



SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Volume 6

Joseph A Cortes



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Keep Standing

Open your Bibles to Ephesians 6:10.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong [endunamoo in the Greek; be strengthened, be empowered] in the Lord, and in the power of his might [in the force of his might; it is His strength that empowers us].

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. [This is the first reference to the whole armor of God.] For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places [against evil forces, evil spirits, demons in the air and sky around us].

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, [the second reference to the armor of God] that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”

Once again, Paul is reminding us to stand. There was no chapter or verse in this letter when it was originally written, and here Paul is telling us, ***“having done all, to stand.”*** Stand. He is communicating to the reader to stand and resist these enemies that are described in verses 11 and 12. He reminds us in verse 11, to 'stand' and in verse 13, to 'withstand.' In verse 14 he starts off with "stand." The title of this message is "Keep Standing" and we must keep standing and resisting the devil and all his minions.

Believe me, there have been times I felt like saying, “Enough is enough. I'm just going to sit this one out. Go find some other Christian warrior to deal with these issues and let them feel the heat. Give me a break, God. I deserve it.” Then, in my saner moments, I realize that we are a weapon unto God for righteousness. We are God's weapon! God lists the spiritual weapons He gives us, and we're to use these weapons and wear the armor. If we're going to be in a spiritual battle we have no choice but to wear the armor.

Let me read something written by an old timer. I love the old timers. I don't get much inspiration from the new scholarship out there, but this author writes:

“In verse 13 of Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul clearly states the kind of armor you as a Christian must use, God's armor. Next, so you will not be tempted to fashion counterfeit armor in your own private forge and call it the armor of God, Paul described the true armor piece by piece beginning in verse 14. Roman Catholics and Protestants alike have often been guilty of devising their own weapons to fight the devil, weapons God never appointed.”

In the past I've been guilty of forging my own armor and weapons, somehow thinking I can come up with better weapons than God. At times the devil had me believing that he was going to be successful with his methods and schemes, when I know very well that he won't be. All I've done is disguise the problem, thinking my own efforts will solve the problems that face me and this

ministry. It's senseless and arrogant to think that we can do a better job than God in forging weapons against Satan and his minions.

To continue:

“Notice in verse 14 that Paul specifies the necessary posture for a Christian soldier, 'Stand therefore.' What good will it do to be properly armed if we do not stand in valiant opposition to the enemy? Stand, do not flee or yield. To stand is the opposite of to flee or surrender. A captain who sees his men retreating or on the verge of surrender gives the order, 'Stand,' and every soldier worthy of his calling responds at once to his captain's voice. In like manner, every Christian is to respond to God's command to 'Stand,' or in other words, steadfastly to resist and never yield to the attacks of Satan. Among soldiers, cowardice and disobedience are among the most damning sins. How then can they be considered slight offences by those who have Christ for their captain and sin and the devil as their enemy? To resist Satan may cost us dearly. 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin,' the Apostle said in Hebrews 12:4. He implies that spiritual warfare may well come to that and if it should, it does not alter the case nor give us an excuse to choose to sin rather than to suffer.”

Chasing the desires of this life that benefit us in the here and now puts in jeopardy the cause of Christ in getting His Word out to the world. Like I said, I have the same temptations as you do. I have no excuse. Some nights I don't want to do a program, not that I don't love preaching God's Word. That's not the issue. At times, I see complacency, and it brings me to the point of discouragement. Then I have two things I can do: ignore it, or tell you to get up and get back into the fight. No matter what anybody thinks, I don't enjoy or look forward to doing the second. I find it hard enough to get my own self into this chair and keep fighting the fight of faith with you. But I have two choices, and although I almost succumb to the first, I thank God that I don't, not only for my benefit, but also for yours.

“He implies that spiritual warfare may well come to that and if it should, it does not alter the case nor give us an excuse to choose to sin [Instead of 'sin' in this case, I like to say 'to chase our own desires'] rather than to suffer. When is it ever permissible for a Christian to shirk his duty because it is accompanied by danger? If we are to be successful soldiers, the preservation of God's honor must always take precedence over our fears.”

They don't make characters like this author anymore. Far too many ministries just try to make you feel good instead of molding you into Christian soldiers for Jesus Christ.

“...God's honor must always take precedence over our fears. Just as an earthly soldier represents his country's honor in battle, the Christian represents God's honor whenever he is called to contend with the devil.

David's subjects valued him as worth 10,000 of their own lives. Every one of them would die rather than endanger their leader. Surely, God deserves as much from His subjects. How dishonorable to expose His blessed name to any reproach, rather than expose ourselves to a little scorn, temporal loss, or trouble.

The Roman General Pompey boasted that a nod of his head would send his soldiers

scrambling up the steepest rock on their hands and knees though they were knocked down as fast as they advanced. This is the kind of loyalty God wants from us and while He is never reckless with the blood of His servants, sometimes He tests our loyalty in hard service and sharp temptation so that through our faithfulness and bravery, He may triumph over Satan.”

We are God’s weapon unto righteousness to triumph over Satan! I have said it and I have read the scriptures but it just doesn't register with some. Our calling is to triumph over Satan, but we must also employ the Word of God. God is molding us and putting the mind of Christ in us to accomplish these things, yet some take it so casually and keep putting it off. They confuse their minds with things they think they're missing out on spiritually, because they haven't grown in some areas. Stop using psychology and Christian nonsense that makes you feel guilty and falls short of what God wants you to be. God wants you to be His soldier. Don't even pick up one of these Christian psychology books to study if they don't start with the concept that we are soldiers of Jesus Christ. Paul used military language in all his letters, and although we are focusing here on Ephesians 6, he uses that language throughout all his letters. We are a weapon unto God for the sake of righteousness to triumph over Satan. We are the tool, we are the agents, we are the chosen created by God to faith and trust in His Word. We're here to show the rest of creation it can be done. He's looking for people that will honor, love, obey and trust in His Word, recognizing that they were called to accomplish what He wants. Fighting Satan is one of them.

“... He tests our loyalty in hard service and sharp temptation so that through our faithfulness and bravery, He may triumph over Satan.

To allow a well-armed fortress to fall into enemy hands would be a disgrace to the defending soldiers. Spiritually speaking, such defeat is even more dishonorable because God in Christ gives His soldiers all the power they need to resist the devil at every turn. God provides armor to defend the Christian while fighting, not to protect him while retreating. Stand, and the day is yours. Flee or yield, and all is lost.

I have read of great captains who purposely cut off all avenues of retreat so their soldiers would fight to the death. William the Conqueror, as soon as his army set foot on English soil, sent away his ships in full sight of his men.

Similarly, God makes no provisions for cowardice. In His armory, there is not a piece to be found for the back. [As I have said.] Here is an awesome truth, 'The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.' (Hebrews 10:38.)

He who faces the battle with confidence comes off with his life, but he who defects wins only God's displeasure. What a poor exchange; to turn from fighting against Satan and engage God as your enemy.”

Read it again so it sinks in.

“What a poor exchange; to turn from fighting against Satan and engage God as your enemy.”

There are two choices you have: to fight against Satan or have God as your enemy. Stop and think about it. Are you going to choose to be a soldier of Jesus Christ today and fight against the enemy, or do you chose to turn from fighting against Satan and have God as your enemy? When you don't choose to engage in spiritual warfare against Satan and his minions, do you think God is going to be pleased with you? His Word instructs us to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ and

fight the good fight of faith. Did you forget those earlier messages? There is no choice. That's why I am spending so much time on this subject. It's a under-shepherds responsibility to equip you for the spiritual fight.

“There is comfort in fighting against the enemy, even when it draws blood, but there is no comfort at all in enduring the fiery indignation of an avenging God. What Satan lays on, God can take off. But who can give relief from what God lays on? Would you rather die in the heat of the battle fighting for your country or be executed for cowardice or treason?”

Spiritual warfare doesn't mean you come with a spiritual cannon. Unfortunately, many would have you come with a spiritual bouquet of flowers instead, to convince the devil that you are his friend, and you want to convert him so he can see the way. I'm being ridiculous to make a point. This ministry is going through many battles and trials because it's exposing the devilish nightmare that's controlled by evil forces. I won't let you become complacent or soft if you follow this ministry. I plan to keep resisting and I plan to keep on standing. Standing is what Paul reminds us to do over and over.

With that, go back to Job, chapter 1 in the Old Testament. Verse 1 begins,

“There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect [the Hebrew is complete, not wanting in any respect] and upright, and one that feared God, and departed from evil.

And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.

His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.”

His children were having a party. A lot of scholars believe it was a birthday party, but I don't know what kind of party it was. It was a feast and party of some sort. Family members came together and they drank and ate, and God knows what else happened. It's obvious when you read verse 5, Job had concerns about what was taking place.

“And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually [or all the days].”

This means that Job didn't just offer these burnt offerings after the fact, he burned these burnt offerings during this party because he was concerned about what was happening. For some reason or another his children cursed God and backslid by turning away from God. Verse 6 continues:

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.”

In Hebrew, this says, *he came in the midst of them*. The sons of God were none other than the angels, the cherubim, the seraphim; all of God's creations came to present themselves to give an account of what God assigned them to do and accomplish, and Satan also came.

“And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? [God knew, but He wanted Satan to confess what he had been up to.] Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect [or a complete] and an upright man, one that feareth God...

Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

Hast not thou made a hedge about him, [‘Haven't you put your force field around him?’ for you science fiction buffs.] and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.”

Satan was complaining that the protective force field wasn't just around Job, but also around his family, his servants, his responsibilities and anything that belonged to Job. Satan and his minions couldn't penetrate it. Satan is also complaining that Job has been blessed and he has many material things and they have done nothing but increase over time. So in verse 11 Satan says,

“But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.”

In other words, Satan is saying these blessings are the only reason Job kept God as his main concern. Obviously there is a record of this in verse 5 where Job offers the burnt offerings for his sons. His own family turned from God. Job hoped that God would forgive their sin, (if they did sin), to reconcile them back to the Father through burnt offerings. Satan is saying, "You are protecting him. Remove that protection, remove that covering and see what he does." Satan was banking on Job turning from God immediately.

I'm reading this story again because Job is a perfect example of someone who kept standing and resisting the temptation of cursing God and dying. Now, Job finally broke down, but he probably lasted longer than you or I ever could. Wait until you hear what he's going to go through. Most of you would have second thoughts and curse God or curse the day that you were born. I'm getting to the point now: Job did not have half the weapons we have available to us. He didn't have Ephesians 6:10 through 18. He had a basic belief and concept of God and he did what was right in his own eyes. God honored him for it. We have so much more knowledge of what God gives us and makes available to us to resist and to keep fighting the enemy. Job did not have any understanding of that.

“But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. [Everything that Job was responsible for and has you can touch, but do not touch Job.] So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:”

This was probably another party. They really didn't have the same heart as Job. They didn't have the same concerns of Job to do things God's way, trying to please God more than themselves. They were just the opposite; they were spoiled children.

“And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

Maybe if his sons and daughters weren't so busy partying, they would have noticed that the Sabeans were on their way to do mischief and evil. They weren't diligent. They weren't resisting unto blood. Forget the blood, they weren't resisting, period. They weren't actively involved in spiritual warfare knowing that an attack could come at any time, whether by seen or unseen forces. No, they were too busy going from party to party.

“And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

And the Sabeans fell upon them, and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

'I only...' Satan allowed one to be spared to be the bearer of bad news and give an evil report.. There's always a bearer of bad news somewhere. Satan reserves those people to do emotional damage when things are going tough in our lives.

“While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.”

One bearer of bad news from one direction and here comes another one from another direction telling him, “Whoa, in case you did not hear about it Job, here is the latest news.” Here, the messenger was blaming God: ***“The fire of God is fallen from heaven...”***

It was not the fire of God! In the Hebrew, it is even more profound. It says, *“the great fire of God.”* Not just *a fire* of God, but *the great fire of God*. God allowed it to happen, but it was not from God. It was from Satan.

“...and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell [or rushed] upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.” [This is the third bearer of bad news.]

What has Job lost so far? In verse 15, the servants were slain. In verse 16, sheep and the servants who were watching them were burned up. In verse 17, the Chaldeans came in and took away the

camels, and the servants were slain with the edge of the sword. People were dying in Job's community, and his livestock, his assets, were destroyed.

Verse 18 goes on, ***“While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house: [Here we go again; another party.]***

And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,”

Go back to verse 19.

“And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

Then Job arose, and rent his mantle...”

His offspring are now dying. All his assets are gone; his offspring are killed by a great wind. Loyal servants he was probably close to were losing their lives. Put yourself in Job's shoes. Your assets and children are gone. Those of you who have children, put yourself in that situation. What if all your children by some strange event are dead tomorrow? I hate to make it sound so dramatic, but there is no other choice. What would you do? Who would you blame? How would you mourn? And don't be super-spiritual, because it's easy to say, “I will trust God no matter what. I know that all things are ordered by the Lord and will turn out some way or another to be good and beneficial for my faith walk.” You can make it all sound so super-spiritual, but when you put flesh and blood on it, ask yourself what you would really do and how would you react.

Read on to see how Job reacted in verse 20.

“Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, [He worshipped the living God.]

And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”

He worshipped and he blessed the name of God. That amazes me. This is an example of someone who is standing and resisting the enemy; someone standing and resisting the temptation to blame God for what was happening in their lives. This story amazes me. I read it over and over and over and I get stuck at the same spot every time and ask, how did he do it? How could we do it today if it happened to us?

We do the same by first recognizing that even though God might allow it, evil of this nature comes by Satan and his minions alone. Don't beat yourself over the head believing it's because you've been a bad person, or believing it is just punishment for your sins. You're nothing

compared to what God has already dealt with in other created beings who are far worse than you will ever be. Don't misunderstand me: sin is sin. When you fall short and have turned away from God, recognize what an opportunity you have to be chosen by God and to live under the blood of Jesus Christ. Realize what that blood has done for you and what a molded piece of clay you are going to become, fashioned by Jesus Christ Himself, pleasing to the Father.

How did Job get back to God? It amazes me. He did it. Up to this point, his faith and trust in the living God whom he worshipped and whom he declared, blessed the name of the Lord and didn't sin or foolishly accuse God of the acts the unseen enemy unleashed on him. Let's continue:

Chapter 2:1, ***“Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a complete and an upright man [doing what was right in the eyes of the Lord is a better translation], one that feareth God, and turned away from evil? and still he holdeth fast [Job held fast, kept standing, and kept resisting.] his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.”***

God wasn't going to destroy Job, but He did allow Satan the opportunity to break his faith and not trust in the Living God any longer. God told Satan that he had tested Job, yet Job kept standing, he kept fighting, he kept his spiritual armor on, and he kept persevering in the faith by standing and resisting. In verse 4 we read that Satan came prepared with another scheme. Remember God gave the instruction, “You can do what you want, but do not touch Job.” Now he came with a plan to convince God to allow him to get closer access to Job and his well-being.

“And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life. [“Okay, do what you want with him, but you can't kill him.” I am sure there were times eventually that Job wished he was dead, but Satan couldn't orchestrate it. God wouldn't allow it.]

So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. [He was covered with painful boils and open blisters from head to toe.]

And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. [He was probably trying to scrape away the boils and any decaying matter.]

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.”

First, you have the bearers of bad news, then you have an immediate close family member tempting you, “You can keep holding on to your integrity, but what good has it done? You can keep believing that God is in control of your life, but what good has it done you? What has He done for you lately! Look what's happened. He has destroyed everything we have; He has killed servants; He has killed our own children!” That's what she was saying here. ***“Curse God, and***

die.” She didn't even care about her own husband.

“But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. [That's putting it kindly.] What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”

Job didn't condemn God. He didn't fall short in pleasing God. He kept standing and resisting. Sheep, gone; servants, gone; camels, gone; livestock, gone; his children, gone; and now he is full of boils, open blisters, things that would make most of you put a gun to your head and end your life if you didn't recognize who was still in control. Up to this point, Job has not condemned God; he did not stop fighting, resisting, and standing in faith. He kept hope that his God was alive and well and had things under control. These events were happening, but he believed that somewhere down the line the meaning behind them would be revealed and God would give the insight for his own benefit. He believed that somehow he would come out of it stronger.

In reflecting back over my life, especially over difficult times, where I have said, “Woe is me the day I was born.” I sit back now and say – you need to also if you are guilty of it – “Unto thee, O God, I have sinned with my unbelief and doubt. Let me learn from your Word what to be aware of next time when something comes across my path.” Believe me, it is going to be tomorrow, probably the next day at the latest because the enemy doesn't like me talking or preaching or teaching about this subject matter because it exposes him and his hatred for anyone living the life of faith and trusting in God and His Word. We should tell God, “Let me recognize you first the next time, instead of all the circumstances and individuals who are part of those circumstances and recognize that you might allow this to happen, but somehow you are going to get me through it. You are going to strengthen me because in Ephesians 6:10 the word is in the past tense.” God has already done it. He just has to find a servant who recognizes what He has already done and be willing to keep that armor on so the enemy will not get to us.

Recently I preached that there is victory. God doesn't have us wear the armor to keep us in defeat battle after battle. There is victory and there is an overall victory that is still yet to come when Satan will be, once and for all, put in his place burning forever because of what he has tried to do to God's creation; not only the human beings that we can relate to, but the unseen beings that God has also created. So I remind myself, “Joe, the God of Job could get him through what he went through, so He surely can handle your problems.” You also need to claim it whoever you are, whether you are a Hearer of Faith or not. Put your name in it and say, “The God of Job can definitely handle what I am facing.”

Up to this point, as verse 10 says, ***“In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”*** Job kept standing and resisting, but what happened when he stopped?

There's an lesson here, but before I get to it, I want you to remember this the next time you don't do your part, feeling that someone else will send in enough messages or someone else will send in enough money to reach the goal. Don't you know how much your messages, (whether it's a two-word statement or a whole page email), mean to this ministry and myself? It shows committed ones have grasped what we are trying to do here and nothing got in their way of being part of the messages for the week. Now how am I going to get that out of Job? Lets' see. Verse 11

continues,

“Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place... for they had made an appointment together to come mourn with him and to comfort him.

And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.”

These boils and blisters took such a toll that they couldn't even recognize their disfigured friend. You may read this and wonder what was wrong with ***'none spake a word unto him'*** as that was part of the custom. I know a lot of commentators will excuse their actions because it was a mourning custom to sit with an individual and be available if they needed anything, but not to commune with them. Commentators who have no insight don't realize that they had opportunity in those words ***'none spake.'*** Job was suffering, he had gone through tragedies that all his friends would never experience in their combined lifetimes. Are commentators and theologians going to tell me that it was the right thing to do because at the time the custom was not to say a single word of encouragement? Oh, hogwash and pig vomit! That is nonsense and it is stupid.

I remember back in 1995 when my mentor was going through a crisis. I made sure that I always had some encouraging words while he was going through that awful time. Even though I couldn't see it, I knew the enemy was surrounding the situation to break the man and the ministry. I made sure that I didn't leave his presence without saying a few encouraging words. I had a deep concern and I realized that there was a battle going on.

It's important to know when to be an encouragement to the person, the circumstances or the ministry. Make sure you're counted as one who is in there swinging. Let them know that you will be faithful, praying and pulling for them. Some of you just can't grasp the concept that any time you are identified with the ministry, there is a battle going on. It doesn't mean that you're going to be engaged in a situation like I was. However, you have tools that can be used in our day (email or phone) to relay an encouraging word of faith or just to say, “I am hanging in there with you. No matter what the devil throws at us, we shall overcome.” Can I make it any clearer?

Verse 12 says, ***“And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.***

So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.”

Job's friends had seven days of opportunity to lift him up in the spirit and encourage him to keep hanging in there. These three individuals could have been a part of standing and resisting against the horrible things that Satan was unleashing. They could have helped Job stay strong in the faith, but they did just the opposite. They were the last piece of the puzzle to bring Job to the point where he stopped resisting Satan.

And what did Job do next because of these unfaithful miserable friends?

Chapter 3:1 tells us, ***“After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.”***

For chapter after chapter, these friends were pontificating nothing but nonsense, really bringing Job down to an even lower point to where he even had to defend why he was in that position. It goes on and on chapter after chapter. Then we get to chapter 13. You have heard this taken out of context many times, or even taken it out of context yourself.

Verse 15 says, ***“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:”***

How many times have you heard, ***“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him”***? You may think Job is full of faith here because he is still trusting in God's Word when actually the opposite is being said. Read the whole verse in context,

“Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.”

In the Hebrew, a better translation of the first part of this verse is ***“Though he slay me, yet will I wait for my turn.”*** Wait for my turn to do what? The rest of the verse states, ***“but I will maintain mine own ways before him,”*** which in the original language is *to prove or argue my own ways before him*. What Job is saying here (because he was brought to the point where he was not trusting in God) was, ***“Though he slay me, yet will I wait my turn to prove or argue my own ways before him.”***

How many times have I been so spiritually arrogant and stupid to think that I could argue or prove my ways with God? God's ways are not man's ways.

“Though he slay me, yet will I wait my turn to prove or argue my own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for a hypocrite [or a godless one] shall not come before him.”

Job is saying, “I will prove my ways; that I was for Him and there's no way He should have allowed this to happen – no way. This should only have happened to someone who was godless and did not understand salvation is from the Lord.” It goes on and on and on. Like I said, you've heard this taken out of context and you've probably applied it out of context yourself.

In the verses that follow, Job complains some more. His friends get involved again and it goes back and forth. Then in chapter 23, Job wants access to God. He's starting to get himself back into the picture. None of these arguments and none of the reasoning back and forth really helped Job, and he finally comes to a point where he realizes this. In chapter 23 he starts recognizing he better start seeking help from God and locate where He is because only He could help him. That is what we read in verse 3,

“Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!”

And in verse 6, ***Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.”***

In Ephesians 6:10, God has strengthened us. It has already happened, although some act like it never happened. It has already happened and is available for us; His strength, His force, His might.

“Will he plead against me with his great power? No; but he would put strength in me.”

Verse 8 continues, ***Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him:***

On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him:

But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Job is saying, “I will keep seeking; I will keep looking; I will look front, back, left, right, north, south, east, west. I will look everywhere possible I can look. I will keep seeking God, and He will eventually know the true desire of my heart. He will know my ways and He will understand my sincerity in finding Him, to get back with Him, and align myself back with Him.” In this case, Job has reconciled back with Him. Even though Job didn't do anything up to the end of the second chapter to really break away from God, he still felt that he needed to get back in line with God. He wasn't getting it done through his friends, these wise individuals who kept preaching their sermons and kept declaring their truths. They didn't do a darn thing to relieve the anguish that Job was feeling. He knew where the source of his redemption was going to come from and that was God and God alone. At this point, Job declares, ***“when he hath tried me, [‘After I have been tested and found faithful.’] I shall come forth as gold.”*** Job has been tried in the fire and when the testing is done he will be more valuable than gold could ever be.

Now go to the end of this book, chapter 42. (Prior to chapter 42, God has had enough of Job's friends and He rebukes them, then He deals with Job.)

In verse 5 Job states, ***“I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee.***

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job recognized that he had to get back with his God, and put his faith back in his Lord. Because of the seeing and hearing, he was aligned back with his Lord. In the New Testament it's the hearing and hearing and hearing of faith and seeing what faith produces that will bring you to a much stronger bond to the Lord. You must keep on hearing it and you must keep on hearing it. It's not something it produces in you and you somehow demonstrate through works of your own power. No; it is what God is producing in you for His purposes. You'll know if you're on the right track. First and foremost, you'll know because the enemy doesn't like it. My mentor used to say, “Cheer up saints, it's going to get worse.” That's because the enemy knows that you are not in his clutches any longer. You have been saved by grace and now you have the power to plead for the blood to be the anchor in your life. There's one thing that Satan hates more than anything else and that is the blood of Jesus Christ. That's why I want to go to communion more frequently and it is why I want to lay down the communion sessions so we can understand and plead the blood of Jesus Christ.

Here Job is repenting in dust and ashes because he realizes that even though he has been through some horrible circumstances, he understands he must get back with God. He realizes how gracious God has really been in his life. He began to put his focus back on Him, repenting and being the person that's described in the beginning of chapter 1; one who was complete, upright, and fearing evil because he understood and knew at that time that evil would be something from Satan and not from God.

Because of this, God restores him and also restores his prosperity. We read that in chapter 42:10,

“And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before. [He gave him a double portion of what he had before. He had plenty before and now He gave him double that.] Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house:”

Job could have said to his friends, “To hell with all of you. Where were you when I was at my lowest point? Now God has made me prosperous once again, not only giving what I had, but doubling it.” And here come all the acquaintances back into his life. He could have turned them away, but he didn't, and that amazes me.

“... and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him:”

Once again, these people didn't recognize it wasn't God who brought this evil on him. He allowed it to show Satan, “No matter what you do, if they get their focus back on me and understand that they are being tried in the fire; even if they might fall short, but keep trusting in me; even though they might fall short, they keep clinging to me, knowing that I am the true God and the God that delivers.” In this case, He is the God who delivered Job and that God would come through, and did He ever. He came through and He came through in a mighty way.

And, by the way, even though his friends tried to bring him to that point, and he cursed the day he was born, he never went as far as some of his brethren did to blame God for the circumstances brought on him. No; some people just never get it and never will. What did these people do?

“...every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses. He had also seven sons and three daughters. [The same amount he lost.] And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Kerenhappuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job a hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

So Job died, being old and full of days.”

The Septuagint adds at the end of the book, *“It is written that he will rise again when those whom the Lord will raise up.”* What a beautiful picture.

Now go back to verse 14. We're given the names of the three daughters here and not the sons, because God is sending a prophetic message through the life of Job. Everything Job has experienced is an example for us to keep standing, resisting, and recognizing where our source of strength will come from and who has gone before us to clear the way if we keep our eyes and focus on Jesus Christ.

