how it was with Judas, this extreme case. The Bible says that on the night that Jesus was betrayed, Satan entered into him.

Did that mean literally he went beyond demon possessed? He was these demons that work under Satan's leadership. This was another way of saying Satan took total possession of him. Satan somehow entered him, but how did that begin? The Bible indicates in other gospel stories that before he betrayed Jesus, he was already negotiating a price.

Most things don't happen overnight or in a second. There's a series of steps. I know it's quiet because we're talking about something very, very serious, but this is good for all of us.

How many say amen? So preaching for amens and working people in a frenzy is a poor way of being a preacher. It doesn't edify and help you. Help me.

So as he was negotiating, how did he do that? How did he negotiate with them and then appear with Jesus and be following him? And when Jesus did miracles, he went, can you believe what he just did? Hey dude, you're negotiating to betray him. How do you have the chutzpah to be following him? It was same with David and Bathsheba. David is playing out a huge thing and it's all fake.

He had the guy killed. He had the husband of the woman who he got pregnant. He had him killed.

And the guy who wrote the Psalms and who had a heart after God's own heart, what was he doing all those months? Until the prophet came and said, you're the man. You're the man. And of course he quickly broke and said, yes, I am.

So let's just end this on this good note. The Bible says, therefore put on the whole armor of God. Whose armor is it? It's God's armor.

It's not your armor. God doesn't want you manufacturing now as I speak, oh, I'm gonna make me a belt of truth. You and I would not know how to make a belt of truth.

Girdle making is not one of our professions. How many say amen? We don't know how to do it. Because self will con self.

Because when we think we're remedying something, we're not, we're always, you know, it's like Augustine said, so-called the church father, when he was living a total profligate life, a total out there life, and his mother was praying for him, he said, his conscience started working on him. God, deliver me, but not yet. Cleanse me, change me, but not yet.

The armor of God, just like God has to give us and teach us how to operate the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, the helmet of salvation, these are all from God. God's able to give you and I the belt of truth, the girdle of truth, so that we can walk in the light. Look at 1 John.

This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declared to you, God is light. There's no darkness in him at all, no unreality, no fake, no lie. So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God, but go on living in spiritual darkness.

We're not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, that's speaking about us, brothers and sisters, and the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us from all sin. God is light.

When you and I have fellowship with God, oh, does he shine his light. And anything that could harm us, any beachhead the enemy's trying to make, right while I'm speaking, he's saying to you, no, let it go, confess it, just agree with God. That's wrong.

That whole thing is wrong. That's wrong. I'm tired of justifying it, trying to work around it.

No, no, I'm putting the girdle of, I'm a guy, but I'm putting a girdle on today. I'm gonna put on the girdle of sincerity, openness, truth. I got a phone call months ago from a wife who said, can you help me? And I said, your husband's a pastor.

I don't know you. You're living more than halfway across the country. Please help me.

I watch your webcasts. I've read some of your books, but would you please help me? What am I gonna do? I said, what? My husband goes to church, he preaches. He acts nice with the people.

He's all sweet. He preaches the word. He comes home, he's a terror, a terror.

I can't be in the same room with him. He turns on pornography right with me in the room. And then he goes to church.

What am I gonna do? Because I don't know, which is he? Is he that guy or is he the one at home? Which is he? I said, we'll pray together, but if he'll call me, I don't know him. I'll pray with him and help him, but we all need to pray for each other. Come on, do we all need to pray for each other? As long as it's called today, encourage each other.

Lest any of you get hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Sin will make you get hard. You justify it.

God knows what I'm going through. Well, how many times have I heard that? No, but that's wrong, sister. That's wrong, brother.

I know, listen, listen, don't be judgmental. I thought you loved me. Why are you telling me I'm doing something wrong? Because Satan is trying to make a beachhead.

And God wants you to wear the girdle of truth, the belt of truth, be sincere. Now, some of us, last word, some of us have grown up in houses where there was no belt of truth. I know that from counseling people.

You grew up in a phony house with phony parents, all due respect. The whole thing was fake. One way here, then another total way, and you can drink that in with your mother's milk, and the next thing you know, you're justifying that.

Others of us have been around people who are real. Perfect, never, but real. Not perfect, never made a mistake, but when they make a mistake, oh God, have mercy on me.

I don't want that. Not accepting that, not making a treaty with it. And when you cast that off and resist the devil and just ask God, but you really gotta call on God today.

Oh God, give me the girdle of truth. Make me sincere, make me real. In a fake world, with fake news, fake people, fake emotion, fake everything.

Make me real, because I belong to Jesus Christ. Everything he says we can count on as being true. He has no ulterior motive or secret thing going on.

Not gonna ask for a prayer for special people or all of that, it's too sensitive, and we all need this. We all need this. The downfall of every believer, every preacher, every everybody starts with losing the strength and the efficacy of the belt of truth, the girdle of truth.

And I don't care how long you've been a Christian. In fact, sometimes the longer you've been a Christian, the easier it is to start compromising. Because oh, I know, I was in a meeting in 2001, what a meeting that was.

Yo, it's 2018 now. 17 years ago is not gonna cut it. How many wanna be real with God right now, right? And listen, listen, that's our first love.

We don't wanna lose that. When you get saved, what's your first love? Jesus is everything. Jesus is everything, and we walk before him like the choir saying, let the words of my mouth, the meditations of my heart be acceptable to who? To our neighbors? No, to you, oh Lord.

The thoughts I think, everything I do. So today God's gonna help. Let's pray.

God, this is a different message, a different everything for us. We turn away and we renounce all the attempts of Satan to bring darkness into our lives, hidden things, secret things. We ask that you would give us the belt of truth so we can be transparent.

Like a child, like Charlotte, who just is what she is. Help us to unlearn all the stuff we've learned as we quote, matured. Make us childlike, for unless you become like a little child, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven.

Make us sensitive, God, to the schemes of the devil who tries to bring unreality, fakeness, hypocrisy. We turn away from that. We're gonna be strong in you today, but we can't be strong if we're compromised.

It's impossible to be strong and then be compromised at the same time. So be strong in our life by giving us the girdle of truth, sincerity, transparency, openness. God, this is a searching word.

That's why we're all so quiet. We praise you at other times. We shout, we jump around the building and that's right too.

But today, Lord, you're speaking to hearts behind me, in front of me, up in the balcony. Oh, save us from the clutches of the enemy. Deliver us from ourselves.

Save me from me. Save us from us. We cannot face him and be victorious unless you do the work and you give us every piece of that armor we need, starting with the belt of truth.

And we worship you today and we praise you. And we love you today for being so patient with us. Thank you for your word today.

Thank you that we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. And Satan, you've been found out yet again by the word of God and by the spirit of God. Thank you, Jesus, for everything that you've done and continue to do in our lives.

Bless us now as we dismiss. Help us get wherever we have to get. We ask this all in Christ's name.

And everyone said. Come on, stand up and say hello to someone.

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