“And he called the name of the first, Jemima;” which means *Dove*. Now I know in the Targum it means *Long life* and most commentators would have you believe that's what this name means here as well, but you must understand that this book was probably written in the Arabic language. Job lived in the land of Ousis on the border of the Idumea and Arabian territories, so more than likely the language he was using, or the writer of this book was using, was not Hebrew. In the Arabic it means *Dove*. It will make sense in a minute why I believe it is *Dove* and not *Long life*, even though I have no problem with that name because *long life* could also be translated to *eternal life*, if you understand what the other two names mean. When studying Job we can't just use the Hebrew sources or the Targum. The Arabic source is important to get a full understanding of the meaning of the names. Here Jemima means *Dove*, which in the New Testament always symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

We read that in Matthew 3:16, ***“And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove....”*** In Luke it says the bodily shape of a dove.

With the other daughter's names we read, ***“and the name of the second, Kezia;***”

A better translation of that name is *Cassia*. If you remember, I taught on the Old Testament holy anointing oil where there were five different ingredients used to formulate the oil. Cassia was one of the ingredients in the holy anointing oil. What is cassia? Cassia is a purging agent and even today it's used as a laxative. Remember that because I want to get to the third name and then I will combine all these names and give you a New Testament meaning.

Again, the first name (Jemima) means *dove* which symbolizes the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. The second name is Kezia which is Cassia. It is used for purging.

“and the name of the third, Keren-happuch,” literally, is *the horn of beauty*.

Horns were used several different ways in the Old Testament. It was used as a receptacle for oil for ceremonial anointing, but it also could be used like a ram's horn as a musical instrument. The horn also symbolizes power in the Old Testament. In Luke 1:69, Christ is the horn of salvation; ***“And hath raised up [speaking of Christ] a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;”***

Putting these three names together, we see that Cassia, or Kezia, was used as a purging element to purge the old man out of us, so the horn of salvation through the Holy Spirit could take root and create a new man. This is nothing more than a prophetic statement of what Christ would do. It's a beautiful picture of the three daughters. One is a dove, the Holy Spirit that comforts us and purges as Christ is creating that new being in us through the Holy Spirit. Hopefully the new man is taking root and creating a vessel which God can boast throughout eternity. That's all possible because the horn of our salvation, which has the true power of saving grace; the horn of our salvation, Jesus Christ. What a beautiful prophetic message at the end!

We have a beautiful illustration here through Job's own circumstances. At end of his life he is truly trusting God and truly understanding by the hearing and seeing of Him. Because of Job's ability to repent and get his life back on track, he got back to the point where he was standing and resisting. He became wiser than ever of Satan's methods, his tactics, and his schemes. Now we have as a record in the New Testament of Christ coming for our salvation, spilling His blood to give us hope and redemption and reconcile us back to the Father. This leaves a record for us that is beyond anything Job had. How fortunate we are.

It's a shame that this verse is not given the attention in commentaries by theologians looking forward from Job's time, and for everyone who has read it, including now, as a record of God's faithfulness. It is a shame that how even as simple a verse as verse 14 you could read right by it never recognizing what it means. It is just another example of God's way of telling us, "I will send you the horn of salvation that will be my Son, Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Spirit which I also promise after He leaves; after He pays the price for sin once and once and for all." He promised to help us and to purge the old man out of us and make us a new creature in Christ to keep perfecting that until completion. He has been faithful to His Word since Genesis when He declared that He would send a seed that would bruise the heel of the serpent. He is still doing that today.

No longer can Satan have the advantage over us if we keep the armor of God on, recognizing the horn of beauty and the horn of salvation and what His Son did for us. We might not like the purging sometimes, we might not like the spiritual laxative to get the old man out, but it is for our own benefit. Thank God for that Comforter, the dove, He sent to get the job done. All we must do is keep standing and keep resisting. An inheritance is promised.

Verse 15 states, ***"And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren."***

It wasn't common in that day to give an inheritance to the daughters unless there were no sons to inherit. Here's another prophetic message that salvation is available to all. Romans 8:16-17 tells of our inheritance,

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Some of us will never suffer what Job suffered, but we will be glorified because we have been

tested in the fire also, and we're promised an inheritance if we come through that test faithing in His Word. That inheritance is to be a joint-heir of Jesus Christ. We are part of the family of God and it is available to all. That is the message of Galatians 3:27-28,

“For as many of you as have been baptized [by the Holy Spirit] into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

I know a lot of women try to use this scripture to justify the pastoring of a church, but this verse has nothing to do with that. If you are neither a woman or man, then why even worry about being a female any longer? No, it is not what it is saying there. Read verse 28 again,

***“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.
And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”***

Salvation is available for all; no matter what race or gender, it is available to all whether you are a woman, a man, or a child. That's also what Job was saying to his children in verse 42:15. We are joint-heirs and that is available to all according to Galatians; no exceptions whatsoever.

“And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.”

Again, this was unheard of in that day, daughters didn't inherit unless the sons were all dead, or if you didn't have any sons. But here, not only is the Holy Spirit promised, not only the purging through the Holy Spirit of the old man promised, and not only is it all available through the horn of our salvation, Jesus Christ, but the promise in verse 15 is available for all: Jew or Gentile, Greek or Jew, male or female. No one is excluded. Satan has been trying to hide that message for millenniums.

Keep scripture in the proper context. Realize that if we keep standing and resisting, even in the Old Testament, we are promised the horn of salvation, and promised an inheritance to be a joint-heir of God and of Jesus Christ. We are promised the Holy Spirit that will keep purging and removing more of the old man in us and entering the new man through Christ Jesus that is being created in us for His purposes. We must keep on standing and keep on resisting. Don't take the armor off!

Stand Firm

Open your bibles to Ephesians 6 where I have been teaching about spiritual warfare and the Christian armor. We started with verses 10, 11, and 12, and in the last chapter I concentrated on the last word '*stand*' in verse 13, and the beginning of verse 14 the first word is 'Stand.' Paul says it twice. There were no verses and chapters when he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. Paul wrote, "*having done all to stand, stand therefore.*" He's trying to get the message across that you must stand, but stand against what? The enemy. Who is the enemy? Satan and all the rest of the evil minions who backslid and fell away from God as listed in verse 12: principalities, powers, demons, wicked spirits. Paul reminds us twice to make sure we have the armor on and now he is reminding us back to back, with the last word in verse 13 and the first word in the beginning of verse 14, "*to stand, Stand therefore.*"

Did you ever stop to think that just a few Christians turned the world upside down? Think about it! Just a few pockets of dedicated disciples turned the world upside down. Now stop and think how many professed Christians there are in comparison today across this world. They don't even make a dent in accomplishing what those few did. It's because there is no conviction or commitment behind the message; there is no spiritual warfare awareness in the message. Christianity today is all about numbers; how big your church can become, how many souls you can say you saved for Jesus, or how many satellites you can put up and say we're beaming God's Word around the world! That's what Christianity represents today.

If we could take those same few people back in the early age of the church and transplant them into today's time, they would be shocked. Not because of technology, of course they would be amazed over those things. No, they would be shocked to see how many Christians profess Jesus is their Savior but how little of the Word of God gets out to the world or is employed in teaching others. They would be shocked with the progress of today's Christianity.

Again, today's Christianity is all about numbers; the bigger the numbers, the more success, the more it looks like you are really doing God's will and getting the Word out and fulfilling the Great Commission. No, it's not. God has called and chosen who He is going to call and who He is going to choose. Our commission is to get the Word out and teach it correctly, so others can have something to base their faith on; not just some silly sown seed that falls on hard thickened ground that can never take any root because the word cannot penetrate. As soon as it tries to take any root, here comes the devil and his minions to blow it away and it never sinks in, it never takes root, and it never grows into having the mind of Christ.

The devil doesn't like to lose and he does not like to have any individual snatched away from his control. He knows if he can get hold of that person at the beginning of their conversion and throw a lot of – I am just going to say it – crap at them maybe he will get them to change their minds and declare, "It's not worth it. I don't see any purpose in it and I don't see how He can benefit me in any way or form." That's Satan's goal.

Let me read something that I thought was insightful:

“Stand, do not sleep. Standing is a waking, watching posture. In the military, 'Stand to your arms' means stay alert and watch.”

Isn't that what Jesus tried to get His disciples to do in the Garden of Gethsemane? He asked them to watch and pray with Him, but instead they fell asleep.

“In some cases it is death to a soldier to be found asleep, as when he is assigned to guard duty for instance. He is to watch so that the rest can sleep. Shirking his duties endangers the lives of the entire army so he deserves the sentence of death.

Watchfulness is more important for the Christian soldier than any other. In temporal battles, soldiers fight against men who need sleep the same as themselves, but the saint's enemy, Satan, is always awake and walking his rounds. Since the devil never sleeps, the Christian puts himself in grave danger by falling asleep spiritually. Satan will be upon him before he is awake enough to draw his sword.

You should be aware that the saint's sleeping time is Satan's prime tempting time. Even a fly dares to creep on a sleepy lion lest he wakes up. The weakest temptation is strong enough to foil a Christian who is napping in security. While Samson slept, Delilah cut his locks. A drunken Noah slept and his graceless son took pleasure in seeing his father's nakedness. Eutychus slept, nodded, and fell from the third loft and was taken up for dead. Thus, the Christian sleeping in false security may be taken by surprise. He may lose much of his spiritual strength, be robbed of his spear or armor, or have his nakedness uncovered by graceless men and bring shame to his profession.

Sleep steals upon the soul as quietly as it does on the body. Take heed that you do not indulge yourself in laziness. Stir yourself into action as we tell someone who is drowsy to stand up and walk around. Yield to idleness as sloth and they will grow upon you. Busy yourself in your Christian duties and spiritual drowsiness will flee.

David first awakened his tongue to sing and his hand to play on the harp, then his heart awakened also. I have heard that when the lion first wakes, he lashes himself with his tail to stir and rouse his courage, then away he goes after his prey. We have reason enough to excite and provoke us to all the care and diligence possible.

The Christian work is too important and demanding to be done while half asleep or in half hardened fashion. If you have ever walked along the edge of a raging river or hiked to the crest of a steep hill, I doubt that you grew sleepy. As a Christian, your path is so narrow and the danger is so great, it calls for both a nimble eye to discern and a steady eye to direct. A sleepy eye can do neither.

Examine any duty and you will find it lies between two dangerous extremes. Faith, the great work of God, cuts its way between the mountain of presumption and the gulf of despair.

Patience is the grace necessary [More than patience, endurance too.] to keep us from suffering a stroke of sleepy stupidity, which would deprive us of our senses or from flying into a rage of discontent that would deprive us of our reason. Keeping a proper balance is essential. Any duty we perform for the cause of Christ takes us very near the enemy's quarters. Do not think you will pass by undetected. Your approach sounds an alarm and Satan comes out immediately to oppose you....”

That's what I was saying. When you become a Christian, you recognize what Christ did for you

on that cross and how His blood reconciled you back to the Father. Then an alarm goes off in Satan's headquarters. "Danger; we are about to lose one if we don't act quickly to try to bring a stumbling block along their path so they can convince themselves that this trip is not worth it." Satan wants to take you to the point where you want to return to your old ways because at least you could determine and predict to a certain degree what was going to happen in your life.

"Your approach sounds an alarm and Satan comes out immediately to oppose you; thus, it is necessary that you remain constantly watchful."

That's why it is important to be steadfast, understanding that you have to withstand in the evil day. Paul tells us, ***"having done all, to stand, now stand therefore...."*** How are you going to 'stand therefore'? Well, first of all, you're never going to stand if you don't understand the spiritual warfare principles. You won't even get that far unless you understand that we're in a faith fight. We're called to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ. We're called for this particular hour in the kingdom, in these horrible and exciting last days, to see God's Word come to pass. We're part of it. We're part of something great, knowing that God is ringing the bell saying, "Last call. You warriors keep employing the Word because the last call is approaching rapidly." That's what you're part of.

Recently I had some people drive here to drop off their offerings. Other offerings came overnight and some were delivered by the internet. There are some still coming in because they recognize they're part of something God is using to get the "last call" message out. These are scary times. A law was passed in Colorado to come against the Christian message, and the United Nations is trying to change the way Christians can respond to other religions across the world, particularly Islam. For instance, my Last Days series sermons will be shunned if these evil men in evil positions get their way. I will be looked at as a criminal.

You are called. I don't know why God chose you, only He does. I don't need to know why He chose me. I just know now we are called to take a stand against the enemy who wants to shut down the rightly divided word of God down completely. It's nothing new.

Let's look at I Samuel 24, and then this message will conclude in the Book of Psalms. I'm convinced the Psalm I'm going to read happened before the events in I Samuel 24, because that Psalm, outside of one possible verse, is such a statement of faith. It inspired me. I wasn't going to preach on this, but I guess God has His reasons and changed my mind. It inspired me and gave me the necessary strength and courage. I just have to recognize that God is still on His throne and all I have to do is to trust Him.

In I Samuel, chapters 21-23, David is pursued by Saul because Saul is trying to kill him. In chapter 22, David raises a small army of about 600 men in the cave of Adullam. Before that David acts insane. Then Saul kills the priests who helped David and so forth and Saul is still pursuing David to kill him. Saul is demon possessed at this point. There's no doubt about it. We pick the story up in chapter 24:1,

"And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi."

Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel [These were the elite; the Navy Seals, the Green Berets, the Army Rangers. This was an elite bunch in Saul's army. He took 3,000 of them against only 600 of David's men.], ***and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.*** [David was hiding in the caves.]

And he came to the shepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet [actually *to rest and sleep*, in the Syriac]: ***and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.***”

Just think about it. Saul is telling his men, “I am going to go in there and rest. Now you stay outside this cave, surround the area and make sure that you keep alert and keep watch while I rest.” What did God do? He delivered Saul right into David's hand. ***“...and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave.”*** Saul couldn't see through the darkness of the cave, but David was there and, if not all his army, a portion of his army was with him. We know for sure a portion was hiding along with him in these different caves, and his men remind David of what God said.

“And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.”

David's men wanted vengeance and they are quoting God, so to speak, saying, “This is what God's Word said to you, David. Let's act upon it and act upon it quickly. God has delivered Saul into your hand.” What happens next, I find so interesting,

“Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.”

In the Hebrew this is *lawt*. David cut off the skirt of Saul's *lawt*, a portion of what Saul was wearing as a uniform or robe. So many people just read through this, not understanding that there's humor in it. The portion that David cut off, the *lawt*, is a piece of the robe in the secret place between Saul's legs. That's right.

Go back to chapter 18, verse 24 where David marries Saul's daughter,

“And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David. And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry [for his daughter], but a hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired. Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife. And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David...”

Now just think about it. In a way, by cutting off the place where the robe or undergarment fell between his legs, David is saying, “I had you in my hands. I could have done with you what I did

to the Philistines.” Saul only wanted 100; David delivered 200. David was very well practiced in removing foreskins. I find it humorous (in a way) that David not only cut off part of the skirt of Saul's robe, but a part near Saul's privates. David is sending a reminder to Saul, “I could have done anything I wanted to you, including what I did to the Philistines,” but he didn't. Returning to chapter 24, verse 5 we read,

“And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him [He became grieved and suffered because of what he did. He was in anguish; his mind was being tormented.], because he had cut off Saul's skirt. [The skirt that protected his secret place.] And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed....”

In the next few verses we will see that God delivered Saul into David's hand, but at this point, I believe God had compassion for Saul even though He knew there was no hope for him. Saul didn't turn out to be what God or Samuel had hoped him to be. There was disappointment after disappointment. David knew that God was already working through him, working his mind over asking, “Are you sure you want to do it this way?” So in verse 6 we read,

“And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed [He still recognized Saul's position as the Lord's anointed given to him by God and no other.], to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.”

I find it amusing, but I also find it very disgusting and sad. I just heard a comedian insulting the highest office of this country, the Presidency of the United States. Whether you like the President or not, whether you are for his party or not, whether you agree with him or not isn't even the issue. Respect the position. In this great country, God allows these individuals to be placed in those positions to fulfill His purpose whether we like it or not. If we don't like who's put there, at least in this case, we think we have the ability to cast a vote that may make a difference that might change things. But just because you think you have a say or a vote, God is in control and He will put there who He plans to use. God will use sinners and saints alike; God will use evil kings and He will use good kings. They are all at His disposal. He is the one in control of history. Yes, do your civic duty if that is what you feel you need to do to be part of the system. In this case, it is still the best system in the world, but just because you don't get what you want, don't make yourself look like a fool or go against the position by mocking it. You still have a right in this country to address governments. If you don't like the policies, then address the policies, but don't make a fool out of the person who is in that position because we have the rest of the world – and most of it is our enemy – looking on seeing how they can take advantage of the situation. That's just a little sidebar into what we are reading here.

However, returning to this story in Samuel, David knew God put Saul in the position as king and He anointed him for that position, and David said,

“The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. So David stayed his servants with these words....”

The Hebrew is very clear in this verse. It says *he had to cut them off*. They wouldn't take no for an answer, so he had to crush their aggression to kill Saul. They wanted to kill Saul and they didn't have the mind of God as David did. They didn't care how it happened as long as he was gone. In a sense, you have to put yourself in their shoes. They were the ones being pursued and they were probably thinking, "Saul's not going to be satisfied just eliminating David. He is going to want our blood also because we followed David." So I can understand what they were going through, but this is why David was a man after God's own heart. He recognized the position.

“So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way.

David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.”

David bowed down to the king from a distance, but he still bowed down to the king; a king that was demon possessed; a king that was no longer favored by God, but David still recognized the position that the Lord still allowed Saul to be in.

“And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?”

David asks Saul, “Who is telling you that I am trying to kill you, Saul; that I am trying to hurt you? It's not true!”

“Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave [just as the Lord said He would do earlier in this book]: and some bade me kill thee:”

If you read it that way, it sounds like David is saying, “My men were hoping that I would kill you,” but that is not what it says. Without the italicized words it actually reads,

“Behold this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave: and bade kill thee: but spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.”

I believe the Lord, through His Spirit and through His promise, is saying, “Yes David, I have said you can kill him. I will deliver him into your hands and you have the opportunity to kill him.” You find that in verse 5, and by the time we get to verse 10. He's not blaming his men who wanted Saul dead. No, he was saying, ***“and bade kill thee:”*** Who? ***“the LORD had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave and bade kill thee: but spared thee....”*** In other words, the Lord said, “Go ahead; kill him.” David would still have been king and God would still accomplish what He would accomplish through David, but there is a deeper lesson to learn here.

We all deserve death and none of us deserve a second chance. God could have said, “To heck with all this. If you think I am going to send my Son down here to spare your lives, you are crazy.” But this was just a type of what Christ would be like for us. ***“...and bade kill thee: but***

spared thee;” We deserve death, but now we have eternal life through Jesus Christ. Saul deserved death, but God spared him for His purposes because He was going to deal with Saul in His own time and on His own terms. It would have left a bad mark and probably a bad taste throughout the Nation of Israel if David had killed Saul.

***“...the LORD had delivered thee today into mine hand in the cave: and bade kill thee: [not and some bade me kill thee] but spared thee [not mine eye spared thee. The Lord, not David spared Saul. David was just in tune enough with the Spirit of God to do what God wanted.]; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.*”**

This is not just an Old Testament message only. Go to Romans 12:17 to see what Paul says. Paul begins,

“Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.”

I read this story of David's life and, come on, there are probably a few of you who would have done exactly what I am about to confess I might have done: get rid of Saul to eliminate the problem once and for all. There are probably a few of you who would have taken matters into your own hands and not let God control the situation. I'll be the first one to admit that I would be guilty of that, so be honest with yourself. Our ways are not God's ways. It is not just in the Old Testament, it is also in the New Testament. Verse 18 goes on to say,

***“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.* [That is not my first nature by the way.]**

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”

Darn! I have been put in many situations where the opportunity to gratify the avenging flesh arose. More times than I would like to admit, I took advantage of it, but I can only say today, “Lord, forgive me, and thank you for bringing me to a point of recognizing what the rest of this verse says.” Vengeance belongs to the Lord. He controls it, he owns it, and in His set time, He will deliver it. Don't avenge yourselves. All you will do is succumb to wrath, anger, and things that will destroy what God is doing in you. Sure you can get mad. You can get angry and sin not. Just know how to do it, when to do it and what it's for. Verse 21 tells us, ***“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”*** A better translation is *overcome evil with truth*. After we are done standing, we move on to Ephesians 6:14, where the next part of that chapter says, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth....”*** The armor begins with your loins girded about with truth, which shows us this is not just an Old Testament message; it's also a New Testament message. Vengeance is God's.

Returning to 1 Samuel 24:11 we read,

***“Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it.*”**

The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee.

After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea.

The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept.

And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.

And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not.

For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.

And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king [for just a brief moment, Saul had sanity], and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand.”

This is Saul declaring with his own lips, admitting to David that, “Yes, right now, I have the understanding that you will be king. There is no doubt about it, and the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand.” Not just the kingdom of Israel under his control, but through all of time. Through Saul, God was proclaiming, through this circumstance, a prophetic message that has lasted through the ages. He was using Saul as his mouthpiece to declare it, and the devil said the same thing about Jesus when he saw the Lord Jesus, “Yes, He is not just King of the Jews, He is king of all the kingdom of the joint-heirs established, and also of Israel throughout eternity through Christ.” This is what happened. Of course, it didn't last very long. Samuel dies and Saul goes crazy again and pursues David.

The reason I went through all this history before I go into the Psalm that I mentioned earlier, is because all these events took place after Psalms 57 was written. So, go to Psalms 57 written by the Chief Musician. By the way, most scholars recognize the title of this Psalm should be "Do Not Destroy." Outside of the first part of this first verse, this is such a statement of faith that people should recognize how God came through for David, even before David knew what happened or experienced the events in 1 Samuel 24. This Psalm was written while he was in the cave, before he had the opportunity to kill Saul. It demonstrated to God that David's word and honor were more important than his own life. David wouldn't dishonor the position or dishonor God who appointed the man to that position. He would let God control the events of time and what would happen in his life, because at that point he was at a place of faith and was standing firm. Verse 1 begins,

“Be merciful [or have favor] unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee....”

In some of David's psalms, you go through half the psalm and it sounds like he is whining; he is crying, he is in fear of his life, he is in misery. However, right from the beginning in this cave, he

is declaring ***“my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, [In the shadow of God's wings, he is protected and he is declaring it.] until these calamities be overpast.***

I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me.”

That verse was translated poorly. A clearer translation of the Hebrew is ***“I will call unto God most high; unto God that caused to cease and disappear and make things come to an end.”*** That's what this verse should be saying. David probably had his own army spies scouting out where Saul's army was; all 3,000 of them. He wanted to know where Saul was, knowing that they were closing in and would be searching the area. So immediately David goes to the source and communicates to the source that “My soul will trust in thee. I will hide under the shadow of your wings. You are my refuge. These calamities will come to pass and I will call unto you because you will have these circumstances cease and disappear; they will come to an end.” Verse 3 continues,

“He [God] shall send from heaven, and save [or deliver] me from the reproach of him [Saul] that would swallow me up. Selah. [Think of that!] God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. [A better translation is God shall send forth his goodness, kindness because of his faithfulness to truth.]

My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire....”

I believe at this point he sees the campfires of his enemies. The lions are nothing more than Saul and his army below the caves. David sees how fast they are approaching and now they are so close that he can see their campfires. Instead of saying, “Well, this is it. This is the last night that I will be living on this earth. God did not come through,” he starts declaring in faith how much he trusts God, and how he knows He is going to watch out for his own benefit. These things will cease and disappear because God shall send forth from the heavens above. He will deliver me and send forth His goodness and kindness because of His faithfulness to truth. David remembered the promise that he would be king, and he can't be king if he's dead. So David declares,

“My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; thy glory above all the earth.

They have prepared [or steadfast prepared] a net for my steps [“The enemy has prepared their plans to destroy my life.”]; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. Selah.” [Think of that!]

This next verse is the point of this message,

Verse 7, ***“My heart is fixed [kun in the Hebrew], O God, my heart is kun: I will sing and give praise.”***

What does ***kun*** mean? It means *my heart is established, my heart is steadfast towards you, my heart will stand firm upon you*. In the midst of all David's problems; in the midst of all David's troubles; and in the midst of probably not having very many people around him who would

declare the statement of faith that God would make sure David would be on that throne, David was steadfast. I'm sure he had individuals around him saying, "I don't know David, but this doesn't look very good. This might be our last night." David wouldn't have any of it at this moment in his life. This Psalm is such a psalm of faith; it just oozes out faith.

“My heart is established; my heart is firmly steadfast towards you, O God, my heart will stand firm, O God, my heart will stand firm, O God: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.”

David says there is no time to sit around and cry, moan, or groan about circumstances. It is a time to stand up and declare faith and not just for his own life. David was also a leader and example for individuals who surrounded him in this army of 600 or so. He took that responsibility seriously and he made a statement of faith. Then the circumstances of I Samuel 24 happened. Put this Psalm first, then view those circumstances and you will see how important this statement of faith is in this Psalm. David didn't have Saul delivered to him at that time. David only had his circumstance of Saul closing in, but he made the proclamation, "My heart is established; I will steadfast myself unto God, I will stand firm because He is faithful. He is the one who delivers goodness and kindness, and He will demonstrate His faithfulness to His Word." David was saying here that his heart was going to stand firm on God.

Just the same, we are to stand firm and keep standing, and having done all, to stand, and to withstand using God's armor. We will not wear any of God's armor unless we understand what faith in God's Word is and start putting our trust in God. He is not a man to lie. What He says is truth and He is faithful to His word. He is just looking for people to trust Him and to hang on in faith with the assurance that no matter what they go through He will be as David said in Psalms 57:3, ***“He shall send from heaven, and deliver and save us from the reproach of him that would swallow us up.”***

He will deliver us from our seen and unseen enemies alike and devour them, swallow them up, and it is nothing to God because of His kindness, His mercy, His goodness, and above all, His faithfulness. That's why it's so important to understand that we need to keep on standing and keep on being watchful because without understanding these concepts, we will never have any understanding of the meaning behind the spiritual weapons that were given here in the list of weapons in verses 14 to 17. How ironic the very next thing mentioned in Ephesians, the first part of the weaponry is the loins gird about with truth, meaning the truth of God's Word.

I don't know about you, but I choose to keep standing firm and keep my eyes fixed on God and my Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gird Up Your Loins

Part 1

Open your bibles to I Timothy 1:18. We've been here before, but I'm going to start here and go to a few familiar places for those who have been following the teaching on spiritual warfare. This is message number 58 in the Ephesians 6 series. There are some who have put ink to paper, saying Paul is talking to the leaders of the church here since Timothy was one of those leaders that Paul assigned to different locations. I have no argument against that, but this message is not only for the leaders of the church. Even though it is directed to them in this letter, it's also to all soldiers in the battle against the devil. Here in Timothy, Paul writes,

“This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare....”

In the Greek, the word *war* means to lead soldiers into the battle. However, leaders require soldiers, or they wouldn't be leading anyone. The bottom line is that no one excluded from fighting the good fight of faith. No one is excluded from spiritual warfare, whether you are the minister at the corner church, the minister at the head of some ministry, or an evangelist travelling the world preaching and introducing the Good News of Jesus Christ. You're in this fight and you will influence people. In some cases, you'll be placed in a position where you lead people; lead soldiers. No matter in what capacity you were called to participate in the work of the Lord, you're all considered soldiers. Maybe a different rank, but you're still a soldier to war a good warfare, or to lead soldiers in war to battle a good warfare.

A good warfare is understanding who you are up against and not running from your enemy. You face him head on with God's Word because you're prepared and wearing the spiritual armor. This armor is suited for you by Christ to come against the enemy and give a black eye to the devil. That's done on a daily basis. So, what I'll try to lay down here before I go to the message is that you're all called to be soldiers. I know it's not a popular message to hear, “Come to Jesus. Now let's put on our armor and go fight,” but I will show that is exactly what the Word of God says. There's no aspect of life in the Christian walk that does not involve spiritual warfare. So verse 18 really states,

“...that thou mightest lead soldiers into war into battle to fight a good warfare;” A good warfare is always fought when we are fighting against the devil. We're trying to stop and hinder his progress in the destruction of peoples lives by bringing the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them. Also, to hopefully set them on the right track with the understanding there's a lot to learn about how the enemy will do anything possible from that point on to mislead them. The enemy will try to bring them to a point where they think they're living the Christian life, but they're still serving self, not taking up the cross, and definitely not following Jesus the way it's outlined in His Book.

I Timothy is not the only place Paul addressed this. Go to II Timothy 2. We've been there before,

too. I'm going to drive it into you that we're called to be soldiers. Whether you're a leader or a follower, you're still a soldier, no exceptions.

Verse 1 says, ***“Thou therefore, my son, be strong [endunamoo; the same word that is used in Ephesians 6:10; be strong, be strengthened, be empowered] in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”***

We're to be empowered in the grace that is Christ Jesus. There's nothing we can do on our own; we must be empowered by Him and filled with the Holy Spirit to be suited with the armor that God lists in Ephesians 6:10. Verse 3 goes on to say,

“Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.”

The Greek word for *hardness* is ***kakopatheo*** which is *suffering hardships, troubles, afflictions*; enduring it as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Yes, Paul is still writing to Timothy, and he still has the same message. “You are a soldier, Timothy. These things are going to come your way. This ***kakopatheo*** is going to happen, but endure it and God will give you the strength to go through it.” It is also promised in verse 1 in the same chapter. Verse 4 continues this,

“No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

Once again, like it or not, if we truly understand God's Word, we have no choice in the matter. We are chosen. It's not something that we can choose not to do. We are chosen, and God is doing the choosing. We are chosen to be soldiers, as Paul has written to Timothy, a leader in the church world. Where else does the Bible say that? Go to the Philippian letter, chapter 2, verse 25. Here we read about Epaphroditus, who came from the church at Philippi to deliver money and other things to help Paul through the really hard times he was facing then. Epaphroditus came to visit and bring the gifts, and the offerings from the church at Philippi. Here Paul writes,

“Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants [or needs in the Greek].”

In this verse Paul calls him *my brother*. He wasn't the leader at the church in Philippi; he was a messenger sent by the church, and a fellow soldier. He wasn't like Timothy, a leader in the church; he definitely wasn't Paul, but he was still considered a soldier. I had a question not too long ago, “Are all Christians soldiers in the battle?” Yes! That is the easiest question I could ever answer. Yes, and there are no exceptions. Epaphroditus was a brother, a companion in labor, and a fellow soldier, as were others in the Philemon letter chapter 1, verse 2, ***“And to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier....”*** I think I have proven my point without going any further into this subject.

Everyone living the life of faith as a faither, trusting in God's Word, understands that we've been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and He sets us on a new journey. A big part of that journey is the spiritual fight, fighting the good fight of faith against an enemy who wants to see any new growth destroyed. The enemy wants us to believe that the Bible caters to us instead of us denying

ourselves, taking up our cross, and following Jesus to get the message out so it affects others who hear it.

The whole purpose of Christ changing your life is not only to get the message out to others. When He changes you, He puts you on a growth spurt that you might not like, but it's necessary. In fact, I guarantee most of the time, if you stay on course, you won't like it. That's my biggest complaint. I ask why the Lord wants me to learn that lesson, when I don't see that it's necessary for me to go through what I am going through. Why does the Lord want to point out a few things that needed to be changed or refined in my life? However, know that first and foremost, He will test you, and when He is done, He wants to see how you respond to His Word.

With that, go to Ephesians 6. We are now in verse 14, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth....”***

In Greek, the loins are *osphys*. ***‘Having your loins’*** in the Greek is *loin* or *the two loins*. This is a place where the Hebrews thought the generative power resided. To give you a greater understanding about those generative powers, they define it as coming from the semen. You may be surprised about that, but where do you think the generative powers to produce life comes from? Yes, it takes more than just the semen, but at the time this was a male dominated world. This is a place where the Hebrews thought the generative power resided, which gave life or the continuance of it from generation to generation.

What gives *us* eternal life? Stop and think about it. I had someone ask me where is the blood in Ephesians 6:10-18? You can't get past verse 14 if you don't understand that there is more blood in this particular verse than any of the other verses. It starts when you define and put definition on these weapons with the blood of Jesus Christ. It's the blood of Jesus Christ that gives us generative power and eternal life.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth....” The truth is the Good News; the truth is Jesus Christ. He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” We are to equip ourselves with the right kind of knowledge; the knowledge and truth of this Book. We need the blood that gives us the generative power to continue existing under Christ's protection against our enemy. With His blood we keep soldering, and we must understand it's not by any of our works. It's by everything He did for us while He was here, while He died on the cross, and after His resurrection. He will continue to sustain us, giving us the generative power to ascend with Him to rule and reign throughout eternity one day.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...” In addition, a dagger was attached to this belt of truth. That is the sword of the Spirit attached to this belt of truth, and along with the apron that protected the loins; the generative power that gives life. Now what gives us eternal life spiritually is the blood of Jesus Christ. Without that being spilled, Satan still had the victory, but when His blood was spilled, eternal death was snatched away from Satan and he no longer had the keys to the grave. That's why we can proclaim, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Death no longer has an effect on us because we live under the blood of Jesus Christ.

With that, I want to take us back to Exodus 12. The Old Testament gives us insight to what Paul was mentioning and referring to here in Ephesians 6:14. All of you know this particular chapter is where the Passover is mentioned. I'm sure many of you have read, but I want to point something out and how it relates to spiritual warfare and why. To begin in verse 1 we read,

“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for a house:

[All this points to what Jesus would eventually do on the cross for us.]

And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year [Jesus was the male lamb without blemish for us. He was the perfect sacrifice.]: ***ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:***

And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

And they shall take of the blood, and strike on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses [On the two posts and on the upper door. Some believe the upward and cross-ward movements symbolize the future event pointing to the cross of Jesus Christ.], ***wherein they shall eat it.***

And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”

Among other reasons, unleavened bread was used because they didn't have time to prepare bread and watch the dough rise. This was to be an event in their lives that would happen very quickly because they were about ready to leave Egypt. God didn't want them to be lackadaisical or put off anything in the preparation of their exodus out of the land and out of the bondage of Egypt.

“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden [or boiled] at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.”

At this point they take a male lamb, and eat it in a certain way after it was prepared with the unleavened bread: ***“Eat not of it raw, nor boil it at all with water, but roast it with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.***

And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.”

The Hebrews didn't leave any remains behind. In other words, anything that was of Egypt. The meal symbolized that they were preparing to leave it all hastily behind. The lamb moved in two weeks prior to being killed, but when it was time to kill the lamb, it was killed and eaten quickly

with unleavened bread. The lamb was roasted and nothing was left behind because the next morning they would depart on a journey that would lead them to a life under the God of their fathers. He had also become their God, and He was leading their way. He wanted them to go back to a land which He said would be theirs hundreds of years earlier, and the way there was through a desert.

Exodus 12:11 tells us, ***“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded....”***

Compare that to Ephesians 6:14, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth....”***

Their loins were girded because there was no time to relax, to undress, to become comfortable, to put on pajamas. God wanted their loins girded. The belt was there not only for holding the dagger, but also it held the clothing; the tunic of the soldier because it usually fell just below the knees. In the winter the tunic went all the way down to their ankles, so when going to war they would tuck it upward into the belt to have mobility and freedom to move around while they were in battle against the enemy.

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and ye shall eat it in haste:”

In this way you are in a position ready for anything to happen; you don't have a tray in your lap, sitting back in your recliner enjoying your meal. No, you are ready at an instant to be notified it's time to pack up and get out of town; in this case Egypt. This sounds similar to Ephesians 6:15, ***“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;”*** In Exodus 12:11, ***“your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand,”*** which symbolizes the sword of the Spirit in Ephesians 6. There was no wasting time in Exodus; they were to participate in the Passover with their loins girded.

When was the last time anybody told you when you go to communion, the Lord's Supper, to go there with your spiritual armor on, ready to do battle as soon as it was over? Think about it! This Passover event symbolized the Old Testament way of having communion. Now, in the New Testament, we do it in remembrance of Jesus Christ and He lays out how we are to do it.

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.”

The staff is to help in the journey through the rough terrain or uneasy areas in our path as we can lean on it for assistance, but it could also be used as a weapon in case an animal attacked. This story of the Passover reminds me of the army chosen by the Lord in the story of Gideon. Yes, they could go down for a drink, but they better be drinking and looking around, still on guard and watchful of their surroundings. The enemy doesn't relax; the enemy does not take time off; the enemy does not go on vacation. He doesn't care what you're doing. He will attack while you are going to the Table of the Lord. In fact, that is probably where he'll attack the most to keep you from participating. He knows why Christ said, “Do this in remembrance of me.” We are to remember what Christ did for us on the cross; how His body was broken, how He was pierced and nailed to that cross and His blood was shed to cleanse us of our sin.

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded...” The next time you go to the table of the Lord understand that even there God is commanding us to be spiritually fit, ready for the battle. I know that sounds harsh, but it is the truth that we need to recognize in Ephesians 6:14. Returning to the Passover story in Exodus 12:11 it continues,

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded; your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy....”

We have that same promise through Christ Jesus when God sees the blood Christ sprinkled on the Heavenly Mercy Seat. It's why it was important to be gathered and taken up and how important the eighth sprinkling of blood was when presented to God the Father by Christ Jesus at His throne saying, “It is done; it is fulfilled. This is the perfect sacrifice without blemish that you required, so now you have to view them as unblemished lambs also.” And that is what happened. When He sees the blood, He will pass over us. We will keep sinning and all the works you can do under the sun will not make you look any different to God Himself. He sees us as a sinner without the blood applied if we try to apply it through works. However, if we recognize what the blood did for us, He doesn't see our works, He sees the blood. He is not concerned about our works. He can get angels to do better works than anything we can do. Yes, He does want us to participate in faith action within a ministry; I'm not talking about that. This is why James is so misinterpreted. God sees us through the eyes of Jesus, but more importantly He sees the blood. It is there at His throne and He cannot view us any longer because of who we are, He sees us because of what His Son did for us. If we faith in that blood, there is no other way. He sees us through His Son's eyes, and He will pass over and there will be no plague, which means anything the devil throws at us cannot destroy us. Verse 14 states,

“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”

That's why it's important that just before Christ went to the cross He gathered His disciples and had this memorial in His time. It was to remind them that what He was doing was equivalent to this Passover in Exodus 12:1-14. Christ's blood cleanses and strengthens us, there's no doubt about it. It reminds us that we are on a journey, just as these Israelites were during this time in chapter 12. They were going to be on a journey right after the Passover that would launch them not only into spiritual warfare but physical warfare. Just think about when they left; they were going through a hot, dry desert. It was not a 'Christian camp for Jesus' with all the luxuries that go along with it. They didn't go camping out in the desert all circling around a big campfire singing hymns. Am I against those things? No, but we must make God's Word real. They went on a journey which included physical and spiritual warfare. In fact, it included more spiritual than physical. Yes, the physical was what they could relate to, but what they couldn't see was far greater than anything they were physically involved in. And it happened as soon as they went through Passover. All through Passover they were required to have their loins girded,

symbolizing their readiness to understand that they were under attack. They remembered the Passover on a yearly basis, to remind them of all that they had been delivered from. Satan doesn't want us to remember what we have been delivered from. He wants to disguise his new methods so we are involved with the same activities, but with a different covering calling it Christian. That's why he twists it; that is why deception is the very first thing that came into existence. It twisted everything in that garden.

Again, ***“loins girt about with truth”*** in Ephesians, or as in Exodus, ***“your loins girded, your shoes in your feet”*** means we're not kicked back with our shoes off getting a foot rub. No. We are ready to go on the journey as soon as Moses says, “We're off and you better have your staff in hand. We don't know about the terrain, and we don't know what's going to meet us when we get there. You can use that staff to lean on, but you also better be ready to use that staff to defend yourself because we do not know what is going to be coming at us in the desert. But we know this, we will be ready no matter what the devil throws at us because our loins will be girded, our shoes will be on our feet, and we will have staff in hand.”

I find it amusing how some people cannot find Ephesians 6:10-18 in the Old Testament. This is a perfect example of it; at least part of it and a very important part of it. When they were done with this Passover, their journey began. The Passover showed they recognized that the blood literally rescued their lives because without that blood on the doorpost they were as good as dead. Once that blood protected them, they would no longer be destroyed and they would keep on living and producing generation after generation as God promised.

“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”

It is what Paul said in I Corinthians 11:23,

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: [If you have some, get it now.] And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body [it symbolizes His body], which is broken for you [it was before going to that cross and also while on that cross]: this do in remembrance of me.”

The Hebrews did this as a memorial every year on Passover. We can do as often as we want, remembering what Christ did for us and how He delivered us from the bondage of the devil. In the Old Testament, it was the bondage of Egypt; here in the New Testament it is the bondage of the devil and all the unseen evil forces. We are to do this in remembrance of Him. We no longer live in a weakened, strengthless state. At the Table of the Lord, we can gain strength, understanding that His body was broken to give us strength. That is why in Ephesians 6:10 and other places, the word ***endunamoo*** means *be strengthened, be empowered*, and be alive in Christ Jesus because He will give you that. It is a promise. We just must remember what the promise was and to faith as a past event that it already took place, so it still applies today and God's Word never changes. Now take the elements in Jesus' name.

The next verse in 1 Corinthians 11:25 says,

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

The bread strengthens our broken bodies, delivers us, and the blood cleanses our sins and gives us eternal life. It's because the perfect lamb took the penalty of sin and created a way, and Satan can no longer hold sin over our heads. Now, too much of the Christian world likes to hold sin over our heads saying, "You have sinned and if you don't change, you will be eternally damned," instead of saying, "You should keep faithing and getting up, pointing in the right direction, saying, "Unto Thee, O God, I have sinned." Or as David would literally say in Psalms 51, "Search my inward parts and work on me Lord so I can put my focus back on you and off myself. When I cater to myself, I stop denying myself and I start pleasing my flesh." David knew when he got off track and even though Satan tried to keep him on that guilt trip, when David recognized God is a God of forgiveness, he would get his act together and march along further on the path that God had him on.

We live today with the luxury that even if we do sin – and we will – Christ, has paid the price. There's no accusation and no sin that can hold guilt or bondage over us any longer as long as we get up pointing in the right direction, putting our eyes and focus back on Christ, understanding not to keep Christ on the cross as too many Christians do. Christ has been taken off the cross. He has been resurrected, He ascended, and He presented His blood to God on the Throne and He only had to do it once because He was the perfect sacrifice. In the Old Testament this could only be through animal sacrifices, which was far from perfect, but Christ was the perfect sacrifice, which is why it only had to be done once. He lived a life without sin and He fulfilled all of what needed to be fulfilled before He went to that cross and died. Now we live in the hope and the promise that God has reconciled us back to Himself through His Son. If we remember and keep remembering what His Son did for us, nothing can break us away from God ever again, Satan, Satan's minions, no one. The key is remembering what Christ did for us.

Again, you must understand that this started in the Old Testament with the Passover. Christ cleansed our sins and He also has strengthened our body. You also need to remember that we are on a journey. After Passover was done, the journey was starting for the Israelites with a new way of life and a journey that wouldn't be very pleasant. They could've arrived at their destination a lot sooner, but because of rebellion, it took 40 years. But even if it had only taken a year or two, or even a month, in the land of Canaan they faced giants and enemies of God, controlled by Satan and his minions ready to destroy those Israelites as they came near.

Now take this and remember what Christ did for us. He will destroy our giants and the biggest giant He did destroy was sin. Don't let anybody hold that over your head because you go to this Table of the Lord recognizing what Christ has done for you: He has cleansed your sin through His blood. Take it in Jesus' name.

Now He has cleansed us, He strengthens us, and my job is to bring out His Word to remind you that after the cleansing and strengthening, the next thing that happened to those Israelites was to engage in the spiritual and physical fight of their lives. It was no different for the New Testament Christians, including us, as it was for those Old Testament Israelites. It's not by accident in

Exodus 12 that while they were partaking in the Passover their loins had to be girded. It's not by accident that they had to keep their shoes on, and it's not by accident that they had to have their staff in hand.

Go to Ephesians 6:14, "***Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth....***" The truth begins when we see that the starting point of understanding is recognizing how the blood is the major component of the armor of the belt of truth. Only the blood can cover us from Satan, his tactics, and his ways that will lead us to destruction and off the path of following God. He will take us down that path and convince us. Even though we might confess here and there that we are covered by the blood of Jesus, most don't even understand what it means. Christ wants us covered by the blood because He knows that once we engage in this spiritual fight, we'll need it.

We must understand the *loins* Paul refers to that needs to be gird about with truth is the knowledge that we must give ourselves of what the truth really is. *Loins*, in this verse, symbolizes the generative power and nothing gives us generative power like the blood of Jesus Christ. That is the starting point in verse 14. There is blood involved in putting on this armor, but not our blood, Christ's blood. It is an ever changing substance that can defeat the enemy and how he likes to twist things.

Understand that when we go to the Table of the Lord, that is when Satan brings resistance and the biggest attack on our life. Do you really think he wants us to remember, and if we do remember, to go through participating with liquid and bread, understanding what it symbolizes and why we are remembering it? Just picture that every time we go to the Table of the Lord, spiritual warfare is happening in the unseen realm around us.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth..." The truth of what Christ did for us on that cross. That's the starting point. It was the starting point in the Old Testament and it's the starting point in the New Testament here in Ephesians 6:14

Having your loins girded means that you are ready, as in the case of Passover. It's the same way even in the New Testament with the Last Supper. It wasn't a passive action. It's depicted as being so beautiful in paintings, so most people are misled in thinking it was such a wonderful moment. Just imagine the panic and anxiety when Jesus told the disciples that someone would betray Him that night. In reality, there was agonizing going on at that table and only through the blood would bring peace. The disciples didn't understand it at the time, but they came to know it as a fact.

Tell me the last time somebody told you there is spiritual warfare at the Table of the Lord and not this other silliness and stupid nonsense that's going on in the name of Jesus Christ. It wasn't so in the Old Testament and it's very clear in the New Testament that it's not the way that it was laid out for us to participate. First and foremost, we must understand what that blood and that body did for us. Don't come to the table of the Lord without being ready and prepared with what God wants us to wear. He knows as soon as we get there, really even before we get there, that Satan is trying to stop us from participating. Then once we are participating, he is trying to put guilt on us that we are not worthy to participate. We need spiritual armor when we get to the Table of the Lord more than ever.

Do you understand this? I'm sure most of you have never had this concept of the Table of the Lord presented to you. Don't take it for granted. Put some understanding into what God's Word says. I'm adamant about the subject because I know what Satan tries to do at this table. I've seen it too many times and I plan to come against it every time that I'm aware it's happening. By being passive and not truly understanding what I've just taught, Satan in his own way has blinded you. Let me know if you understand.

Gird Up Your Loins

Part 2

Open your Bibles to Ephesians 6:14, “*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth....*”

In verse 10, we are told we will be empowered with God's strength, His force will be behind us, and it is His might that goes before us; God's strength, God's force, and God's might. In verse 11, we are told to put on the whole armor of God and to be aware of the methods, the *methodeia* in the Greek, *the tricks, the schemes, and the strategies* of the devil. In verse 12, the King James says we are told not to wrestle against flesh and blood, (really *blood and flesh*;) against principalities, powers, demons, or evil spirits. In verse 13, we are told once again to take on the armor so we will be able to withstand in the evil day, having done all, to stand. That gets us to where we are in verse 14, “*Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth....*”

Let me say right now, the toughest thing for me to do every morning is to spiritually gird up my loins. Let's focus on the spiritual application of this verse. It's hard to gird up your loins. It's not easy, but it's the starting point. It is the first thing Paul writes about when he gets to the armor. Gird up your loins with truth, “*having your loins girt about with truth...*” Loin girding is not easy, but it's the first thing we should do every day.

First of all, as a reminder and refresher, we are never really to take this armor off. If you get up in the morning and in the spiritual sense forgot that you're still wearing it, you better quickly refresh yourself, understanding that without the armor, the devil will have a head start. He has a game plan and will quickly attack (along with the demons and evil spirits assigned to you) when he notices that you have forgotten to wear the armor. It's not some physical armor we can see; that's not what Paul is talking about. In these verses he uses the description of a soldier to make a spiritual point. Spiritually, the devil can see what part of the armor or any of the armor is on. First thing in the morning, he can tell if our loins are girded about with truth and we have the necessary foundational piece. That's why it's listed first.

Let me read something:

“A soldier had a belt [also called *the belt of truth*], and all the rest of his armor was somehow hooked to that belt. [in some cases, even the shield]....”

I'll get to the shield and what kind of shield it was in a later chapter. The shield had a place to hook onto the belt so while in battle the belt wouldn't separate from the shield. Not all soldiers applied that technique, but many did. I believe it's the technique that Paul is referring to, because it can attach to the belt so we won't separate ourselves from the shield. The shield was a very important element of this armor; the shield of faith. It literally protects us from the flaming arrows of the enemy, amongst other things. The short sword was also attached to the belt. Most of the armor was attached to the soldiers belt of truth that Paul is using here to describe our

spiritual weapons.

“It [the belt] was critical to the rest of the equipment. If it was wintertime, soldiers wore a long robe [or a tunic]. The first thing a soldier would do to get ready for battle was to ‘gird up his loins.’ ... most of us don’t gird up our loins when we get dressed in the morning. To a soldier, however, girding up was essential. He would lift up that long robe [Even without the long tunic, he would still do the same thing with a short tunic.] and tuck it in into his belt so that he could move freely.”

So, not only was this belt attached to other pieces of weaponry that were part of the armor, but it also was used to tuck in the uniform, to use a modern word. The tunic or uniform would be gathered and tucked in to the center of the belt so it wouldn't get in the way and they wouldn't trip over it. The soldier then had mobility when moving, especially when fighting the enemy.

“He would lift up that long robe and tuck it in into his belt so that he could move freely. On a march, he could have it down to stay warm. If he was off duty, he could unbuckle his belt.”

We don't have that luxury, spiritually speaking. We're never off duty. Yes, God might give us times of rest. He might even allow us to go on a vacation, but even during those times we're not off duty. Enjoy it, but don't take it for granted. The battle gets pretty heated if we don't have God's strength, power, force, and might behind us to give us the strength, spiritually speaking, to wear this armor. This armor is perfectly designed to fit each of us, because God knows what we need. Some might need more of a breastplate lining for instance; some might need a thicker helmet of salvation. God knows how to design what we need, not men.

This battle isn't just for our own personal life, but even as Paul would say, it's for other saints. That's why when we get to verse 18, Paul is specifically saying “Pray for me, but pray for everyone also. Supplicate and pray for everyone. There are no exceptions.” Paul literally says in verse 18, ***“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”*** This prayer and supplication is not just for him, but for all saints; just as it's not just for us, but for all saints.

“But if he was on duty and it was time for battle, an unbuckled belt and a hanging robe would mean one of two things: being punished by his superiors or having a severe disadvantage against his enemy. Either way, the consequences were grave.”

If a Roman soldier going into battle was caught with an unbuckled belt, he was punished severely. There was no excuse for not being prepared when it was time for battle. As Christians, we have no excuse for not being prepared when it is time to go to war. We are given God's Word that goes before us and prepares the way, not only in the unseen world. We're also given knowledge that will hopefully be implanted in our brains that we can apply on a daily basis knowing what we must do and what to expect.

“But if he was on duty and it was time for battle, an unbuckled belt and a hanging robe would mean one of two things: being punished by his superiors or having a severe disadvantage

against his enemy.”

That's because with the tunic down, he had no mobility. He would be tripping around on his own clothes, his own tunic, stumbling, falling all over himself because he was caught off guard. The tunic was lifted and put out of the way to give the soldier mobility, not only to defend himself, but to also go on the offensive during battle.

“Either way, the consequences were grave.

So when the battle cry sounded, a soldier would lift his robe and tuck it into his belt, where his sword would hang and his shield would attach. The belt was central, and a lot depended on its being secured.”

I'm trying to communicate the concept that this belt of truth was the foundational piece of the armor. At least two other weapons listed here in Ephesians 6 were attached to it by the Roman soldier. I already said the short sword was one of them. The shield was the other.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”

Now, as I said before I started this little sidebar, how many of us really understand that when we get up in the morning – I am guilty as much as you – how many have applied this concept, this principle, this truth, that our loins must be girded first when we wake up? We must have our loins girded about with truth, not just first thing in the morning, but always. We must have our tunic ready to be tucked in to go to war and to enter into the battle.

I'm going to take us back to Joshua in this chapter. Even though Moses gave him his marching orders, I believe Joshua was still not convinced when to say, “Okay, it's time to gird up my loins. Now I must do what Moses said as God's representative and cross Jordan.” He had some skirmishes and battles before, but those were just warmups for what was lying ahead once he crossed over Jordan. Even though he got his marching orders, he didn't cross Jordan until God intervened and said, “Okay, obviously my servant Moses told you, but now I am going to have to tell you also.”

Again, it's not easy to gird up your loins and march into battle. We will find every reason and excuse to put it off. Face it. I face it daily. I would rather spend my time doing something I enjoy than going to war. Anyone would. But when it's time to move forward and take the land that was promised in Joshua's day, he too needed to be nudged and told, “Okay, Joshua, you heard my servant. For some reason, you still have not moved, so now I am telling you.” This is my interpretation and I will show why I believe that not only did Joshua receive same instruction from God, but God had to remind Joshua to be strong and courageous.

With that, first go to Deuteronomy 31, the book before Joshua, just before Moses' death. Verse 1 begins,

“And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.

And he [Moses] said unto them, I am a hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the LORD hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan.

The LORD thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the LORD hath said.

And the LORD shall do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed.”

Now why shouldn't they believe Moses? They saw all the miracles; they saw the Red Sea parted and the plagues at Moses' command used by God to achieve His purposes. There wasn't a reason why they wouldn't believe Moses. The group who rebelled the most, who turned against God because of their lack of faith, their constant rebellion, whining, complaining, and murmuring had been eliminated in the desert during those 40 years. Nevertheless, I'm sure God kept a close eye on this group with that history. Even though most of them probably saw some of the miracles, they still had history of rebellion. There was no reason not to believe Moses. He told them that God would go before them and He will destroy. God made it very clear that Joshua was going to be their leader and God would go before them. In verse 5 Moses is still talking as God's representative,

“And the LORD shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you.

Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee [literally nor leave or let you go].

Moses talked to the people about the things that were going to happen in the very near future and he told them, ***“Be strong and of a good courage:”*** I'm sure Joshua was also listening. Then in verse 7, Moses speaks to Joshua,

“And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.”

Then God prepares Moses for his death. In chapter 33, Moses blesses Israel and then dies in chapter 34 and all of Israel wept and mourned for 30 days. In Deuteronomy 34:9 it says,

“And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face [just think about that!],

In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,

And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel.”

The story continues in the next book, the Book of Joshua, chapter 1, verse 1. Israel is given their instructions by Moses a few chapters earlier in the previous book and Joshua is given instruction. Both were told to be strong and courageous.

“Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,”

I was thinking last night about the phrase, *“that the LORD spake.”* I was asking myself, and praying, asking God for clarification. No, God did not speak to me, but He didn't convince me that what I was thinking was wrong. At least I didn't get that feeling. I was always under the impression, as I read this verse, that even though Joshua got his instructions, Israel was waiting for Joshua to make the move. It was like they were saying, “Okay, Moses is gone. We have mourned for 30 days. Let's go Joshua. Did Moses not say that we are to go to the land and God is going to be there? He knows what we are facing and we will have victory over our enemies. Is that not what God said, and He told us to be strong and courageous? Isn't that what God said through Moses, not only to you Joshua, but to us also?”

If Joshua had total confidence and trust in what Moses said, as soon as that mourning period was over, he wouldn't have lingered. God wouldn't have had to intervene. God wouldn't even have had to nudge him. Joshua would have gone straight towards the land of Canaan and carried out what God, through Moses, said that they would do. Sometimes it doesn't happen that way. Just because it doesn't happen, just because you don't get it the first time, it doesn't mean that God gives up on you. Look at it.

“Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead [“He is dead; you will mourn him.”]; now therefore arise...”

In the Hebrew, it is *arise and stand*. Does that sound familiar? All the standing and withstanding that we have already covered in Ephesians 6. Now, God Himself is telling Joshua,

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise and stand, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, to the children of Israel.”

I get the impression here that Joshua was in no hurry to cross the river Jordan because he knew what was on the other side. Battle after battle was going to take place and it required not only his effort, but also the people's effort. He knew their track record and that their forefathers were complainers, murmurers, just a bunch of whiners. I'm sure in the back of his mind as he was reviewing all the decades prior, was: “What if they do the same thing? I'm no Moses. How am I going to control these people? How are they going to follow me?” It makes me think this is why he lingered and why he was in no hurry to cross that river. Joshua was hoping that somehow his own strength would increase. If he just gave it enough time, he would gain the courage to make the first move so the people could follow him and they could carry on as God's representative as Moses said in the previous chapters in the Book of Deuteronomy. God finally had to intervene and say, “Okay.” Basically, God is saying the same thing that He said through Moses, but this time He is talking directly to Joshua. This is what I love about God's compassion, “Just in case

you had any doubts about what Moses was saying Joshua, yes, this is what I said through Moses. This is what is going to happen, and you are going to lead them. So stop dragging your feet. Gird up your loins; it is time to go to war.” That is what crossing Jordan meant; there was not going to be a time of rest, not yet. In fact, if you go to the end of the book, Joshua never truly inherited his land. He was buried outside of the borders of it.

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise and stand, go over this Jordan...”

Not just arise, but '***arise and stand***' meaning it was time to move on. “The war is not done; the mission is not completed. There is still plenty to do. It requires your leadership and faithfulness, and also the children of Israel's faithfulness. I will go before them. I will make sure they get the victory.”

The very first battle was Jericho. By the way, when they crossed Jordan whoever was not circumcised had to stop and they circumcised all the males in the camp. I'm sure if God told them what He was going to do after they crossed Jordan, Joshua really would have dragged his feet and so would the children of Israel. None of them wanted to cross Jordan that quickly. Jericho is one of the first battles they had and all they had to do was be obedient not only to God, but to leadership, and the walls came tumbling down. They were faithful and obedient, but like I said, they already had their instructions before Joshua 1:1-2. However, even after mourning, they didn't cross over. They didn't say, “Okay, let's go! We have a job to do and that battle depends on us. We might not like what we are about to face, but nevertheless this is what the Word of the Lord said through Moses and we must fulfil it.” That's not what happened. In my opinion nobody especially Joshua, was that eager to cross Jordan. Oh, they were eager to get to the land of promise and rest. They loved that idea. Most churches preach you can get it here and now. In some occasions you can, but unless I'm reading some other Bible, God puts us in battles constantly to prove us so that we come out more precious than gold tried in the fire.

I'm telling you that is why you must gird up your loins every day even if you think of yourself as just an individual, no matter where you live. You might be living in Timbuktu, but that doesn't change the battle one iota. You're a soldier in that area. God is using you. He knows where you are and He knows how you need to apply your soldiering duties in this war in the fight of faith. There's no little guy in this battle. We've all been called and chosen for the positions that God wants us in as we wage war against the enemy. We just don't fight a defensive war, we also fight an offensive war. There are too many preachers and scholars who think that most of these weapons, if not all of them, are defensive. No, they're not.

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise and stand, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them...”

Just in case you think I'm being too hard on Joshua, just put yourself in his shoes. Put flesh and blood onto the situation. What do you think was going through Joshua's mind? I mean, think about it. Can you imagine having to fill Moses' shoes? If you wonder what I mean, here are a few things Moses did:

- How many people have been spoken to through a burning bush? There's no record of Joshua

ever doing that.

- I already mentioned at the end of Deuteronomy 31 all the wonders the Lord sent to Moses in the land of Egypt, all the plagues that happened at Moses' command as a servant used by God.
- Moses stretched forth his rod and the Red Sea parted. Those are tough shoes to fill.
- Moses got water to come out of a rock twice; not once, but twice. The second time he did it the wrong way. He was disobedient to God, but nevertheless water still came out of the rock, not once but twice.
- Moses handed down the law that they were to follow.
- A lot of you know the story of Aaron and Hur. When Moses' arms were raised they would win the battle down in the valley, but when his arms fell, they would start losing. Aaron and Hur made sure Moses' arms were kept up because it was then that the battle turned and victory was achieved.

Think about all these things. If I was Joshua, I would be thinking, “Boy, Moses didn't make the promise land; Moses didn't get to cross over Jordan and look at all the wonderful things that God did through him. What makes me a candidate to lead these people? I know Moses told me to be strong and courageous.”

Just imagine what was going through Joshua's mind, “How am I going to fill these shoes?” I know what Moses said, but that is the compassion of God. He knows our hearts. He knows our needs. He knows where we're at with Him. I believe He saw that Joshua was not making that straight line across Jordan to go into the land of promise, knowing that there would still be so many battles ahead. Joshua probably wondered if the people would actually follow his instructions and be obedient to the word of the Lord. So in a sense, I really do feel for him in what he must have gone through at that time, but as I said, God had compassion and He repeated the same words back to Joshua.

“Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise and stand, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.”

We find the same promise in Genesis 15:18,

“In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt [That is the Nile.] unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

All the territory listed here in Genesis 15:18 through 21. Here God is reminding Joshua again in Joshua 1:4,

“From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast [The Mediterranean coast].”

That's why the battle still rages on today. I believe we are talking about Syria, to the northern part where the westerly portion of the Euphrates River is located and goes into Syria all the way down to what is presently known as Lebanon, Israel and Jordan, all the way into the territories of the great river in Egypt, the Nile River. There is approximately 300,000 square miles that God promised to Israel. In actuality, they only conquered about 30,000 square miles, about a tenth of what God promised.

“There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee [really withdraw or leave thee or let you go].”

Moses, when speaking as God's representative, said to the people of Israel, including Joshua, ***“Be strong and of a good courage...”*** Hopefully you understand why I came to the point of believing that these people, especially Joshua, weren't that eager to cross Jordan that quickly. But when Joshua got the word finally from the Lord God, he didn't hesitate. Some of us need that because, unfortunately, we're hard heads. There's no nice way to put it. It's not a pleasant thing to talk about, but we're hard heads. We need to be hit over the head over and over until we get the message that this is what God wants us to do. This is where God has placed us; these are what our responsibilities are.

You may not see the purpose when I ask you to get involve. If you don't, then go somewhere where you can find some purpose. Go somewhere where you can identify with and follow and be faithful, but know that God wants you somewhere to take Canaan over and over. He doesn't want us to become couch potatoes for Jesus. He has plenty of those already and they are no earthly good to Him. He wants us to take Canaan, He wants us to be strong, and He wants us to be courageous. He wants us to gird up our loins, tuck in our tunics, get ready for war, and make sure that everything necessary is attached to the belt of truth. We will enter into that rest someday, but not yet. It's not time. It is still time to be a weapon unto God for His righteousness' sake. Like it or not, that's why we are called to be a good soldiers of Jesus Christ to war a good warfare.

Now, God did not say anything new here in Joshua. He is saying the same thing He said through Moses; ***“to be strong and of good courage.”*** It's the same message of Ephesians 6:10 through 14. God will give us strength and He has already given us that strength, His force and might goes before us. He will put His armor on us, that is perfectly designed and fit for each of us, and He will give us the weapons listed in Ephesians 6 to come against the enemy. I don't believe just in an defensive posture, but an offensive posture to take Canaan, whatever the Canaan is in your life and whatever the Canaan is in the ministry or church that you follow.

How was Joshua going to accomplish this? I just said, ***“Be strong and of a good courage...”*** Joshua is going to accomplish this by being strong and of good courage through the key points here that God lists. If you read it quickly, you will just go right by it and not catch it.

Point number 1: Go back to the chapter 1, verse 3, ***“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”***

We will be strong and of good courage when we wake up every day having our loins girded about with truth. As we wake up not knowing what we will face, we will trust God's Word and stand on the promise that with the whole armor of God, there is no defeat. The enemy will not have his way. Trust God's Word and stand on the promise.

The children of Israel had this promise in verse 3, ***“Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said....”*** They will come against many foes and enemies, but those enemies would tremble in front of the sight of God's people and they would take that territory.

Point number 2 is in verse 5. ***“There shall not any man [really, whosoever, it covered more than just man] be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee [I will never withdraw from thee and never let you go].”***

Point number 2 is that nothing can stand before thee because God will be before you, He will not fail you, and He will not forsake you. That's a promise. It is what Hebrews 13:5 says and what Jesus said in Matthew 6, “Do not worry about what you are going to be facing and become anxious over it.” Read it again in Matthew 6:25-34. He compared it to the lilies of the field and the green grass and how much more precious to God we are than those things. Quit being anxious, quit worrying about what the enemy thinks or how the enemy is going to attack. Whatever circumstance, whatever situation or trial, nothing will be able to stand before us because God will be there. He will be there, go before us, and will never leave us nor forsake us.

As we read further in the scripture we come to verse 6, ***“Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them.”*** That is a bad translation. It should really say, ***“Be strong and of a good courage: thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land.”***

Just as I have been telling you, it's why God chooses leaders. Most people will not cause themselves to inherit the land or conquer Canaan and to make it their own because God promised it. Here God is telling Joshua, “Be strong and courageous and I will strengthen you because 'thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land.' You, Joshua, will have to cause these people to inherit the land. They will not do it on their own.” In other words, “You will have to force them.” Now you know why Joshua wasn't eager to cross Jordan.

By the way, as they crossed Jordan they went from city to city conquering territories and certain tribes had certain geographical areas. Just because they obtained and conquered their areas didn't mean their fight was over. They had to help their fellow brethren conquer other territories where the other tribes would eventually inherit. Just because they won their part of the territory didn't mean the battle was over. God said, “Be strong and of good courage.” For us in the New Testament, we are told, “Gird up your loins with the belt of truth. Stand up and rise, put on that belt. There is a war to be fought.”

That is why Paul says in verses 18 and 19 we must pray and supplicate for all saints. You might have gotten the victory in your life over whatever you are going through, and you might not even be having a bad time right now, but there are other saints, more than likely saints that you know, who need that support system that God has set up. We're all in the same army and our captain has made it quite clear that we are to be supplicating and praying for our fellow soldiers.

Point number 3 is in verse 7, ***“Only be thou strong and very courageous...”*** [God reminds Joshua a second time to be strong and courageous. God is telling him he will have to cause these people to inherit the land.] ***“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.”***

In other words, don't compromise, even if the belt seems too tight, the armor too heavy, or if the Word of God becomes a burden on our lives; it requires us to keep on faithing. Here God tells Joshua, ***“Only be thou strong and very courageous...”*** First, God said he had to be strong and courageous because he had to convince these people and lead them into battle by force, if necessary, to conquer the area that God had promised and then,

“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law....”

Joshua must not only lead them into battle and cause them to inherit the land, but he must also make sure that the law stays on their minds and in their mouths when they get into war and into the areas they were to conquer. This means when they inherit that land, they're not to forget where they came from and that it was God who brought them there and gave them their victory. That was not an easy task and is why in verse 7 He reminded Joshua again, ***“Only be thou strong and very courageous. Don't turn to the left or to the right. Keep God's Word constantly in your mind. Don't compromise with the devil and don't compromise with the devil's agents. There is a battle. Let nobody convince you otherwise and do not let anybody lead you astray.”*** No compromising.

Point number 4 is in verse 9, ***“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage....”*** For the third time God is saying, ***“Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.”***

To review, here are the four points:

1. Trust God's Word and stand on the promises.
2. Nothing can stand before thee; I will be with you, I will not fail you, I will not forsake you.
3. Don't compromise along the way. Keep your mind focused on the Word of the Lord.
4. God reminds Joshua again, the Lord thy God is with thee wherever thou goest.

As I've said, Joshua had to be strong and courageous. He had to take charge saying, “The Lord thy God has given me the commandment and even though this side of the river seems easier, that

is where the promise land is. To achieve it, means we must cross this river and go to war.” It is what they had to do and what they had to accept. They would not enter into that land of promise without fighting many battles, and they had to stand side by side with each other until the job was finished.

When you go to war, you must have God's armor on and the first piece of it is the belt of truth. Your loins must be girded with the belt of truth. It is the first piece of the armor and one of the most important because without it, you might as well forget the rest of the armor described in Ephesians 6:14 through 17. You might as well forget it. Without the belt of truth, where are you going to hang the short sword, literally the dagger which would be the Word of God? Where would you attach the shield so it would not separate from your presence? The belt of truth is an important piece of the armor. Without it, you would probably lose and misplace the rest of the weapons.

God will strengthen us. He told Joshua to be strong. He is telling us in Ephesians 6, be strong or be strengthened in the Lord. It has already happened because we faith in Him and He has implanted His righteousness in the breastplate of righteousness. He is indwelling in us with His force, His might, His Spirit, and He will give us the strength that gives us courage to carry out the battle in this war with this unseen enemy. We must remember that we must trust in His Word, standing on the promises so we can withstand in that evil day. Nothing will ever separate us from God, nothing can stand before us, He will always be there with us, He will not fail us, He will not forsake us, and there is no compromising of that in our mind. That is why the helmet of salvation is very important. Satan will try to trick you and try to convince you differently. The last point is the Lord thy God is with thee no matter where thou goest.

It's guaranteed that God will send you into battle. I know most of Christianity now doesn't really preach that God will send us into battle, but remember, He is coming with us. He is coming with us! Better yet, He is going before us! He is our banner. God will send us in the battle. Our battle might be legal problems, relationship problems, employment problems, or financial problems. Whatever the problem is, He allowed it to happen and He is coming with us, and He is actually going before us because He is our banner. Our enemies better take cover because they are messing with something that is a lot bigger and a lot more powerful than you and I. He constantly always has our benefit on His mind. He just wants us to carry out the marching orders, and part of the marching orders is to put that armor on, and the first piece of it is that belt of truth. Gird up your loins because we are marching into war with an unseen world that is a lot more vicious and ferocious than anything we can see. What we can see are just agents and tools used by the unseen, but this kind of spiritual armor is more than a match for whatever Satan and his minions will throw at us. We just have to faith and trust God that His Word is true and never changing as we march into battle. Like I said, our enemies better take cover, but it starts with girding up your loins and being strong and of good courage.

Again, my mentor used to say, “Cheer up saints, it's going to get worse.” Oh, it's going to get worse, but we will be prepared when the time comes to handle it because God has given us the necessary armor to deal with it and thank God we are under His control. We are clay being molded by Him for His purposes. Once again, I just like saying our enemies had better take cover.

Deception

Part 1

Open your bibles to Ephesians 6:14. I've been here for a few messages now. We've been looking at it from the perspective of how important it is to gird up your loins, tuck in your tunic, and be ready for battle, having on the belt of truth.

In this chapter I want to go in a different direction with the first part of this verse, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth....”*** Ask yourself: Why do I need this belt of truth? (For the last few days, I've been asking myself that, thinking about it a lot because this message wasn't going to be part of this series. I was going to use it somewhere else.) You've heard me preach on these scriptures before. Some of this will be review and some of it will be new. So, why do we need this belt of truth? We need it, we need to wear it, and we need to understand what it spiritually means and how to apply it to protect us from deception.

Deception means: to be involved in deceiving or misleading someone. That's probably the most basic definition that could be applied to the word. What is *'deceiving'* for those of you who don't quite understand what deception means? (I speak in these terms because I have people listening around the world that may not necessarily understand all the meanings of these English words.) If deception is involvement in deceiving and misleading someone, then deceiving is to make a person believe something that's not true. Satan is the champion of deception. This isn't just something he developed throughout the ages; he already had it mastered all the way back in the garden. We need to protect ourselves from deception because it is the number one device or strategy, or *methodeia*, which Satan uses against Christians. This includes a new Christian, or a baby Christian if you want to call it that, a new convert, or someone who has been a Christian for decades. Satan will keep trying to apply this method against us to deceive us to believe white is black and black is white. He attempts to make us believe something that is totally untrue. He uses it against Christians at all levels. Satan makes up lies. He is a master of it; he is the father of lies. Satan makes up lies and he makes them appealing. He deceived Eve by making her question God. Go to Genesis 3:1,

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

Now this is a beast, a creation of God that the devil possessed so he could achieve his purposes and deceive Eve. Verse 2 continues,

“And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:”

“Look! Look around. We can have all this wonderful fruit. Doesn't it look delicious? Adam told me that God said it is ours and we can have it.” But in verse 3 there was a condition,

“But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat

of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.”

In the past, I have always stopped to wonder, and still do today, why this verse reads the way it does, especially the last three words 'lest ye die.' I come up with different answers, different reasons all the time. What did they know about death? Think about it. What did Eve really know about death? They are in the midst of a garden filled with God's creation. The animals there were totally under their control, obeying and submitting to Adam and Eve. God said they could eat the delicious fruit, not to mention everything else in that garden. We'll never know what the garden was like until we get up there, but I'm sure it was a wonderful place with no death in it.

So right from the get-go, I think the reason why Satan used this particular temptation, this deceiving method on Eve, was because he knew very well she had no way to define death. Death doesn't look so bad if you don't know what it means, or if you have never experienced it. Eve hadn't experienced the sorrow, the grieving; even the pain that could come with death. Satan knew that this was a very deceptive way to penetrate Eve's mind because she had nothing to compare it to.

***“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:
For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”***

This should say *ye shall be as gods, acquiring the knowledge of good and evil*. The devil is telling Eve, “Don't worry about death.” Through deceit Satan leads Eve to a place where she is questioning God's authority and the accuracy of God's Word. In verse 5 look how crafty he is to follow that up with a lie mixed with truth. You can't deny Satan is absolutely right. It was 100% true, like it or not. He used truth as a weapon in his way of deceiving Eve, ***“your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.”*** That's exactly what happened. They would acquire the knowledge to know what was good and evil. He was 100% right. This is what Satan does and it can happen in an instant, in a blink of an eye. He takes truth and twists it completely. Satan's ways have not changed throughout the centuries. What he did in that garden, he's still doing today. Satan's first method of attack was deception. How did humans react to it?

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

This is the “you go first” mentality. Since Eve obviously didn't die, they questioned the accuracy of God's Word. She partook; she is still living. The serpent was right. Praise ye the serpent, is what Adam was thinking. And now, because she didn't die immediately, he said, “Why not. Give me that. Let me take a bite out of it,” whatever that fruit was. Verse 7 goes on,

“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

I've been here before. This is the first works of the flesh to try to cover sin thinking there is something that we can do to make us worthy again. It didn't work because the sin also changed

their heart and mind; not only to a point where they understood their nakedness, but it also created a change of heart. I know that because we can see the steps they took and how they reacted to this situation as the chapter goes on. In verse 8 we read,

“And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”

In these verses, we see Satan's first method of attack was deception, deceiving Eve first and then Adam fell just like a domino. He easily fell when he didn't see the physical evidence of death, which brought him to questioning God. You have in verses 8 through 13 how they reacted. The word 'hid' was used twice; once in verse 8 and also in verse 10. They reacted first by hiding. Obviously their own efforts, their own works, making and sewing fig leaves together didn't cover their shame or their sin. God eventually had to sacrifice an animal and make them coats of animal skins. That was the first sacrifice. You find it in verse 21, God actually made them present the offering to Him, but showed them how to do it. The verse states, ***“Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them”*** to cover their sin and to cover their nakedness. It was not a sin to be naked, but it was a sin how they got to the understanding that they were naked. An animal had to be sacrificed and that started the blood atonement. God made atonement for them all the way back in the garden.

Adam and Eve also hid themselves from their Lord and Creator, God Himself. They became ashamed of what they did when they understood it was wrong and that it was in total disobedience to God. Hiding was the only thing they could come up with, as if any of us could ever cover up our sin. Thank God, in the New Testament we have Christ to cover and remove our sins. Oh, I am a sinner, but I am a sinner saved by grace. There's no more blood atonement through animals. It was done for me and for you through Christ Jesus. So, the first human reaction after being deceived was to hide. They played the first hide and seek game with God thinking, I believe, that if God didn't catch them, over a period of time their sin would go unnoticed. Now, I don't hit you over the head with sin. There are plenty of New Testament and Old Testament verses that you could reference to see what displeases God, no matter if you fall into sin or not. I guarantee there is no one listening to me, including myself, who hasn't sinned today.

For example, I sinned at 6:55 this morning in a phone call to a New Hampshire business about a transaction. Boy, did I sin. Put it this way, it was not a baby sin. It was something that would turn most Christian heads around and say, “I can't believe he said or did that.” I don't have to hide and

neither do you. The one who took the brunt of all our sin, not just one or two, not just the little ones or just the big ones, all our sin. He took them upon Himself and He bore it all for our sake. Thank you, Jesus Christ. Daily we should thank Him and that is one of the reasons why we go to the Table of the Lord; to remember what He did for us. “Do this in remembrance of me” has special meaning to a sinner saved by grace, recognizing they are a sinner. Even though we are being molded by Jesus Christ, we will not be perfect here. We are in the completion process, but this flesh and blood has a lot of completing left to go.

Let me tell you right now, we can't hide anything from God. I can deceive people around me, but God sees everything. However, if you put our trust in Christ's redemptive work, God does not see our sins because His son covered and removed our sins, so don't hide yourself from God. If you feel like you've been deceived and brought to a point of believing that and you're not worthy to be a follower of Jesus Christ, know that in the flesh none of us are. To tell the truth, we're all pathetic, but I have said before, through Christ Jesus we are something precious. Some of you might get mad at me, but I am just going to say it; we are one hell of a vessel that Christ is molding. I said it that way to make the point that we are a work in progress, so don't hide yourself.

So, the first method of attack in the Bible was deception. Satan method or plan was to deceive and question the accuracy of God's Word, since Adam and Eve didn't die. As soon as they ate that fruit, they realized what they did was wrong. They realized they listened to the wrong individual and they should have been obedient to God. When their shame was exposed, they tried to hide. God further exposed them for what they had become because they were deceived by Satan, so they hid. Verse 12 tells us what they did next,

“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”

Talk about an individual in self-denial! Adam is trying to deny any participation or fault of his own. What a coward! My mentor used to say when he gets up to heaven he wants to smack one right on Adam's chin. Well, he might be first, but I will be second. What a coward Adam was at this time. ***“The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree...”*** She might have done it and she might not have died, but it still was Adam's place to stay obedient to God and not listen to what Satan said through Eve. God probably would have created another Eve and started over with another helpmate for Adam if he would have stayed obedient. Instead, Adam denied any responsibility for his actions. He put all the blame on Eve. The first three reactions they had to this sin were:

1. They hid.
2. They went into a self-denial state of mind.
3. They started to shift blame.

This is very applicable today even in our own lives. We are guilty of all three all the time, and those who think you're not, you have arrived at a certain place in sainthood that I haven't arrived at yet. I congratulate you. If you think I'm too hard on Adam and Eve, I probably would have done the same thing and so would you. What was Adam also doing here in these verses?

“And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”

Adam was shifting the blame onto someone else; he was a finger pointer. This is what deception brought out. After being deceived, those three traits developed quickly. They were brought to a place where they wanted to hide from God and they were in denial. At least Adam was denying what happened, which led him to blame someone else about why it happened. There's no nice way of saying it, he was trying to cover his ass to protect his skin from God. At least Eve had enough character still in her at this time. You see it in verse 13,

“And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, [At least she was honest.] The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”

That is 100% true. She was beguiled, she was deceived, and she was part of the plot of deception that Satan planned out for her. (I believe Adam was also tempted by the serpent prior to Eve being created or even after Eve's creation. For some reason or another, he wasn't tempted to the point where he listened to the serpent.) Eve listened to the serpent long enough for him to twist the truth and deceive her. It worked, but she had the character of at least saying, “I bleeped up. I got beguiled and I did eat.” It's easy to blame someone else and go into denial. Some of us are very creative blame shifters. I'm a champion at it. I'm sure some of you could raise your hand along with me. We are all champion blame shifters. We justify or excuse it because of our circumstances, our relationships, money or financial problems, whatever. We justify it using anyone or anything other than ourselves.

I'm going through this because I don't want you to fall into this same trap when you're deceived. It will happen in your Christian walk and to Christians who should know better; no exceptions. Paul warns about it. I don't want you to be deceived and I want you to understand when you are deceived what quickly happens after that. First, you start hiding yourself from God; you start living in a state of denial; you start blame shifting. If those three, or any one of those three happen, Satan has a way in to start twisting the truth more and more bringing you to a point where you believe a lie and are damned. It's not one of my favorite subjects to teach or preach about. I could have skipped it completely and I almost did, but it is my responsibility according to Ephesians 4:11-14 to make you aware of it. It is my responsibility to be carried out, whether I like it or not. That verse tells us, ***“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;***

For the perfecting of the saints, [or for the completion of the saints] for the work [the ergon; for the employment of the word] for the ministry....”

My responsibility, is to bring you to completion for the employment of the Word. Not just the Word and how it pertains to you, but in getting the Word out as part of the Great Commission. Too many Christians have been satisfied with going to church on Sunday and becoming couch potatoes the rest of the week. We are commissioned in the capacity that God has called us to employ the Word of God. I don't want us to become complacent. I remind us constantly that complacency is another way the devil deceives us so we think we are doing just enough.

Let's continue.

“For the completion of the saints, for the employment of the word for the ministry [Paul talking about participation in the ministry] for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect [really, completed] man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we [henceforth is not in the original] be no more children [Not just be sucking on milk any longer, but chomping away at the meat of the Word.], tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine....”

Ephesians 4: 14, reads, ***“That we be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men [actually, by the deception of the master deceiver which began back in the Garden], and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive [through “every wind of doctrine”];”***

That word 'wait' is *methodeia*, and is also in Ephesians 6:11. The best English translation of that word is *methods*, and is where we get our words like; *the strategies, the tricks*. It is the deceptive ways the devil takes truth and twists things to make you believe a lie. ***“...cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in methodeia [they lie with their deceiving methods is the best translation.]”***

Verse 15, in contrast, speaks of those who do not,

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, Christ:”

Therefore, it's my responsibility to point out some of the deceiving ways that Satan leads even Christians into believing a lie. Most Christians don't look at themselves as blame shifters or as someone in a state of denial. I already gave one example of those who think they are good Christians because they go to church on Sunday, but they never think about God any other day and only give a small fraction of their income into the offering plate. Now I know that is extreme, but it makes the point. Those people, whether they realize it or not, run the risk being hidden from their Lord Jesus Christ.

Go to Romans 16:17 to see what Paul says in a different book in the New Testament.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark [or spy out, or go out of their way] them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”

Avoid them. If you're not grounded in the Word of God, Paul knew that it only takes a minute, a second, to be deceived by a little bit of truth mixed with lies.

“For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”

I like the way the Revised Version puts it. It's closer to the original in this case. That version

states,

“I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties....” The 'take note' is not a literal translation. I would read it, ***“I appeal to you, brethren, to spy out those who create dissensions and difficulties in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them.*** [He says the same thing in Ephesians 4.]
For such persons do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded.”

Paul isn't saying to keep quiet so as not to disturb others. He wasn't praying and hoping that they could all live in peace and unity no matter what faith, what sect of the Christian faith they may be. Do you know 60% of Christian denominations around the world do not even believe a resurrected Jesus Christ exists and that He did die? Catch up on your news and if these statistics are right, it's an alarming thought. Paul says to avoid them.

In verse 19, Paul goes on to say, ***“For your obedience [to the faith, verse 26 tells us that] is come abroad unto all. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise [to Satan's deceptive ways, which is why I take my lead from Paul] unto that which is good, and simple [harmless is a closer translation] concerning evil.”***

I teach this, even though it is not my favorite subject to teach on, because I'm commissioned to get the Word to you, so you'll know what to be aware of. Actually, I am amazed at how many young people listen to me on any given night. They take what I am saying, apply it in their life, and listen to it over and over again. That's why I teach that God's Word must be verifiable from the beginning to the end of this Book.

Go to Psalms 139 where I will close this chapter. Here you will see what happens to David when he took his eyes off the battle and put it on flesh. David was a man after God's own heart because he knew even after being deceived, even after falling for deception the way that Satan twists truth, he knew that he had to get back in sync with his God, his Creator. He knew he had to come to a point where he realized, "Unto thee, O God, I have sinned." The reason David is liked by so many people is because they can identify with him; with all his failures, with all the ups and downs of his life. We can identify with those events. But let's also identify with some of the good traits David had and learn something from David when we find ourselves deceived and falling for Satan's deceptive ways.

The first thing we should do is realize that our own fig leaf covering is not sufficient. It's only through the blood of Jesus Christ that we sinners are saved by grace, no matter how many times we sin. That grace doesn't give us a licence to sin, even though some have taken that for granted. When we sin, we are covered by His grace because of the blood that was spilled. The second thing we must understand here is to get the heart of David.

“Search me, O God [examine the inner being of myself, O Lord, my mind, my heart; anything you want to observe], and know my heart: try me [test me, prove me], and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Whether you realize it or not, that is a faith statement. David knew very well when he was pleading, “God, search me, search my mind, search my heart, test me, and know my thoughts, and if there is any wicked way in me, lead me in the way of everlasting.” When Satan brings us to the point where we feel about one-inch high because we fell for his trap of deception, personalize it. Say, “Search me, O God, search me, my Lord Jesus Christ. Search me Lord, search my thoughts, search my mind and apply your blood and remove my sins that I have committed and lead me in the way that brings me closer to you; that Peter says comes by trial by fire.” It proves you are going to come out of that fire more precious than gold. We will be tried and proven, and if we go through it still hanging onto God's Word, still understanding that we will have our ups and downs, we will have days where we sin more than others, like it or not. However, because of our faith in Jesus Christ and what He did on that cross we have a chance every day to start over with Him. Then He can work in us through the Holy Spirit and implement in us the things of the Fruit of the Spirit necessary to bring us to the point of completion. Only Christ can do that. We can't do any of it. Too many Christians try and fail. Whether they realize it or not, they fail.

Again, I pray that you wake up every morning and say, “Search me, O God. You know my heart, you know my way. Try me, for in that trying period I want you to know draw closer to you. I realize what you have done for me and because you did that for me, I am covered now through the blood of Jesus Christ. I will keep Trusting in you as you keep molding me with your Holy Spirit.” All of us that keep trusting in Him will get into the everlasting arms of God forever.

In the next chapter I will make David's life even more real and apply some of these principles. I'll show that when David did sin he was a perfect example of someone who would hide from God, try to cover up his rear end with lies and deceit, walk around in a state of denial that he did anything wrong, and then blame someone else for his actions. But I'll also show how he came out of it. What a wonderful example we have after we see God's handiwork, and how He tried and proved and brought David to the point that he realized, "Unto thee, O God, I have sinned." It also brought David to the point where he was seeking and searching God so God could search him and He could finish His completion in David. He is doing the same for us.

Deception

Part 2

Open your Bibles to Ephesians 6:14 where I will continue pointing out in scripture how Satan's tactics have never changed and why it is important to understand this belt of truth means ***“having your loins girt about with truth.”*** Before I get to the continuation of the message on deception, I want to quickly review. Verse 14 tells us,

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”

If you remember, the loins are where Hebrews thought the generative power resided. It's a place that gave the continuation of life. In the spiritual sense, understand that God gives us eternal life through His Son, Jesus Christ.. He gives us that generative power where death will not have any effect on us except for transportation, if we are not gone in the rapture from this miserable decaying flesh. Eventually we will have a new body that will not die or decay, but will forever have an existence where God intends us to serve Him without any of the worries or concerns about whether we can keep up; whether we will get tired; or whether we are strong enough. All these earthly situations that we deal with in our earthly bodies will be gone forever. I am looking forward to that day. Again, the loins were a place where the Hebrews thought that the generative power resided. It's why it was important to gird up the loins. In the spiritual sense, if we want to keep our existence and not be taken over by the devil, we must have our loins gird about with truth. I shared all kinds of explanations about what some think truth means, why I expected those types of explanations, and I'll get to what I think it means and where I get it from in scripture.

Then we moved on to Exodus 12 pointing out the importance of having our loins girded about, but not only your loins girded about, but also our staff in hand at the Lord's Passover. Then we went to Joshua 1:1-9. God reminded Joshua once again what Moses said to him before his death. I pointed out how even though he heard Moses, respected Moses, and knew Moses was God's representative, when it came time to deal with reality after Moses' death, Joshua still needed that nudge to cross Jordan and head in the direction of the enemy. It meant battle after battle, taking city after city, and village after village to regain what God promised all the way back in Abraham's day.

I took us to Joshua 1:1-9. There God reminded Joshua once again what Moses said to him before his death: to be strong and of good courage. I pointed out four points that God wanted Joshua to understand and to apply into his life as he was leading the children of Israel into battle.

1. Trust God and stand on the promises of God's Word.
2. The Lord told Joshua, “Nothing can stand before thee, Joshua. I will be with thee. I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”
3. Don't compromise. There was no compromising in his assigned commission.
4. The Lord thy God is with thee wheresoever thou goest.

The point I was making with that message is that God will send us into battle. God will send us into battle, but the promise is that even though He sends us into battle, He is going before us. The Lord is our banner.

Finally, I took us back to Genesis; back to Adam and Eve in the garden to show how Satan used his most potent arrow, deception, and how he deceived those two individuals. I pointed out the way Satan uses deception as one of the most effective strategies against Christians at all levels; without exception. I don't care how mature of a Christian saint you are, Satan will always try to deceive you. He is never going to let up. I also pointed out how Adam and Eve reacted when deceived by Satan:

1. They hid from God.
2. They went into a state of denial.
3. They were blame shifters.

Adam in particular was a blame shifter. He told God, "The woman that you gave me caused me to eat." Like it or not, he was a failure in his responsibility to his household. God could have started all over with Adam. In my opinion, Adam didn't live up to his responsibility in making sure that Eve completely understood the message from God. If Adam had made sure that Eve understood, maybe she wouldn't have been deceived and would've been aware of what Satan would eventually try to do.

And now we are at Ephesians 6:14 once again.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth..."

Paul is referring to the *cingulum* or belt, the belt of truth, spiritually speaking in Ephesians 6:14. Paul, as a prisoner, was handled by Roman soldiers continuously throughout his ministry. Paul knew very well what their attire was, what that armor consisted of, how they wore it, how they applied it, and how they used it. The *cingulum* belt was a soldier's badge of office. To get a better idea of what it looked like, just imagine a belt with about eight leather straps with kind of a beaded material down the center of it. Soldiers decorated it in many different ways. At the end of each leather strap were medals of achievement hanging down to show what they accomplished in certain battles. One author writes:

"The belt was a soldier's badge of office, worn with a tunic at all times. The 'apron' of decorated leather strips gave some protection to the groin in battle. Also, the jangling noise made by the apron [the strips hanging down] when the legionaries marched helped to intimidate the enemy."

These medal badges of honor, so to speak, were about one inch in size and would bang up against each other and cause this metallic sound as they marched. I am sure if there was only a few dozen marching, it wouldn't make that much noise. But if legion after legion marched, it was quite intimidating. Our belt, the belt of truth that girds up our loins, is important and listed first in the armor to send the same message to Satan: although he might be intimidating to us in the

flesh, through God's strength and Spirit these weapons are intimidating to him and all our unseen enemies, down to the lowest demon. I find that comforting. I just wanted to point that out.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”

I asked recently for you to let me know what 'the truth' in that verse means to you, and I got the typical answers that I expected. I have a stack of books to share several different explanations of this belt of truth. Unfortunately, only one scholar from quite a bit back in time had actually given this topic more than a few pages. Here's what one scholar said about Ephesians 6:14. (All the authors I am going to read are referring to Ephesians 6:14.)

“The girdle of truth: Since Satan is a liar, we must oppose him with God's truth. In oriental countries, people wore girdles to bind up their flowing garments to hold everything together. It is God's truth that must hold everything together in our lives. As Christians, we must love truth and live truth.”

As I read these, I hope you start recognizing that all these scholars are trying to convince us of what *we're* supposed to do. They put the emphasis back on us and something we can do in the flesh to bring on this spiritual armor, which you know I am totally against. In the flesh, we can't stand up to a wild animal. What makes you think you can stand up to the unseen powerful forces described in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation? We are no match in the flesh. I find it amusing that as I read all the different explanations of what this verse can possibly mean, or what they are convinced it means, they always go back to what we can do in the flesh to bring on this spiritual armor.

“The girdle of truth is not an offensive weapon; it is for protection. When the believer has what I call ‘an attitude of truth’ in his life, this protects him from Satan's attacks. It does not prevent these attacks it keeps a believer from being harmed by them.”

Once again, there is nothing we can do in the flesh. I'm not against being truthful. We should be truthful, but being truthful will not affect anything that energizes these weapons.

Moving to the next author:

“The belt is mentioned first because it is the foundational piece of the armor. It gave the soldier mobility and support. For us, it is the belt of truth. The truths of the Word of God are the foundation from which our warfare is waged. To be girded with the truth means to know the truth and believe it. The enemy cannot be withstood by human reason, tradition, personal charisma, or any other carnal means. God's truth alone must shape our thinking and living.”

I really have no problem with any of that, but what truth? I'm assuming he is saying the Word of God. I understand this, but it falls short and leaves too much that is empty to do you any good. It definitely doesn't do me any good. I don't know whether you can get something out of it or not, but it did not fill in any gaps for me. In a general statement, it's saying God's truth is sufficient to wage war and how important it is to understand, (I guess), why we should wear the belt of truth, God's truth. I have no problem with that. I think it just falls short of what Paul is saying.

Moving on to the next one:

“We must be strong for the ‘truth in the inward parts’ (Psalms 51:6). We are not imaginary soldiers fighting an imaginary war- all is real and true. Because he is truthful, a girded soldier is strong, prepared, and intense in his fight.”

It almost makes it sound like we must be perfect to use any of these weapons against our enemy, and we're not even past the belt of truth. ***“Because he is truthful...”*** I challenge anyone, are you 100% truthful every living moment? You're not even 100% truthful in your dreams, to go as far as I can with that point. It almost sounds like this author is saying if you are going to be a girded soldier, you are going to be strong, you are going to be prepared, and you must be truthful. Once again, it goes to something that we must do to energize the weapon when the only thing that energizes this weapon, back in Ephesians 6:10, is to ***“be strong [or be strengthened] in the Lord, and the power of his might.”*** It's not our power, it is not our might, and it is not our strength. I am telling you right now, this scripture is *not* saying if you are truthful, then, and only then, can you be girded and strong and prepared for the intensity of the fight.

“Truth is the ornament of a jewelled belt, a diamond set in gold. We must conquer the Devil by truth as the strength and support of our lives. We know the truth and have the truth because we have Christ who is the truth.”

Once again, it just aggravated me as I kept reading through book after book and commentary after commentary; everything I could find. Here we go again about the belt of truth. I want to point out some of the things that just further aggravated me as I kept reading:

“First, it can mean the truth of God. [‘can mean’ does not even mean committed to what it possibly could mean] That is, it can refer to Christian doctrine, but a specific concept of God's revelation in the Bible. Second, since the article ‘the’ is not present, truth can refer to truthfulness or sincerity of the heart. It is significant that Paul puts truth first.”

Paul didn't put truth first. Paul put the truth about a certain subject first. Otherwise he would have just gone straight to the truth and not even mention the loins girded about with truth.

“This suggests that successful spiritual warfare begins with fixing Christianity’s great doctrines firmly in our minds. Or to put it another way: it is dangerous to rush into battle without having the great doctrines of the faith fixed firmly in our understanding.”

Hogwash; next:

“One of the spiritual applications is that, before we can put on the full armor of God, we must bind up the things that hinder us. We must maintain a life of integrity so that we will have a basis from which we can effectively use the sword of the Spirit...”

This author goes back again to what we can do. Yes, it is important to be truthful. Paul mentions it in other scriptures, because without the truth we will be led into deception, believe a lie, and be

damned. Without truth, we will believe any lie and be damned for it. That's why it is important to understand why there is so much warning in the New Testament and the Old Testament about false prophets. They easily deceive, so we must understand what the truth is. There's plenty of other scripture, including further down in this chapter, that addresses why it's important to understand what the gospel of peace is, but not here in this verse.

“We must maintain a life of integrity so that we will have a basis from which we can effectively use the sword of the Spirit- the Word of God. A commitment to truth removes spiritual hindrances to our lives and gives us the freedom of movement in the kingdom of God that we need for battle.”

Next:

“As to the reference to truth, the same authority says: ‘It is the simplest and most accordant with usage to take it so here (in the sense of ... sincerity, truthfulness). And this plain grace of openness, truthfulness, reality, the mind that will practice no deceits and attempt no disguises in our intercourse with God, is indeed vital to Christian safety and essential to the due operation of all the other qualities of character.’”

Now, if I didn't know better at this point, I would be totally discouraged with the progress of my walk of faith and my connection with God. I just read small portions but I could actually spend more than a program reading author after author. They all take us back to the same point, no matter who you read, namely, it is something that we can do, something we try with our best efforts to be truthful and have integrity so it could build character, and then, and only then, will we be able to have our loins girded about with truth and be able to apply and use the weapons that Paul describes and defines here in Ephesians 6:14-18. I would be totally discouraged and almost want to give up if I didn't know better. Some of you can brainwash yourselves into thinking that when Paul was saying, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth”*** that you just have to be a truthful person full of integrity. That's not what Paul was saying at all. The ones close to me know I'm mad and aggravated about how easily people have been deceived and how easily they accept what is traditionally taught in Bible schools. It has been carried on from generation to generation because someone back then said it and it sounded good, it felt good. They made a list of things we must do to be a Christian; therefore it must be right, so therefore keep teaching it. Throughout the generations, people have accepted it is the Word of God when it has not been the Word of God at all.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...” I'm not going to get into the Greek that much, but the most accurate definition of what is being said here in the Greek is *what is true*. Do your own research and don't settle for just any Greek translation. Do your homework. Remember, the Koine Greek was the common Greek language, not the Classical Greek, the higher educated Greek used by Plato. Paul used a version of the Koine Greek, but in a higher educational way of using the language, and Koine Greek became the common version. Even our own English language, as you travel this country has different meanings for the same words. I remember going from New Jersey down to Florida for a period of time. Even though it was the same English language, the slang was different and the definitions of certain words were different.

What Paul is saying is ***“Stand therefore, having our loins girt about with truth...”*** What truth? Not the gospel of peace mentioned in verse 15. He's getting to that. He wants you to understand *the truth* he has been writing about in verse 10 to 14 is *what is true in the matter under consideration*. That's what the Greek is saying here and the 'matter under consideration' in 6:14 is the spiritual warfare that is described, not just in verse 12, but also in verse 11, where he is writing about the wiles or the methods of the devil. Paul wasn't just writing this letter to write. He wasn't writing this letter to be poetic. He wasn't just writing this letter to get it done. He was relaying concepts through the only means of communication he knew that wouldn't change his words along the way.

I remember watching an old Johnny Carson show and he had three or four guests. The whole purpose of it was how a story would change from one person to another. Johnny Carson told the guest on his right a story in secret and that guest had to whisper to the person next to him and so forth down the line. It seemed like it all happened in less than seven minutes. By the time they got to the fourth person, the story had changed so much that it was laughable from what was originally told to the first person.

Paul didn't mix words in his letter writing. He knew exactly what he had to get across. He wasn't going to leave anything ambiguous or vague in any way. Unfortunately, Christianity has thrown up a smoke screen we can't wade through because of the various opinions, the super self-righteous, super-spiritual opinions, because it sounds good; and the "how could it hurt" attitude in some of those things I read to you. I'm not telling you to be a liar or carry out your transactions with non-truth, or whatever you participate in life. No, but all those works won't get you anywhere when it comes to energizing these weapons. It's only through God's Spirit, His strength, His force, His might, and it's His armor that fits us perfectly; He knows how much of the armor to use and what part of the armor we need in whatever we're facing.

What is said in this verse, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”*** is be prepared, be ready, and understand that we are going to war. The words 'with truth' really mean *what is true in the matter under consideration*; it is the correct translation from the Greek that Paul used. He wants us to understand ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”*** In this case, he wanted everyone in Ephesians to understand, and I'm sure he never imagined the hundreds and hundreds of millions who would eventually read this letter. Remember, the matter under consideration is spiritual warfare; the matter under consideration is the spiritual fight for your eternal life and the truth you need to understand is that there is no escaping it. There is no turning from it, and there is no looking for an easier path to follow. He wanted it understood that it's a battle that we are engaged in; a battle for eternal life. So gird up now, be prepared, just as Moses and God told Joshua. (By the way, Joshua really never did see his rest; he was not even buried in his own land, just at the border of it.)

I want to make one other point and bring you to the understanding that spiritual warfare is not just a thing of the garden. It didn't just happen to Adam and Eve. It also happened to a man who was after God's own heart continually. What happened in the garden with Adam and Eve also happened to David when he put his eyes on something this world can provide, instead of the spiritual and physical fight that God had commissioned for him. The 'matter under consideration'

is spiritual warfare. It has never changed. To see that, let's go to II Samuel 11. This message is a continuation of what truth means and of the message about Adam and Eve being deceived by Satan and how they reacted by hiding from God. Adam put himself in a state of denial and then started blame shifting. It still happens today. It happened to Adam and Eve and we're going to see how it happened to David.

David was a man after God's own heart. You've heard that over and over and over again, but it doesn't mean he had it all together. As sad as this might sound, it gives me comfort because I'm just the same. I don't think I have it all together either. If you are honest with yourself, you probably could repeat those same words to me too. You would probably raise your hand if I asked if you think you have it all together. I don't think I even know anyone that thinks they have it all together. David was a man after God's own heart, but it doesn't mean he had it all together and that is why I can identify with this character. In fact, for our instruction, I will show how David slipped to the place where he fell (with Satan leading the way) for only one reason: He decided not to go into battle. He decided to change the commission that God had given him. In this chapter in Samuel, David started to hide his evil, he definitely was in a complete state of denial, and he tried to shift the blame to the enemy that the children of Israel were fighting against.

In chapter 11 verses 6 through 13 David is hiding his sin. In verses 14 through 27 he is pretending that nothing happened; he is in a state of denial. Also in verses 14 through 27 the blame is put on the intensity of the battle instead of his plan to commit murder. His sin was first and foremost against God, and then against one of his loyal soldiers and the soldier's wife. Verse 1 begins,

“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.”

The kings in this geographical area would wage war at certain times of the year, mostly because of the weather. That shouldn't sound so odd. I was curious about the Vietnam War when I was growing up. I remember reading a book about the different battles, and during the monsoon seasons fighting almost came to a dead stop. Helicopters and planes couldn't fly and soldiers would get to the point where they couldn't move because of the swampy areas and the mud the monsoons created. Even the enemy didn't do that much fighting during those monsoonal periods. So it's not strange that at certain times wars stopped. Now technology has changed a lot of that in our time. We could probably wage war every hour of every day because of our technology, but they couldn't during David's time. So, these kings would battle during certain set seasons. Remember, it was a constant struggle over who controlled the geographical territory in David's time. That's why we read,

“And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel;”

David decided he wasn't going to make this trip into battle. Previously, David was always directly involved in the battles and wars and he didn't leave it to his captains. David led them

even when he was becoming king of Judah. During the wars between Israel and Judah, David was there in chapter after chapter. Then in chapter 5, David also becomes Israel's king and he prospers and defeats the Philistines. In chapter 6, David brings the Ark to Jerusalem, and again David was actively involved. Chapter 7 is God's promise to David, and in chapter 8 there is more of the same where it lists his military successes. Israel goes on to defeat the Ammonites and Syrians in chapter 10, and then we get to chapter 11, "***And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth,***" but David didn't show up for the battle.

Now, there was probably more than one reason why he didn't show up. Maybe one of the reasons was because he liked the comforts of the palace at Jerusalem. Maybe he justified this in his mind, and the devil slipped in somehow saying, "You know, you have fought a lot of battles. You don't need to go to this particular battle. Your men can handle it; you have competent captains. Stay here. Relax! Enjoy yourself! You're only going to live so long. Stay here and rule the people. They need you too."

However, David's commission from God was to conquer, to do battle, and take territory for the children of Israel. He had so much blood on his hands that he couldn't even build the temple. God said, "I will let your offspring do it. You can gather the material, but you can't do it because of all the blood on your hands." But his son Solomon would never have built the temple if there wasn't a period of established control in that area to bring peace for a time, not only in Israel but the area surrounding Israel. David's commission was to fight. From this point on, the beginning of a long life of sorrow and heartache began because he decided that he wasn't going to engage in battle with his men.

Some of you have also engaged and disengaged, engaged and disengaged in the battle and it has brought you nowhere except to the point of more heartache and more disappointments. I'm not promising that you won't have the heartaches or disappointments if you are in the battle, but getting out of the battle does nothing except break your connection with God. If you don't see that, you are in a state of denial and you have disengaged yourself from the battle. I don't care what ministry or church you attend, if they don't teach this, run from it and find one that does because it is God's Word, and not just here in David. I could show you from Old to New Testament.

One of the things I am so frustrated with is the decision that I have to make on how long I stay in any particular scripture in this Ephesian 6:10 through 18 series. I moved on and only touched the surface Biblical demonology in verse 12 because I could spend probably another six months on that verse. There's a lot of silliness that has been written, and still is to this day, about Biblical demonology. I have to get to it and I'm going to get to it. In fact, when I am done with this series in Ephesians 6, I have a commission for those who follow this ministry to remind me if I go more than 60 to 90 days without teaching a lesson on spiritual warfare. That's how important it is and it is why we need to be refreshed about the subject continually so we do not somehow get the idea that God has allowed us to be disengaged from this spiritual fight for eternity.

Here we see David disengaged himself from the battle, but for the rest of his life he was forgiven by God which I will show, but first, continue with verse 2,

“And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

And David sent and enquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?”

That should have been David's first clue. Remember they were living under the law which included, ‘thou shalt not commit adultery.’ In fact, David broke four commandments of the law in this chapter. This was another man's wife and shows how far David drifted away from God's ways, but I'm not going to sit here and pound on David because of the sin he committed. Yes, the sin he committed affected people's lives, but more importantly it affected his connection with God. He broke the connection when he decided not to be in the fight any longer. Verse 4 goes on to tell us,

“And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her; for she was purified from her uncleanness: and she returned unto her house.

And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child. [“Oops, guess what, I am pregnant, and, David, it is your child.”]

And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David.

[David's mind is already scheming going into the cover-his-rear mode.]

And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered.”

David didn't care one iota how the war was going because if he did he would have been in the war. He was actually pretending he had some concern for his men at this time and how the war was proceeding, but the only thing he was concerned with was the plan he devised to cover his mistake; to cover his sin. Like I said, if it sounds like I'm coming down on David, I'm not. Those without sin cast the first stone. I have said many times, the only one that could have done it is the one who said it and that is Jesus Christ. I don't see Him in scripture casting that stone, so I'm not judging David. It is not my place, but I'm reading and trying to understand these scriptures to give us instruction on how important it is to stay engaged in the fight so we do not fall into the circumstances and temptations in our lives. We don't want to fall into the same trap that David did of hiding himself. He hid his evil deed and moved into a state of denial, then shifted the blame onto something or someone else.

“And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king.

But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord [This is a Hittite, not even someone who was born an Israelite.], ***and went not down to his house.”***

David was hoping now that Uriah was home and on leave he would have a good time eating, drinking and being merry. Then he could go home and have relations with his wife. It's about the best way I can clean that up. David's plan was if he could get Uriah to go home and spend time with his wife, Uriah would think it was his child that Bathsheba was carrying. The plan backfired in verse 10,

“And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house? [“What in the heck are you doing here Uriah? Why didn't you go home? I gave you permission. Go home. Enjoy yourself; enjoy your wife. Oh, you will get back to the war. Do not worry about it, but since you are here take advantage of the benefits I am giving you.”] And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah [the whole Nation of Israel], abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.”

This is a Hittite who understood better than David the importance of not disengaging in the fight for his life, his nation's life, and his family's life. This is a man of integrity. This is someone you would call in our day and age a hero. He wanted to get back into the fight. In a sense, this was his way of telling David, “I do not belong here at this time.” How do you think David must have felt thinking he couldn't get this guy to do what he needed him to do? David's sin would be exposed, but David didn't even realize his sin had already been exposed to God. It took the prophet Nathan to later come and expose it even further, saying that God knew exactly what David was doing and trying to get away with. How do you think David must have felt? If David had his scruples together and his connection wasn't broken (because he desired not to be in the fight any longer) he would've told Uriah he was right and David would've gone back to the battle with him. And if, on that trip back to the battle, David would've spent some time prostrated in front of the Lord realizing what he did wrong and how to deal with it at that time, maybe the events that we read here in the next few verses would've never happened. Unfortunately, that wasn't David's thinking at the time. He was still trying to cover up his sin. Verse 12 goes on,

“And David said to Uriah, Tarry here today also, and to morrow I will let thee depart. [“I will let you go back to battle.”] So Uriah abode in Jerusalem that day, and the morrow. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him; and he made him drunk: [If David could not get him to go home, maybe if he got him drunk, he would give in and go home, be with his wife and lie with her so David would be off the hook. That plan backfired also. Uriah did not go down to his house.] And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.”

When that plan didn't work, Satan started to creep deeper and deeper into David's mindset. In verses 6 through 13 in this chapter Satan used his method of deception and David is clearly seen here hiding his sin, just like Adam and Eve were trying to hide from God because they knew what sin was. David is doing the same thing here in verses 6 through 13. He is trying to hide his sin. He is scheming and dreaming up plans and they're not working. The man he is trying to use to go along with his plans had more integrity than David. He is more concerned about being in the fight than David. He is more concerned about the Ark, the children of Israel, and his own family than David. Uriah knew that if they lost the battle his own wife would be in jeopardy. When David disengaged, he fell into Satan's hands. Even though it was probably a gradual process, Satan's grip on his life was beginning to squeeze him and Satan was able to control his every move. This is a man after God's own heart. What comforts me is how a man after God's own heart could fall so low, yet God was there to pick him up when he recognized, “Unto thee, O

God, I have sinned.” You see his repentance in Psalms 51.

It is in verses 14 to 27 where David pretended as if nothing happened. He was in a state of denial.

“And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die.”

David wrote in the letter for Joab to put Uriah where the most danger was, with the greatest probability of him dying, but that's not where David stopped. David went on to write that they were to then desert him. He told Joab to just leave him there in the hottest spot of the battle all alone with the enemy, outnumbered. The probability of death was 100% in that case. Uriah would die and David committed murder in his heart and eventually the actual murder of the individual. Now, Joab was legalistic to the letter of the law when it came to following orders, and the bottom line is, Joab didn't know the situation. As far as he knew, Uriah did something to upset David and this was a way for David to punish him for it, so he carried out the order. We read that in verse 16,

“And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. [Where the most valiant of the enemy were.]

And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. [Murder has now been committed.]

Then Joab sent and told David all the things concerning the war;

And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king,

And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall?

Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. [Now Joab is scheming about what to say to David when this particular messenger goes back and reports to him. It is amazing how God kept His hand in all this.]

So the messenger went, and came and showed David all that Joab had sent him for.

And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us into the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate.

And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants; and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.”

Uriah didn't stand a chance. He was set up and murdered by his own king. Yes, the enemy they were fighting committed the physical murder, but the spiritual murder of this individual was planned ahead by David. David spiritually murdered this individual. He had murder in his heart to cover up his sin. You can't disguise it or sugar coat it, and that's what happens when you disengage from the battle and try to hide your sin.

“Then David says unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab....” Here, David goes on to tell the messenger to go back and tell Joab to not feel bad about what happened; things like this happen. What a state of denial David is in here. He hasn't even realized what evil he has done to this faithful soldier and servant and how he brought others into his hideous crime; like Joab, for instance. Even though Joab probably didn't know what was going on, it is evident here in verses 18 through 24, that Joab thought something was up. He was probably thinking, “This does not sound like David. What is going on here?” So he tries to scheme his own little story. Then we read in verse 25,

“Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee, [or be evil in thy eyes is the correct Hebrew translation] for the sword devoureth one as well as another [such and such happens in the Hebrew]: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him. And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. And when the mourning was past, David sent and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife....”

Most Hebrew scholars will say that mourning was about seven days. It could have been longer, but it was about seven days. I also believe it was only about seven days, because David knew he had no time to spare. He had to marry this woman, Bathsheba, quickly to hide the evil that he had done by lying with another man's wife, who was also a faithful soldier in his army. In the process, just think of the arrogance that now creeps in. The rest of the city of Jerusalem and its inhabitants will look at David and say, “Wow, what a king! His faithful soldier Uriah died in battle, (which was common in those days), so he took his widow and made her his wife. He will take care of her.” Oh, I'm sure he was getting some congratulations for the admirable moral portrait he was trying to paint of what a good king he was, not understanding that he betrayed not only his soldier servant, but God Himself.

I keep saying the same thing. This shows that when you try to hide yourself or hide something, or when you try to pretend nothing happened and that everything is okay, you go into that state of denial and start blaming something else. In this case, what David did in verses 24 and 25, was to say, “Well, these things happen. This is what war does.” No, this is what evil does. Yes, there might have been a situation someday where Uriah would've found himself pinned against the enemy and would lose his life, but this wasn't the way to lose it. God knew it and David also knew it, but he was more concerned with covering his sin instead of getting down on his knees and saying, “Unto thee, O God, I have sinned. What do I do now?” Remember he is still king. As a result of this, Nathan confronts David in chapter 12:1,

“And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.”

Then Nathan goes on to explain an injustice that was done to a poor man. In verse 4 we read,

“And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's

lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.

And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: [David does not even realize that he is convicting himself to death.]

And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. [“Thou art the man, David.”] *Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul;*

And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, [He did. Just look at the story of Absalom.] *and I will take thy wives before thine eyes* [Which Absalom did.], *and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.*

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.”

He was forgiven of his sin. Most of you would have said, “He's not worth it, Lord. He's just a miserable character. No matter how he started, something got hold of him and now he is totally evil so just get rid of him. Get him out of our sight. We want nothing to do with him.” God didn't do that because what made David a man after God's own heart was that he recognized that he allowed sin to enter his life. Then he ran to God and asked for forgiveness and he asked God to put him back on the path of God's righteousness and back on the path of doing it God's way.

You will see that repentance in Psalms 51, but sin had its repercussions and Nathan lays it out clearly in the latter part of the verses when he said, ***“Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house....”*** His wives would be taken, his family would eventually be nothing but a heartache to him, watching his own son turn on him and then eventually would find out he was killed and his daughters raped. You name it. From this point on, David's life was a life of sadness and a life of having his heart broken over and over again.

Today we are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ when we sin and now God doesn't look at us as sinners, but sinners saved by grace through Christ Jesus. I have known so many Christians in my lifetime who think because they understand that Christ died for their sins and they are covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, (which is 100% true), that there will be no repercussions for their sin. As a Christian, if you commit murder and then ask God for forgiveness, which He can give to you 100% covered by the blood of Jesus Christ, and you will be totally forgiven. But to the state you still have to pay the price for the crime. There are repercussions for sin; some greater, some lesser. Not that God is going to be punishing you like He did here with David, but there might be other institutions and people who will hold you accountable for that sin and never

forgive you for it. They will forever be there to remind you or somehow make you pay back what you have done; stealing for instance.

I'm not here to preach about sin. We all face it, and there are repercussions to it, but the same God that forgives our sins also gives us the grace and the strength to go through whatever repercussions there are from it; He is the same God who promised that He will never leave us, nor fail us, nor forsake us. Understand that there are times when sin will happen in life and you'll feel the repercussions. The one thing you can be guaranteed, just as David was guaranteed when he recognized he sinned against God, is that there is forgiveness at the cross when that blood was spilled. No one can take that away, no one whatsoever. Don't let Satan deceive you into think it is not available. It is available.

All this wouldn't have happened if David, back in chapter 11, verse 1, had decided to go with the kings when they went to battle. He would have led them and they would have conquered and been victorious. Just as God had led them in the past with those victories, He would have lead them into victory once again. God was still with David. Those victories were going to come, but God knows how long all the distractions took from His plan of accomplishing what He wanted accomplished because David decided to disengage.

Too many of you have decided to disengage because you are bewitched and deceived by Christian doctrine saying there is a better way, an easier way, a more cozy way to get into heaven. No, there is not, and there was not for David. In Ephesians 6:14, Paul is trying to warn us what that truth is, what the matter that was under consideration is, and that is spiritual warfare, the spiritual fight. Satan is not letting up.

Go to Psalms 38, which was written around the same time as when David's sin was exposed. In this psalm, just put yourself in this man's mind as we read these verses. This is not a very happy psalm. Actually, reading this psalm really depresses me more than anything else once I put myself into David's mindset. David writes,

***“O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. [David's conscience is killing him.]
There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.
For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.
I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.
For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh.”***

His loins were not girded about with truth; the truth of the matter that is under consideration, when everything started to go wrong in II Samuel 11:1, when he decided to disengage. His loins were not girded about with truth. His loins were filled with a loathsome disease. Basically in the Hebrew, *he is slowly drying up* both physically and spiritually.

“I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.”

Again, this is why David was a man after God's own heart. He recognized where he went wrong and found himself in the state of hiding from God, hiding his evilness, devising a plan to cover it all up, which led him to a state of denial. Eventually, he blamed the battle for Uriah's death when he knew very well that he told Joab to put him, not only in battle, but leave him there by himself. David's conscience was eating at him.

Verse 7 tells us, ***“For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease:”*** Meaning he was slowly drying up as a person in the flesh, decaying, rotting away, and spiritually and physically. He needed God's rescue. David never would have written this psalm if he understood Ephesians 6:14, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”*** The truth is the matter that is under consideration, the spiritual warfare, the fight for eternity.

The question now is whose side are you on? Are you on the Lord's side or with all the others who want to convince you that you don't have to be engaged in this fight for spiritual eternity and existence with our Lord Jesus Christ? Satan wants you to believe the latter. To that, I say let us remember when it is time to go to war to have our loins girded about with truth every hour of every day. When it's time to go to war in this case, we might not be kings, but we are joint-heirs with Christ, which in my mind is a lot more important than any earthly kingdom here. To be a joint-heir with Christ means to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ; one who is chosen and called without recall.

The choice you have now is whether you want to take time off from the spiritual fight, or keep being engaged day in and day out in your personal life and also with your ministry or church. Decide whether you want to be engaged in what they are trying to accomplish. Hopefully, they are employing the Word of God as this ministry does. The next step is yours. Some of you have fallen away from God because you have disengaged, like David you have disengaged in the battle; maybe not as horrible as David's situation, but you've been there. You disengaged from the battle to pursue other avenues, or to pursue a life that catered to your flesh, or at least that's what you thought. Willingly or unwillingly, you thought that and it has led you to nothing more than heartbreaks and disappointments.

Again, I'm not promising that you will be delivered from those heartbreaks and disappointments, but I promise that if you stay engaged, you will have God's strength, power, force, and might that will clothe you and never leave you, fail you, or forsake you. It's all you need to get through whatever you are facing. That is the truth Paul was trying to communicate to these Ephesians.

Girding Up in the Flesh vs. Faith

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”

In verse 14 in Ephesians 6, we've covered everything about deception using several different examples to explain that the phrase 'with truth' mentioned in verse 15, is not the Gospel. Some have checked what I was saying and found it accurate. Once translated correctly in the Greek 'with truth' is *what is true in the matter under consideration*. That's what Paul has been saying since verse 10; that we must be strengthened in the Lord, and that we will be attacked by the devil plus all his agents, so we must stand and withstand making sure the armor is on. The 'matter that is under consideration' from verse 10 to this point is spiritual warfare. It is as simple as that, yet Christianity has complicated it to the point of confusion.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”

This message will be about girding up in the flesh versus faith. Yes, you can gird up your loins in the flesh instead of in the faith and I'll show examples of people doing just that. Some of you are probably getting tired of this verse, but I don't know how you can be. Some wish I would move on and get to the breastplate of righteousness, your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace and so forth. I'll get there. Like I said earlier, when I get there, I'm sure I will bring out some things that you have never heard before to give us further insight on how important it is to understand what Paul said.

Regarding this subject, I ask the question: Would Eve have been kicked out of the garden if Adam didn't eat any part of that fruit? Go back to Genesis 2:15. It reads,

“And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”

He was to work it. Perhaps this was not the same toil of work that we now share since the fall of man. Maybe it was a joyous labor without any pain and agony, sore muscles, or becoming overheated. Adam and Eve were to work, not lying down in the Garden of Eden's flowing grass, not sitting beside the still cool refreshing waters, doing nothing except taking naps all day. Of course I'm not against naps. In fact, today I could have used a good one. However, they were to keep busy and working for God and His pleasure. Verse 16 continues,

“And the LORD God commanded the man [Adam], saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone;”

Even though Adam had no concept of death, he knew eating the fruit was something he shouldn't do. But then he ate it after he saw Eve eat the fruit and not immediately die. After God's

command, He goes on to create Eve from a rib of Adam, but this command was to Adam. Adam was given all the necessary instruction and commands of what he should and shouldn't do. It's as simple as that. After Eve was created, it was Adam's obligation to let Eve know God's instructions and everything he knew about what God told him to do and not to do. As I said before, I think he did a lousy job of it. Perhaps because Eve did not hear it from the Creator Himself, she didn't take Adam's word for it. Maybe she thought Adam was just making that up to tell her what to do and not to do, and she rebelled. There are probably a million excuses to rationalize what happened. The point is, they were not obedient and we've paid the price ever since; they paid the price and we're paying the price.

In verse 25 it says, ***“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.”*** Most preachers and theologians think there was some kind of glory of light covering their bodies where – how can I put this in a clean way – all their body parts that we cover up now were not exposed because of this glory of light and therefore they had nothing to be ashamed of. They basically had a light of glory covering their bodies. I'd like to know how they would explain how they were to produce children and replenish this earth without seeing anything that was going on. I always found that fascinating.

“And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” The actual Hebrew word for ashamed is, ***buwsh*** [boosh]. Check it out if you don't believe me. I'm not trying to be funny. That is the actual Hebrew words are, ***“and were not buwsh.”*** The King James has *ashamed*, meaning they weren't confused or confounded by their nakedness. They didn't have a guilty conscience, they had an innocent conscience. There was nothing wrong with it so they went around naked. They didn't need to gird up their loins as long as they stayed obedient to God. God was the protective hedge round about them and Satan couldn't penetrate it; just like he couldn't get to Job, but more so with Adam and Eve.

In chapter 3, verse 1 we read,

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”

You know what happens next: Satan gets Eve to question God and God's Word until she eats the fruit in verse 6,

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”

The question then arises, was Adam with Eve at the time she was being tempted by the serpent? I don't believe so. I think she was separated from Adam at the time. Adam was busy doing what God had commanded him to do and that was to dress and keep Eden, the garden of God. Eve drifted away by herself. To make it short and simple, Satan got hold of her through the serpent and she made the choice to take a bite out of that fruit because she saw it was desirable and also to make her wise. She fell for that temptation and lie, and she partook of that fruit ***“and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”***

We know when she took of the fruit in verse 7, what happened next, ***“And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked;”*** That only happened after both Adam and Eve ate the fruit. Yes, Eve took that fruit and took that first bite, but, if Adam was the first one to take that fruit and he took that first bite, the roles would have been reversed. That's why most people in today's society don't understand or comprehend it.

Their eyes weren't opened at different times. Eve's eyes weren't opened when only she partook of that fruit; it was only after Adam ate the fruit that both their eyes were opened. He was responsible for Eve, just as the second Adam is responsible and provided a way of escape for all of us because of what the first Adam did. The first Adam, in my opinion, still had the opportunity to not eat of the fruit. We don't know what he would have to do to keep Eve in that garden. Even though she was now plagued with disobedience and not technically in the will of God, her innocence was still intact where she did not decipher the difference between good and evil. It only happened after Adam ate the fruit and, of course, you know what happened then.

Again, it was Adam's responsibility to make sure Eve knew exactly what God communicated to him, but I don't think it happened. Maybe he said, “Don't touch that. It is one tree we cannot touch,” or maybe he never even mentioned that God didn't want them to touch it. Who knows what happened? No matter the scenario, it was Adam's responsibility to instruct Eve to stay away from that tree. The serpent could speak and God knows what else Adam and Eve had to deal with. It was Adam's responsibility to tell Eve, “No matter who tells you, don't believe it. I'm the one who has communicated with God and I know exactly what He said.” Even if he did not have time to tell her everything prior to that particular experience, “Before you do anything of that nature, make sure you have some contact with me so I can tell you exactly what God said we should do about that particular circumstance.”

Even though a lot of this is speculation, I'm trying to communicate the many different scenarios so you can understand all the possibilities. You could read the story right through and think God said this, they did that, and here we are, but it was a lot more complicated than that. Their eyes were both opened after Adam ate the fruit, not before. Eve still didn't have an understanding of what she did, because she had no knowledge up to the point. When Adam took a piece of that fruit, then it gave them both the knowledge of good and evil and how vulnerable they were, having exposed themselves to what God was trying to protect them from.

Read the rest of that verse, ***“and they knew that they were naked;”*** Most preachers will translate this verse by saying that there was no shame before sin entered into the world and only after Adam and Eve sinned did they become self-conscious of their naked bodies. I don't believe that. I think they were conscious of their naked bodies, but they had innocent minds. Before they fell into Satan's trap they had clear consciences without any of the evil manipulations that sin would bring into their system. And that happened very quickly, too. Sin was not something that they would gradually learn throughout the decades. In my opinion, they became instantly knowledgeable in just about all things that sin produces. Satan caused a rush of thoughts to run through their minds to bring them to the point that they felt vulnerable. Not because they were naked, but because they were knowledgeable of what sin produced, so it brought shame into their existence.

What happens next are the first works in the Bible. It is in verse 7 we also read, “... **and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.**” That is a bad translation, a terrible translation. What this really says is, “**and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves things to gird about.**” It's very clear in the Hebrew. They made something to gird about their loins because Adam and Eve were now vulnerable.

I've told you before, the phrase ‘**girding up your loins**’ is symbolic of giving oneself strength. In the spiritual sense it is God giving you strength if you understand that you must gird up your loins. It is part of the warfare, the necessary tool and weapon, an instrument, to put on to supplement how other weapons are carried and how they are used. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, when character after character are facing difficult situations, the words 'and they girded up their loins' are found. They had to gird up their loins first when they felt vulnerable. Once again, this is speculation, but I wouldn't be surprised that as soon as Satan had Adam under his control, he gave him one swift kick in the genital area. I wanted to say something else. Boy, did Adam know at that point how vulnerable he was. It's just speculation, but that is what I would have done.

We see here that Adam and Eve sewed fig leaves for the purpose of girding up their loins. The problem with that is that God wasn't girding up their loins. They were girding up their loins in the flesh instead of understanding, “Unto thee, O God, I have sinned and how do I get back with you, O Lord. How can you forgive me?” Instead they lived in a state of denial thinking they could somehow hide what they had done from God. You know how the rest of the story goes. They tried to hide from God and they were afraid, but God knew exactly where they were and He dealt with them. In fact, in verse 21 in the same chapter, God made them a tunic or undergarment of skins and clothed them with the kind of clothing they needed. That clothing was the first animal sacrifice done because of their sin.

The reason I'm bringing up this story is because I want you to see that the first girding up of loins wasn't girding up in faith; it was girding up in the flesh, and the flesh produced fig leaves. Have you ever had a fig tree growing in your garden? I don't know if they are the same type of fig leaves, but if you just touch it, it's prickly and itchy. I don't know what they were thinking, but I am sure Adam and Eve would've gone around scratching all day trying to figure out how to stop that itching. See, what man produces is foolishness, trying to scratch an itch that can never be satisfied. Once you go down that path, you can scratch all you want and you will never be satisfied. In this case, what was missing was that perfect, completed union with God. It was completely under control by God who gave them everything they could possibly need. All they had to do to be able to have everlasting life without death was to be obedient and work the garden, but they didn't do it. They tried to cover themselves with their own works, tried to gird about their loins in the flesh, but all they could produce was itchy, prickly, uncomfortable clothing that would forever leave them scratching, never satisfying the itch until God got involved and showed them how to offer a temporary blood sacrifice. Even though it was temporary, because Christ had not yet come, the blood sacrifice would then be used for clothing to cover them.

We see another example of this in Numbers 13. In Genesis, Adam and Eve showed the first

works of the flesh by trying to gird about their loins in the flesh. Obviously, they weren't successful because after they girded about their loins in the flesh, they hid from God and God had to deal with them. Mankind hasn't changed throughout the centuries, even now. In Numbers we begin with verse 1,

“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. And Moses by the commandment of the LORD sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel.”

Now, if you started from the front of the Bible and worked your way through it, you would come upon this particular event first. Did you ever stop and wonder if God was telling Moses to send spies to explore Canaan in this verse? ***“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan....”*** Did you ever stop to ask why God would need to send spies to explore Canaan? He obviously knew what these rebellious Israelites were like; they would use the first opportunity to discourage themselves and communicate that to the rest of the camp when they came back. Then they would talk negatively amongst themselves, which would bring them to the point where they would rebel against God. God knew that would probably happen, so why would He set them up this way? He sure didn't need the information. He is an all seeing, all knowing, all powerful God. Why would He need spies to explore Canaan? That's what it says here, ***“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying.”*** And if you read Numbers before Deuteronomy, you would think that the Lord was behind what I'm about to read, but He wasn't. God allowed it to happen, but this wasn't the Lord's original intention. This is not how the Lord wanted this event to happen. He allowed it. Moses asked Him if it was okay and He allowed it, but this is not what the Lord said. To understand this verse, go to Deuteronomy 1:22. You cannot just read the Bible through thinking you have a complete understanding of how these events happened. In Deuteronomy 1:22 it is recorded,

“And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come.”

If you read Numbers 13:1, you get the impression the Lord spoke to Moses, and that it was the Lord's idea that they should send spies to explore Canaan. No, that's not how it happened. In Deuteronomy 1:22 it says, ***“And ye came near unto me [The people, the captains responsible for the certain tribes, went to Moses] every one of you, and said, We will send men before us...”*** “Now we believe God wants us to possess it.”

However, back in Deuteronomy 1:21 it reads, ***“Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.”*** That is what the Lord said, ***“go up and possess it, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.”*** The Lord knew that they would become discouraged and probably would have fear multiplied time and time again if they saw in advance what they were about to face. God knew very well once they saw the giants, the walled cities, and everything else, fear would creep in faster than anything and they would

become discouraged and dismayed. He didn't tell them to go spy it out because He knew exactly what would happen. He wanted them to get there and then He would have provided the way of escape. He would be the one providing the necessary knowledge of what to do to gain the victory through Moses.

Remember, not long after crossing the Red Sea one of the first battles was with Amalek in Exodus 17. I know I'm jumping around, but follow me because I'm making a point. Those verses in Exodus tell us,

Verse 8, ***“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek:”***

God is very clear in His instructions here, as He was very clear in Deuteronomy 1:21. This is their first battle and he wanted Joshua to choose out men. So Moses tells Joshua, ***“Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.”***

Those of you who know the story of Aaron and Hur know that as long as Moses' arms were lifted up, Joshua would win the battle. It looked like victory was close as long as Moses' arms stayed lifted up to heaven in prayer, but as soon as Moses' arms got tired and he dropped his arms, Joshua wouldn't prevail over Amalek. They would start losing the battle, so when Aaron and Hur saw what was going on, they propped Moses up and kept his arms up. Then Joshua won that first battle. It's where we get one of the names of God, Jehovah Nissi, the Lord is my banner. This name was chosen as a memorial to be heard in the ears of Joshua, to never be forgotten, even though this battle involved soldiers of God, (just as we are now soldiers of Jesus Christ) and human instruments that God was using in this spiritual warfare. This was spiritual warfare of greater importance than anything that could be seen in the valley below between Joshua, the Israelites, and Amalek.

It was a spiritual fight. Here Joshua is told to “Choose out men and fight. You are physically going to get involved and fight. If you do what I have told you, and I do what I know God wants me to do, we will win this, not only in the physical realm but also in the spiritual realm,” which is far greater and more important. And that is what they were told back, but here in Deuteronomy 1:21, ***“Behold, the LORD thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it...”*** There is no reference of fighting up to this point. 'Go up and possess it' were God's words, very clearly spoken, and He doesn't mince words. If He wanted them to go and fight, He would have told them that. I don't know exactly what God would have done once they got there. Maybe they were going to fight or maybe God would have provided another means of escape and provided the victory without fighting. Maybe it would have been more of a spiritual warfare of the unseen forces. I read stories not too long ago on how that can happen. God would have responded to obedience in a way that is unimaginable to our eyes. We don't know, but here he is told to go and possess it. Instead the children of Israel came up with a different answer in Deuteronomy 1:22, when Moses said,

“And ye came near unto me every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into

*what cities we shall come. And the saying pleased me [Moses] well; and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe:
And they turned and went up into the mountain, and came unto the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out.”*

In the Hebrew it says they were to take possession, but they wouldn't listen to God. Obviously Moses felt that their plan was a good idea and the responsible thing to do; he could prepare before going into strange territory knowing what they were going to face. It all might sound wonderful. In my lifetime, I have come across a lot of people who would rather go through all those motions than to put their faith in God. But if you put your faith in God, He will organize your way in the battle and just see if He doesn't take care of it. That could be a message in itself.

The point is, unless you understand what Deuteronomy 1:22 through 24 is saying, you'll never understand it wasn't God's idea to have this plan. God wanted them to go into the land with faith and obedience under the leadership of Moses to possess that land. But they weren't satisfied with that idea so they came up with their own plan. And the Lord told him, “Okay, if this is what you want to do.” That is when, **“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan...”** That's what they did and that's how they got there. It was not the Lord's idea, but He allowed it to happen, probably knowing very well what would happen when they didn't put their eyes on Him. They would only put their eyes on what they could see then and there at that time.

Read on in Numbers 13:17,

**“And Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain:
And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many;”**

Think about it! Why would it matter? These verses really show how someone who is close and powerful with God can make some very bad leadership decisions, but that didn't change his position. It doesn't mean they had a right to vote him out. They made some poor decisions themselves and if it not for Moses they would have been wiped out a lot sooner. Verse 19 continues,

**“And what the land is that they dwell in, whether it be good or bad; and what cities they be that they dwell in, whether in tents, or in strongholds;
And what the land is, whether it be fat or lean, whether there be wood therein, or not. And be ye of good courage, and bring of the fruit of the land. Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.”**

What Moses should have done, even after the Lord communicated to him, was to tell them that this was the dumbest idea yet. Is “Go check them out if they are strong or weak” not the biggest lack of faith statement that you'll find Moses saying in the first five books of the Torah? Yes! I challenge you to find anywhere that this is a faith statement. This is setting them up. Of course they are going to find strong people and of course they are going to find weaker ones. What they

were going to find would discourage them because they would use any excuse to remind themselves how they thought how good they had it back in Egypt when they were under nothing but slaves toiling away with no future and hope. Moses took a stupid pill.

“So they went up, and searched the land from the wilderness...” And in verse 23 they brought back pomegranates and figs.

In verse 25 we read, ***“And they returned from searching of the land after forty days.*** [They spied out the land for 40 days.]

And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land.”

I can just imagine this congregation sitting there watching these spies lay down in front of them all the wonderful figs, pomegranates, grapes, everything that was available in the land of milk and honey. Their first reaction must have been one of joy, one of relief, and one of excitement thinking, “Let's go! Nothing is going to hold us back.” That was the good news, then, here comes the bad news.

“And they told him, and said, We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it. Nevertheless [“Oh, by the way people.”] the people be strong....”

So what! They saw miracle after miracle. They saw the Red Sea parted. I know some scholars don't believe it was the Red Sea, but they saw waters parted, they saw all the plagues, they saw deliverance that God provided them when they put the blood on the doorposts. Just go back to see miracle after miracle. They didn't have to look hard to remember what God had done for them and what He brought them through.

“Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.

The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan. [That is a lot of 'ites' to get rid of.]

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it;”

Caleb was one of the faithful spies, the other being Joshua; two faithful spies who came back with a good report and full of faith. They knew what God instructed them to do, which I have already read in Deuteronomy 1. They were to possess the land. They were not told at this point that they were going to have to fight for it. They were told they were going to possess it. It still required obedience and it might have required a lot of fighting and conquering, but up to this point all they were told was to possess it. It was when they returned almost 40 years later, that they would have to fight for it, but not the kind of fighting that you would necessarily think.

Look at the walls of Jericho. Those walls didn't come tumbling down because the children of Israel had the might to do it. It came down because of God's might, which made their conquering

of the city easier because God was before them. I don't know how much fighting would have taken place in that first trip if they had remained faithful, but because of their unfaithfulness, things changed. Just as with Adam and Eve's unfaithfulness, there were repercussions for sin. If that wasn't so, I wouldn't be suffering and you wouldn't be suffering. We suffer because of Adam and Eve. Although we are forgiven, there are still repercussions for us and there were also repercussions for the children of Israel who would go into the land 38 years later. In my opinion, they had to do a lot more fighting than would have been required in that first trip. Even though God is a compassionate God and He is long-suffering, He also comes to a point where He has had enough. He came to this point with this rebellious people.

“And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. [In today's modern language, “Those giants, Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites are no match for us! Do you realize who we have on our side! Let's go, make haste and get the job done.”]

But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. [They did not gird up their loins with faith. They girded up their loins in the flesh.]

And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature.

And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”

They portrayed themselves as grasshoppers waiting to be crushed and eaten because grasshopper was a delicacy in those days. Then in Chapter 14, the people rebelled. We read in verse 1,

“And all the congregation lifted up their voice, and cried; and the people wept that night. And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and against Aaron [They murmured against God's leadership once again.]: and the whole congregation said unto them, Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt! or would God we had died in this wilderness! And wherefore hath the LORD brought us unto this land, to fall by the sword, that our wives and our children should be a prey? were it not better for us to return into Egypt?”

Just think what they are saying! They are worried about their wives and children? What a miserable state it must have been to be a slave in Egypt under fierce taskmasters. A slave in bondage under terrible toil knowing that as soon as your son or daughter grows up, they will be doing the same thing, in the same place, suffering the same circumstances. There must come a time when you say, "Enough is enough" and "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The children of Israel needed to believe what was prophesied. They had the opportunity to step out in faith and be obedient to God, if not for their own miserable flesh but for their children, wives, and families, so they wouldn't be raised in and die in the land of bondage. What was going through their minds?

“And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt. [That was always their famous line.]

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the assembly of the congregation of the

children of Israel.

And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

If the LORD delight [or be pleased] in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.”

Joshua and Caleb spoke to all the company of Israel saying, ***“The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD be pleased [not delight] in us, then he will bring us into this land...”*** How do you please God? Faith pleases God. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Joshua and Caleb were saying, “Come on! Gird up your loins! Have faith! He is going before us and He has told us to possess it. Don't even think that we are not going to be able to possess it if we remain faithful and obedient, not only to God, but God's leadership.”

“Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us [They will be our meal.]: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

But all the congregation bade stone them with stones.”

Here were two individuals full of faith trying to get this congregation lifted up in faith, putting their eyes back on God instead of just listening to ten faithless spies. They were saying “Listen to us! You will not listen to Moses and Aaron, but we have seen it with our own eyes. It can be done. We should never have spied out the land anyway because it was never part of God's plan. He just allowed it to happen, but since we saw it, listen to us.”

“But all the congregation bade stone them with stones. [They wanted to kill the ones delivering a faith message to lift their spirits.] And the glory of the LORD appeared in the tabernacle of the congregation before all the children of Israel.

And the LORD said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? [In other words, “Why will these people not believe me and how long should I tolerate this? I give them signs, I produce miracles, I give them food to eat, I have led them all the way, but it is never enough.”]

I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they.”

If I was Moses, I would've said, “Okay, where do I sign up for that plan. I am sick of Plan A.” (That is the flesh talking.) God's plan sounded a lot better than what the children of Israel had in spying into the land of Canaan. If I was Moses I would have agreed with God, but thank God I am not.

“And Moses said unto the LORD, Then the Egyptians shall hear it, (for thou broughtest up this people in thy might from among them;)

And they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land: for they have heard that thou LORD art among this people, that thou LORD art seen face to face, and that thy cloud standeth over

them, and that thou goest before them, by day time in a pillar of a cloud, and in a pillar of fire by night.”

Moses was concerned about how the Lord's integrity would be perceived, not only by the children of Israel, but also all the enemies of the children of Israel. In other words, “God, you said you would deliver them and bring them to this land of Canaan. Don't let our enemies mock you. Don't give them the opportunity to do it.” In verse 15 Moses goes on to tell the Lord,

“Now if thou shalt kill all this people as one man, then the nations which have heard the fame of thee will speak, saying,

Because the LORD was not able to bring this people into the land which he swore unto them, therefore he hath slain them in the wilderness.

And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my LORD be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying,

The LORD is long-suffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

Pardon [or forgive them], I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”

In verse 20, we see what God did,

“And the LORD said, I have pardoned [or forgiven] according to thy word:”

Many have been trained to think that because the children of Israel didn't get to the promised land – the first group who were 20 years and older that did not make it – never had the opportunity of entering into the rest of the future promised land, the one that goes throughout eternity. You've been led to believe that these rebellious children of Israel all end up in hell or the lake of fire because of their rebellious hearts. Now, they were a rebellious group of people. There's no doubt about it, and God was sick of them. God wanted to destroy them and start all over with Moses because Moses was more concerned about the Word of the Lord and how it would be perceived by the enemy. Moses begged for their forgiveness so they could be forgiven their iniquities and transgressions in verse 18. And he asked the Lord in verse 19, ***“I beseech thee, to forgive the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of thy mercy, and as thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.”***

Moses asked the Lord, “With the forgiveness that you have shown them, through all the rebellion from the time we left Egypt until now, I'm asking you to do again and keep doing it.” Do you ever wonder why they had to go through the motions, even in the desert, of all the sin offerings and trespass offerings? If there was still no opportunity for sins to be forgiven, even for this first group, then why go through all the rituals of these offerings? It's counter-productive. It doesn't make any sense. So, the next time you read that all the children of Israel who didn't make it to the promised land on the first trip will end up in the lake of fire, know that the Bible says there is hope and the possibility that they will make it. Maybe not all of them, but there is a possibility that some came to the understanding of why they had to bring their offerings, especially the sin and trespass offerings. The offerings brought them back to the point where God looked at them

differently, as no longer covered with sin, but forgiven. Even though it's a temporary forgiveness, and there was a perfect lamb still to come in the future, a way of escape was provided for their sin because God said in verse 20:

***“And the LORD said, I have pardoned according to thy word [“I have forgiven them.”]:
But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD.”***

This is because of the events that would eventually take place and God's Word would be carried out by a people who would not rebel a second time. In verse 24, God also provides information,

“But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it.”

And in verse 26 we read,

***“And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying,
How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me.
Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you:
Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness, and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, Doubtless ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I swore to make you dwell therein, save Caleb... and Joshua....
But your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land which ye have despised.
But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness.”***

Their rebellious flesh shall fall in the wilderness. Do I think all of them changed their ways? No, I don't, but I believe they were still given the opportunity or else God's Word in verse 20 is a lie. I know they were shown, because scripture clarifies their way of escape through the offerings for their sins. But their sins had repercussions and because of these repercussions they wouldn't see the promised land. Instead, in verse 33, God tells them they must wander in the wilderness for 40 years, and their carcasses be wasted in the wilderness. They wouldn't see the promised land.

Then in verse 34,

“After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. I the LORD have said, I will surely do it unto all this evil congregation, that are gathered together against me:”

Some may wonder if God did forgive them when God called them an evil congregation. Without Christ's blood what do you think of yourself? You might be a good person as far as the world perceives, but without the covering of the blood of Jesus Christ, I am evil and you are evil; there are no exceptions, but now we are sinners saved by grace, thank God. In verse 36 we read,

“And the men which Moses sent to search the land, who returned, and made all the congregation to murmur against him, by bringing up a slander upon the land, Even those men that did bring up the evil report upon the land, died by the plague before the LORD....

And Moses told these sayings unto all the children of Israel: and the people mourned greatly.”

Those ten spies died a miserable death for their unbelief and their lack of faith. But the mourning and sorrow wasn't over the sin they committed against God, or the sin they committed against God, Moses, and Aaron, the men with God's leadership. That was not what they were grieving about. They were grieving because now they realized that they would have to spend 40 years in this wilderness. They would rather take their chances in the flesh to be once again disobedient to God. They never grieved over the sin they committed against God, Moses, and Aaron. No, they were grieving because they didn't want to go wandering around in the wilderness for another 40 years. Now they were saying that they would take their chances there in the wilderness. God wouldn't go with them this time:

“And they rose up early in the morning, and gat them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be here, and will go up unto the place which the LORD hath promised: for we have sinned. [I am glad they recognized their sin, and even though they were told what their future would be like, they didn't want to accept it.]

And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the LORD? but it shall not prosper.

Go not up, for the LORD is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies.

For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the LORD, therefore the LORD will not be with you.

But they presumed to go up unto the hill top: nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and Moses, departed not out of the camp. [They did not go.]

Then the Amalekites came down, and the Canaanites which dwelt in that hill, and smote them, and discomfited them, [in the Hebrew, they crushed them by beating them down]....”

You know the rest of the story. They spent the next 40 years in the wilderness missing the promised land, but I don't want to finish this message there. In Deuteronomy 21 God said they were to possess the promised land. Instead, they came up with their own plan described in verse 22 and 23, and with Moses' approval, asked God to put His blessing on it. God said, “Okay, do it your way,” and bottom line is, they did it their way which produced nothing but discouragement and fear. Then in verse 41 we read,

“Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the LORD....” After realizing what they did and hearing that God said their carcasses would be spread across that wilderness and they wouldn't see the promised land because of their actions, they had a change of heart. Repentance was not there, just a change of heart. It is now that they would rather take their chances, go into the promise land, and fighting the Amorites instead of going back into the wilderness. What we read here in verse 41 is the same story as Deuteronomy,

“Then ye answered and said unto me, We have sinned against the LORD, we will go up and fight, according to all that the LORD our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on

every man his weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill.”

However, the Lord didn't tell them to go up and fight; He said twice to go up and possess it. The first time God told them to go, they didn't want to go without checking it out. Then when God says they cannot go, they are saying they will go and now they are ready to gird up their loins. They finally realized the truth, and they were ready to put on the girdle of truth, but it was too late. In verse 42,

“And the LORD said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you [The children of Israel went in the flesh, not in the faith.]; lest ye be smitten before your enemies.

So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill.”

At the beginning of this message I said you can gird up your loins with faith by understanding what you're involved in, who goes before you, who strengthens you, and who gives you the force and the might to face whatever you are facing. Whether you possess it or fight against it, God will gird up your loins with His spiritual armor, or you can try to do it in your own strength and power in the flesh. The children of Israel tried to do it in their own flesh. They girded up every man his weapons of war, instead of God's weapons of war.

They never understood the principles of that first battle with Amalek. As I told you earlier, yes, there were human components involved in that battle when Joshua and the men he chose fought against Amalek. But they would have lost that battle if the spiritual component was not achieved through Moses' communication with God. Aaron and Hur recognized it when they got involved and held up his arms. When they did that, the battle turned and Joshua won the battle. He crushed them, discomfited them, and beat them down to nothing. He girded up his loins, but his loins would only stay girded, so to speak, if the Spirit of God was also involved in the battle. And here, the children of Israel never came to realize how important it is to have God's weapons of warfare rather than man's weapons of warfare. We must be girded up with God's weapons of warfare.

No matter what took place in the garden, (whether you agree with my point of view or not isn't even important), what Adam and Eve tried to do, if you understand the scripture and understand how that verse is translated in Genesis 3, was to put on fig leaves to gird up their loins. This was their efforts of the flesh. God had to finally get involved and gird up their loins with animal skins sacrificed to cover their sin after they failed at girding up their loins in the flesh.

Just the same, the children of Israel tried to gird up every man his weapons of war when they realized what they had done by their disobedience. God said not to do it. They didn't listen to God, demonstrating further disobedience to the Word of the Lord. They lost badly when they went in with the flesh girded by their own weapons and not girding their loins by the spiritual weapons. They never came to realize or understand that.

For us, in Ephesians 6:14, we have that opportunity to be girded up by having our loins girded about with the truth about what spiritual warfare is. It amazes me when I stop to think about all

the giving in the Old Testament. This is in contrast to Christians today who say there's no giving in the New Testament, that giving was all law. However, there is so much giving in the New Testament, not just in the Gospels, but throughout the Epistles, and it amazes me how people can miss it. Spiritual warfare is also found in so many places from Genesis to Revelation as a subject, more than any other you can find throughout the Book. Spiritual warfare only becomes important once we put our priorities, our minds, and our focus on Christ. Without that, we would be just reading any book.

Once you understand what the blood of Jesus Christ did for you, you realize that now you are called as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. This is not a choosing done by you, but He chose you. He chose you to be a soldier and soldiers are involved in warfare, preparing for warfare, and understanding how warfare will be engaged, and who the enemy is. That's why this Book is loaded with information from cover to cover front to back, with the information of how this warfare is carried out and how we should apply God's spiritual weapons, the armor of God, in our minds, to be clothed with the fitted armor that He gives us. The children of Israel never recognized that. I believe that eventually Adam and Eve recognized it, but not at first because when you gird up your loins in the flesh, you're not thinking about God; you're only thinking about covering your own sin.

When you gird up your loins in faith and the truth of what you are fighting against, He will clothe you, empower you, and He will give you the strength and might to fight all the methods of the enemy. Hopefully we can learn by past mistakes and understand how important it is not to try in our own power, but totally rely and trust in God's power and God's Word. (I'm sorry for those of you who think you can do it alone. Actually you have believed a strong illusion and will be damned.) Girding up in our own power has never been God's way. That's why there is leadership. Whether you like the leadership or not is not even the question. Leadership is there and placed, if done properly as Paul says in Ephesians 4, to bring the body of Christ to a place of total unity; not with me, not with whoever you follow or wherever you go to church, but to Christ. I'm not here to gain followers; I'm here to make people understand why God's Word is important. It should never, on any day, go unnoticed in your life. Quite frankly you should be thinking about it and trying to understand it every day of your life without fail.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God. I believe spiritual warfare is a big part of it.

The Bows of the Mighty are Broken

I'm in Ephesians 6:14, "***Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,***" and I'm still on the first part of this verse.

As I have been saying, we need more soldiers of Jesus Christ to stand instead of looking for opportunities to lie down and relax from the battle that continues to go on every hour of every day. Also, as you already know, *girded about with truth* is referring to the truth of the subject presented between verses 10 to 14, and that is spiritual warfare. The truth of the matter is what is under consideration here; spiritual warfare, doing battle with the unseen foes listed in Ephesians 6:12. We're put on the armor of God so we can withstand in that evil day, having done all to stand, so "***Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth***" As part of this, we have been reviewing some of the people that God has used throughout the millenniums to make this point clearer to you and now I'm going back to that particular subject matter.

Go to I Samuel 1:1,

"Now there was a certain man...

And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children."

I'm not going to go into whether having two wives was correct or moral. I'm sure he had two wives for the very reason that Hannah, who we are going to take a closer look at, couldn't bear children up to this point. Do I support polygamy? Absolutely not; it was never God's intention. In fact, every time we see polygamy in the Old and New Testament, there was nothing but trouble. It was never God's intention. God's intention was for one man and one woman period; no exceptions. Now you know where I stand on a lot of different political controversial issues. One man, one woman; I'm not their judge and I'm not even considering myself to be their judge. God is their judge. God deals individually with us. I'm just telling you what God's intention was from the very beginning.

I'm sure, and am willing to bet everything I have, that Hannah's inability to have children was the reason he took a second wife. This man was somewhat of an upright character if you really take a close look at him here in chapters 1 and 2. He tried to follow God and observe what he thought was right in his own eyes of what he should do and how he should follow the law. Nevertheless, in those days if you couldn't have children, if you couldn't have sons to carry out your lineage and your name, it was like the end of the world. That was one of their most important reasons for existence at that time, because no matter what tribe they came from, they believed that their child might be the Messiah, the deliverer that had been promised. Returning to verse 2,

"And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children." Peninnah means *jewel* or *pearl*, and Hannah's name means *grace*. We will find out why in a minute the importance of this and what it has to do with spiritual warfare. Verse 3 continues,

“And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship [a better translation is *from year to year to worship*] and to sacrifice unto the LORD of hosts in Shiloh. [Just as all the Israelites were to do; to worship and sacrifice their offerings at Shiloh where the Ark was.] And the two sons of Eli ... were there.”

These two sons of Eli were priests. I've analyzed this verse over the last few days and I asked myself: why were the sons of Eli listed here in verse 3? What point was trying to be made here? Believe me, everyone living in those times knew how evil the sons of Eli were. Eli paid a dear price for his wicked sons. He became weak in not dealing with his household and setting things in order. These sons continued to abuse their position doing seen and unseen things in the name of the Lord to gain some advantage over the people. They were wicked, insulting, and disobedient to the Lord, and Eli should have taken them out of the positions they were in.

However, that didn't change this man, Elkanah, the husband of Hannah and Peninnah, one iota. He was obedient to the faith, worshipped, and gave what was his to the Lord. Elkanah came year after year to worship and to sacrifice, and he handed over the sacrifices to these wicked priests, these sons of Eli. No matter what they did with that sacrifice, Elkanah and his family would still be credited for doing it God's way, even if these priests didn't do it God's way. This must be the reason I see the sons of Eli listed; Elkanah and his family were obedient to the faith and respected the position of God's representatives.

Returning to I Samuel, we read in verse 4,

“And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions: But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb.”

I know some translations have *double portion* and some say a *single portion*. There's a lot of controversy about how many portions, but that's not the point. I believe he gave her a double portion. It's the translation that I believe is correct. Remember, they were going up from year to year, and Elkanah had been married to Hannah for quite a while and she couldn't produce children, which was like having the plague during this time.

“And her adversary also provoked [really *angered*] her sore, for to make her fret”

Verse 6 is telling us that ***“her adversary,”*** a woman who should have had compassion for her, agitated her and eventually made her anxious and fretful. Peninnah, the adversary mentioned here, provoked Hannah to the point where she was fretting. She was telling Hannah, “I can produce children, but you can't. I don't see why he is giving you a double portion. I'm the one who is having children year in year out. What does Elkanah see in you that he doesn't see in me?” This adversary was nothing more than someone used by the devil to bring Hannah to a point of fretting because she couldn't produce children. Verse 7 goes on to say,

“And as he did so year by year [really, *year after year*], when she went up to the house of the

LORD, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.”

I can only imagine what this adversary, Peninnah, was doing to Hannah, telling her, “God obviously has forsaken you, but look what He has done for me. I do not know what kind of life you are living, Hannah, but obviously you are doing it all wrong.” There was barb after barb, fiery darts, and flaming arrows coming at Hannah from Peninnah year after year after year, at a time when she should have been celebrating, worshipping, and offering. That was supposed to be a sacred and happy time. Instead this adversary was using this time to send her flaming arrows into the heart of Hannah. This was an evil woman controlled by an evil unseen force. Peninnah was demonized by these unseen forces to bring Hannah to a low condition of fretting and nearly losing all hope.

“Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?”

I'm sure Elkanah loved his wife and I'm sure his wife loved him. However, you mothers understand that no matter how much you love your spouse, there's a certain type of love you have for your children. That love can't be substituted by your husband's love. It's probably unique to mothers only. Sorry guys, when it comes to the relationship between a mother and child, there's no nice way of saying that you take second place. Yes, you will have respect from the position that God has given you as the head of the household, but I'm talking about mothers who have this kind of love for their children. The Bible has a record of many mothers that have grieved over their children and have done some amazing things to demonstrate that kind of love. Hannah's husband is trying to step in and say, ***“Am not I better to thee than ten sons?”*** No, he wasn't. As godly a man as you may be, but no matter how great of a husband you are, you can't even replace one son, let alone ten. The story goes on in verse 9 to say,

“So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the LORD.”

The problem with Eli was that he was sitting around too much instead of taking care of his priestly duties, including taking care of his sons and putting them in their right place.

“And she was in bitterness of soul [She was bitter in her soul.], and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore.

And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child [or a seed of man], then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.”

Her child would be associated with the Nazarite vow, (which makes my request that you e-mail me once a day look shallow in comparison). Hannah is vowing and committing that a child God may grant her would be turned over to the Lord after being weaned. She wouldn't have control over that child after the age of approximately three to five years old. Remember, she had no children prior to this point, and here she is committing a vow. It just grieved her soul so much and she wept sore, so she made this vow to God Himself if He would give her a child. The

Hebrew makes it very clear in verse 12 that she didn't just continue praying, but multiplied, multiplied, and multiplied this prayer over and over and over, pleading with God.

“And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.”

It is amazing how God still used Eli to achieve His purposes, as he had as much spiritual insight as a frog. She wasn't drunk; he couldn't even recognize sincere prayer right in front of him. He had no discernment. He was literally just what verse 9 said: sitting by a post of the temple of the Lord. He was basically a bump on a log, but nevertheless his position was to be respected. So as she continued multiplying her prayers, Eli thought she was drunk. Hannah answers him in verse 15,

“And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit [or hard of spirit]: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out [or emptied] my soul before the LORD.

Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: [“Do not think I am a daughter of Belial.”] for out of the abundance of my complaint [bad translation, out of her continuing prayer and meditation] and grief have I spoken hitherto.

Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.”

An amazing transformation takes place in the next verse. Over the years I have read this and said to myself I would be pleased if I could just be half the hero of faith that this woman Hannah was. She only had to hear from who she perceived to be the representative of God, in his high priest role, was the declaration and statement to go in peace: *shalom*, which included health, wealth, and so many other things ***“and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.”*** All she needed to do was hear those words and her fretting disappeared.

“And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.”

After that, there is not another place in the first or second chapters where we see this woman sad or fretting about this situation ever again. ***“...and her countenance was no more sad.”***

Just the same, that is what Paul was saying in Hebrew 6:12, where he writes about God keeping His promises. All this woman in I Samuel had to do was hear this representative of God say, “Go in peace, and may God grant you your petition.” All she had to hear were those words and she immediately went from fear to faith, from fretting to faith. It almost does it injustice if I don't cover more of this chapter, but let me just read what Paul is saying in verse 12,

“That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience [actually, faith and endurance] inherit the promises.”

“That ye be not slothful [Sluggish, lazy, expecting God to be at your service constantly just dying to wait to hear from you so He can jump at the opportunity of serving you.], but followers of them who through faith and endurance inherit the promises.”

I've come across too many Christians in my time that want to inherit the promises without the endurance. They want the promises, but they want to continue being slothful, taking God for granted, especially in the way they trust God's Word and make it their own. It takes endurance to inherit all the promises that are given to us.

Back in I Samuel we read, ***“And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.”*** Again, from that point on, a transformation happened in this woman's life. She went from fretting, to weeping, to a hero of faith who would inherit the promise of God, because she trusted who God put in the position of proclaiming the promise along with her. That's why I am totally against the movement that believes churches and ministers of God's Word are no longer necessary. They believe that each and every one of you are your own minister, in your own life. They misinterpret those scriptures completely and don't understand what the Word of God says about that subject.

“So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.” She didn't hear any direct word from the Lord. All she really did was what we see in the New Testament where two or more agree, with faith, on anything that is in line with God's purposes. In a sense, her faith stepped out and took what Eli said as a promise from God that she would inherit. That transformed her from a fretting person to a faithing person. Returning to I Samuel 1:19 we read,

“And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the LORD remembered her.

Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the LORD. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow.

But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever. [She is not going back on her vow. She understood that the child had to be weaned first before handing him over to the priests, into Eli's control, into Eli's arena, so that is what she did.] ***And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the LORD establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.”***

Elkanah didn't resist. He saw the miracle himself. They were married for a long time and weren't able to produce children. Hannah was full of faith at this time in her life, and after she claimed to inherit the promise that her petition would be granted, Eli jumped on board along with Hannah, understanding that this was a miracle from God. He also understood how Hannah was reborn. Verse 24 continues,

“And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one

ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child was young. [Between three to five years old.]

And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli.

And she said, O my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD.

For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD: And he worshipped the LORD there.”

Actually this should really say, *Therefore I returned him whom I have obtained by petition to the Lord.* This was a child given through the petition of Hannah, witnessed by Eli, and confirmed by the miracle of his birth. She realized this was an answer to prayer because of the commitment and faith that she had in the Lord. Remember, she made the vow prior to speaking to Eli, that she would give up this child to the priestly line to be a servant of God and this child would be under God's care through the priests to fulfil God's purposes. She fulfilled her vow. She returned what the Lord gave her, to fulfil a vow that she committed to the Lord that if the Lord would grant her a man child, a seed of a man, and that is what He did.

There's no record after this of her adversary, Peninnah, provoking Hannah to the point of fretting any longer in this part of the story. God shut the mouth of the adversary. She no longer had an angle; she no longer was used as an instrument or a tool of Satan to destroy a woman by saying that God purposely had shut her womb. The reason she was chosen is very obvious in chapter 2, and not only in chapter 2. In Hannah's prayer we see promises that can still be claimed by us today, but we also see a prophetic picture of Jesus Christ, beginning with verse 1,

“And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn [or my strength] is exalted in the LORD:”

She finally realized where her strength came from, just as we get our strength in Ephesians 6:10; not by our own doing, but by God and by Christ. We are to be strengthened, which is in the past tense, in the Lord and the power of his might, *endunamoo*, not our strength, but God's strength. Hannah's strength is exalted in the Lord.

“... my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation.”

Salvation for her came through the miracle of that man seed. For us, it comes through Jesus Christ; by His blood, we are saved. We are sinners saved by grace and we rejoice to this day and forevermore over what our Lord Jesus Christ did for each and every one of us. And the reason she can 'rejoice in thy salvation' is because she was reborn.

“There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God.”

We can claim that promise today. In fact, I have covered this before in Matthew 16:18 when Christ is speaking. The church world, for the most part, has taught throughout the generations and the centuries that Peter is the rock that the church was built on. No, the rock that the church would be built on is Christ. Reading verse 18 Christ states,

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.”

The rock Christ was speaking of was Himself. The Greek word for rock is *petra*; not *Petros*. *Petros* was the Greek for Peter, but *petra* is the word Jesus used here. He wanted the focus put on Himself when He was speaking. That is why He used the word *petra*. ***“...and upon this rock [upon Christ] I will build my church.”*** The church being a gathering of Christians called out into assembly. ‘Out-called ones,’ (as my mentor would say), to serve His purposes, to be instruments and weapons of righteousness used of God. We’re just foot soldiers following orders from Christ Himself that He has laid out for us.

Returning to I Samuel 2:2 we read,

***“There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God [or Jesus Christ, on whom the church is built].
Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogance come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed.”***

So, to you prideful, arrogant individuals who tell others that they aren't worthy of the Lord's mercy, or that God has overlooked them, or He frowns upon them because they can't bear children, I have news for you. He sees and knows everything that is going on. You might not think He does, but He does. He has it all under control and nothing gets by Him.

In verse 2 we are told there is no rock like our God (and there is no rock like our Lord Jesus Christ, on whom the church is built). All you proud and arrogant ones, take note because the Lord knows what you are saying, what you are doing, and how you are coming against us. I want you to highlight verse 4. Say it to yourself if you want to, ***“The bows of the mighty men are broken....”*** Ask yourself why would you have a bow if you weren't a soldier? This verse is not saying *the bows of the mighty men*. It should actually read, *The bows of the mighty strong*, emphasizing how strong they were. ***“The bows of the mighty strong broken...”*** No matter how much you think that your enemy, your adversary, or your problems are mighty and strong against you, they are broken because the verse finishes, ***“and they that stumbled....”*** But a better translation is, ***“and they that staggered are girded with strength.”***

This goes hand in hand with Ephesians 6:14 if you understand the Hebrew and some of the earlier translations of it, ***“The bows of the mighty strong are broken, and they that staggered are girded with strength.”*** If we take Ephesians 6:14 and apply it to this verse, our enemies might think that they have wounded us and are about to win, but those that stagger are armed with God's armor. The Hebrew word for *girded* in this verse is used when you gird yourself for war. If you don't believe me, check it out for yourself. This word is used when girding oneself for war in some of the original translations of the Hebrew.

“The bows of the mighty strong are broken, and they that staggered are girded for war with strength.” This is God's strength and this is what Ephesians 6:10 and 14 are saying. He is talking to the proud and the arrogant, the adversaries, the ones who think they have one over on God. These are the ones who think they sit in a high seat with God and mock and throw flaming

arrows at you with either circumstances or accusations, thinking they have some high position with God and you don't. Hannah is declaring "No, they are just proud and arrogant and God sees their actions."

"The bows of the mighty strong are broken, and they that staggered are girded for war with strength." Hannah knew at this time that not only was this a prophetic description of Christ to come, but it was also a promise and verification. (And not just in the Old Testament but also with the New Testament.) It makes very clear what we need to understand about spiritual warfare. Adversaries will be there; problems and circumstances will be there; troubles will be there; aggravation will be there; the bows of the mighty strong will be there. We might feel like we will stagger when they are all approaching and attacking, but if we gird ourselves for war, He will give us the strength to overcome.

Verse 5 tells us, ***"They that were full have hired out themselves for bread;"*** For all the high and mighty church world that looks down on teaching about spiritual warfare, saying I'm emphasizing the devil too much and not really emphasizing all the good things about Christ, I ask: what New Testament are you reading? Christ went through spiritual warfare, from the very last second on the cross to His resurrection when He presented His blood to His Father. I'm sure resistance was there. If you don't think that had anything to do with spiritual warfare, then you're lost. Criticize me all you want, I will stay on the path of arming true Christians to do and to understand warfare; knowing what kind of enemy we face, and giving them the knowledge of how to overcome, using God's Word and His strength.

"They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven [Hannah begins by talking about her adversary, but then she also talks about herself; she hath born seven.]; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up."

This is a prophetic prayer, Hannah's prayer statement about the resurrection, which also includes us. Christ was the first goer of faith paving the way for us to be resurrected someday with a new body to be attached to the Spirit, waiting for the new body to catch up.

The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up."

You can claim this for yourself, but think about how low the Lord Jesus Christ had to go. He was surrounded by all the riches of glory, all the wonderful things of glory at the throne of God. He made Himself poor in such a low condition, putting Himself in a tent of human flesh. But after doing all that, He too was lifted up, He too was resurrected by His Father, and that is why without the resurrection there is no faith in Christianity.

"He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and he hath set the world upon them."

I don't know what you are facing today. It might be as bad as a dunghill to you, but I have a promise for you that you will inherit; He will set us among the princes because we will endure.

Go back to Ephesians 6:12 to inherit the promises that are lying there on the shelf.

“He will keep the feet of his saints [or, He will keep the feet of his faithful ones], and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.”

If you rely on your own strength, you won't prevail. Those who rely on God's strength, understanding that if they are girded, prepared, and ready for war, as verse 4 says with God's strength, will prevail.

“The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken [shattered] to pieces; out of heaven shall he [Jesus Christ] thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king [the future king, Jesus Christ, the King of kings], and exalt the horn of his anointed [mashiyach translated Messiah].”

I believe something wonderful came from that child, Samuel, through a dark period in the Nation of Israel. His life and how he was used by God was important, but Hannah was brought to the kingdom for this hour. Not only because she bore Samuel, but she also gave the prophetic statement of faith and hope to that day and age, giving a glimpse and hope of things still yet to come: a king, the King of Kings, and exalt the horn of His anointed, the Messiah, the *mashiyach* in Hebrew, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just look at Hannah's life. She went from fear to faith in verse 18. She became someone who committed and lived up to her vow to God, obedient to the faith, understanding the child belonged to God, and having the faith that he would be used by God; and was he ever. Her prayer spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ who would be the rock that the church would be built upon. Her prayer in verse 4 gave us a glimpse of how spiritual warfare would be taking place among the faithful, and that if they would remain faithful and loyal, they would be resurrected to a glorious eternity. She was used to prophetically put out a prayer statement of faith of one that would be coming, a King of Kings, the Messiah Himself. In my view, she was used by God, first and foremost, to be a prophetic voice, if we see and understand that through the struggles there is One coming. We won't need Eli any longer to agree for a petition, because we have Christ Himself who will petition for us, if we communicate with Him, even though it's important to find a fellow individual to agree with you. God is looking for faith on top of faith.

Did you ever stop and think what a wonderful opportunity you have when you actually take a promise listed here in God's book, make it your own, and petition with God? Don't petition for some self-serving purpose, but petition to *fulfil His purposes*. God is so pleased with the recognition of what you see in His Word and that you want to make it your own pleading with God. You will see it come to pass, if you keep faithing and trusting. Now imagine if you can find someone else to faith with you for the same petition, faithing together to inherit that promise if it fulfils His purposes. I keep saying ‘if it fulfils His purposes’ because too many Christians think they can ask anything of God and that He will grant it to them.

How does your petition line up with fulfilling His purposes? That's the key. Hannah knew about it and her husband, in my opinion, agreed with her that God would fulfil His purpose if she would just stay faithful and not live in a state of fear and fretting. She needed to take her eyes off

the seen adversary and put her eyes on the unseen God who would give her victory and overcome her problem. She had that opportunity with her husband prior to speaking to Eli, but it didn't happen. Maybe she could have achieved the purpose that God had for her if she and her husband had agreed in faith, but obviously there was no faith being demonstrated. There was obedience of what to do yearly as far as the sacrifices and worship, but no promises were being claimed. It took someone in the office of the ministry to declare to her, ***"Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition"*** to spark her to become a hero of faith from a woman of literally no faith at that time. She went from fear to faith because in those days the position as one being a representative of God was still respected.

You need to understand that the church is important and has its role. The church that is built upon the rock, Jesus Christ, is to be respected as Hannah respected it. She knew where to go with her petition if she didn't trust that God would hear her and grant her petition.

The church is still to be proclaiming the Word of God, which should spark some faith to change lives. That's one of the roles of the church. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God. Paul makes it very clear when he asked in that same chapter "How are we going to hear the Word of God if He does not send a preacher?" Those verses do not say "if He does not send his neighbor" or "if He does not send your boss at your job." It says He sends a preacher. The Book is very definite and is not to be changed into your own imaginary representative. It's a preacher that is spoken of there in Paul's writing. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God. As I have said, in the original language it is *hearing and hearing the Word of God*. That is why faith comes by hearing, and hearing the Word of God. How are you going to hear it if He doesn't send a preacher; if the church doesn't do what it's supposed to do? The church is to keep preaching and proclaiming God's Word and the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The church is to keep preparing saints to be soldiers of Jesus Christ, understanding the spiritual warfare principles laid out in His Word.

Those of you who understand that you're to be a soldier of Jesus Christ and what weapons and armor you are to be wearing, should be excited to see that other saints have the opportunity to be fit with that armor that is designed for them. How many of you this week have asked yourselves, or even thought about who is being fitted with God's armor today because they are starting to understand what God's armor is all about? I can't get some of you to email. Do I think you are concerned about someone else being fitted for the armor? Well, the promise is that if you stagger in this spiritual fight, then gird yourselves to be ready for war with God's strength. It's not too late. God is a God of compassion. Farther along in I Samuel 2: 20 we read,

"And Eli blessed Elkanah and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman for the loan which is lent [actually, for the petition which she asked] to the LORD. And they went unto their own home [After they gave up their child Samuel]. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bear three sons and two daughters. And the child Samuel grew before the LORD."

Here is another statement of faith whether Hannah realized it or not, although I believe she did. Go back to verse 5, ***"They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven"*** Here, Hannah was speaking of

herself. Now, go to verse 21, ***“And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons and two daughters.”*** After Samuel, the first child, there were three other sons and two daughters and so we know that Hannah talking about herself in verse 5, when she says, ***“hath born seven”***. She is talking about herself and how she has been reborn. She was reborn at the end of verse 18 because she would now inherit God's promise, and she did.

Hannah is the seventh reborn! She was reborn in the Spirit because faith was activated in her life. She was reborn because she endured and inherited the promise. She could have complained, she could have given up on God, she could have come up with any excuse under the sun, but she used the opportunity when she was at the place of worship to petition, pray, and multiply her prayers. She didn't just give God a ten-second prayer; she stuck with it. She endured and God granted her the wish without any word from the Lord. Her only word was from Eli, as God's representative, to go in peace and God would grant her petition. As I said, she took that promise from Eli, who was a mouthpiece of God, to give her the spark that she needed to start faith activating her life. It changed her into a new person that God would use, not only to bear a son, Samuel, but also as a prophetic messenger in verse 10 of a Messiah, the King of kings, the anointed one to give us all hope and victory. Even though we stagger, if we just learn to gird ourselves for war, if we cling on to His strength (not our strength), He will give us victory.

Hannah is a beautiful picture of someone who endured and inherited the promises, but she also recognized the spiritual war she was involved in. Peninnah was the seen adversary, used by the unseen adversary in this case, but she was dealt with by an unseen God who is waiting for someone to just hang on to His Word. He used a representative to declare that word, and she held on in faith and trust in the Lord. She saw herself as reborn; the true meaning of born again; reborn in God with a new direction and used as a mouthpiece to be a voice to prophetically announce the coming of the King. Even though most of the world did not recognize it, she was the mouthpiece used by God. And this is the reason she was really used by God to keep her womb barren until a set time. Her pregnancy could have happened sooner, but it was a set time when God unleashed His miracle power in her life. He was just waiting for her to catch up, to hang on to that promise, and inherit for herself. When she did that, God used her in the beautiful picture we see in I Samuel, chapters 1 and 2.

I can only hope to be half the hero of faith as this woman Hannah, who was used by God to keep proclaiming God's message and the Good News of Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, the Messiah. That is my petition. I want to be used by God to fulfil His purposes no matter where it takes me or what it takes me through, as long as I fulfil His purposes. Hopefully, you will be claiming the same for yourself.

Belt of Truth or Sackcloth

I've been preaching through Ephesians 6:10-14 concerning Spiritual Warfare.

Verse 10 begins, ***“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.”*** Be strengthened in Him in His strength. *Endunamoo, be empowered by His strength with His power, His force, His might.*

In verse 11 we are told to, ***“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles [or the methods] of the devil.”*** We must be strengthened by God; energized by Him to put on His armor and understand the methods the devil uses.

Then it goes on in verse 12 to explain all the unseen evil forces that are against us. These are the principalities, the powers, the rulers, and the spiritual wickedness in high places or evil spirits.

Verse 13 continues, ***“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God,”*** reminding us again and that we need ***“to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.”***

Verse 14 tells us to, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,”*** which we have already covered. That truth is the subject being discussed between verses 10 and 14, including what was read everywhere else. Stay with the context, subject matter, and meaning of the word as used by Paul. In this case, the context is spiritual warfare against an enemy, a powerful foe that we face, and that is why it's important to put on the Christian armor.

With that brief introduction, go to the Book of Jeremiah in relation to the first part of Ephesians 6:14, ***“having your loins girt about with truth.”*** I've already covered what ‘*girding your loins*’ means. I'm not going to review, but continue straight to the Book of Jeremiah. There's a little introduction here in my Bible: ***“The Book of Jeremiah is not arranged in chronological order [Most people read through the Book of Jeremiah and don't realize that], but is grouped according to the subjects [that he was dealing with at the time]: God's dealings with His people (chaps. 1- 45); God's dealings with the foreign nations (chaps. 46- 51); and the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple (chap. 52).”***

Jeremiah prophesied disaster and because of that he wasn't liked. In fact, he was hated by most. He eventually was labelled the Weeping Prophet. Read the Book of Lamentations which is also written or dictated by him, (or possibly written by Baruch). Then you'll understand why he was labelled the Weeping Prophet, but that's not the subject matter. Jeremiah wasn't liked. He prophesied disaster and because of that he was hated. He was hated by kings and priests. To some extent I can identify with that. He was hated and persecuted by kings and priests and eventually imprisoned. They even threw him in a muddy pit and left him there to die.

Most Christians would look at that and say, “No way has God called me for that type of ministry. I'm to bless people; I'm to cater to people; I'm here to make people feel good preaching the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” It is good news. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news,

but in a sense, it is also gory. Think about it. The brutality that Jesus Christ suffered for our benefit; beaten, His skin stripped because of the whipping He received, thorns pressing down on His skull, beaten by rods, nailed with spikes to the cross through His wrists and feet, and then being pierced by a spear. Then, when you read Isaiah 53, He suffered all the pain, grief, sorrows, and illnesses, ever experienced - past and future. If you really think about it, if the story ended there, it would be a story of tragedy and unachieved success that He could have had if He had just bent His message a little bit. But that's not where the story ended. He died and three days later God energized His being and He was lifted up and raised from the dead, just as was prophesied and promised. So, even though it was gory, the ending was a great beginning for Christ and for us. We are the beneficiary of all He went through.

“Some would suggest that Jeremiah is a type of Christ. He was accused of political treason, as was Christ, and was tried, persecuted, and imprisoned for words he had spoken. In addition to this, Jeremiah and Christ both foretold and wept over the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem.... each was rejected by his own people.”

As I said, Jeremiah was persecuted by kings and priests, imprisoned, thrown into a muddy pit, and left there to die. Eventually an Ethiopian, an African man, came by and pulled him out. Put it this way: you wouldn't use Jeremiah to campaign for enrolment in an 'Israel Bible School' at the time. He wasn't the person that you would put on a poster for marketing purposes. It's just not attractive to do as the New Testament says; deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Christ. Modern day Christianity has changed that. It's no longer deny yourself; they substitute it with cater to yourself; it's not take up your cross, it's lie in your feather bed; it's not follow Christ, it's follow your own ways. The message today is totally opposite and I know I don't sound very positive. I'm not a Joel Osteen or a Tony Robbins for Jesus who smiles at you and tries to make you feel good. Those of you who don't know who Tony Robbins is, I guess the best way to describe him is as one of these positive power thinkers talking about how you can succeed in life by focusing your energies on catering to your wants. I don't preach that. I preach deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Christ and I'm just a shadow of these great men of God. Jeremiah came against kings and the religious establishment and he was persecuted for it. He suffered many hardships and he went through trials and tribulations because God had a commission for him.

In this message, I want to show where his commission started and how it relates to Ephesians 6:14. Beginning in Jeremiah 1:1 we read:

“The words of Jeremiah...

To whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah [the southern kingdom], in the thirteenth year of his reign.

Verse 4, Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee;”

Jeremiah didn't really have much choice. He was called and chosen before he even left his mother's womb. ***“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee;”*** God had already commissioned Jeremiah before he was even born.

“and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee...”

That is a bad translation. It should really say, ***I selected and separated thee***. God selected and separated Jeremiah for a special purpose and commission. This message can also be applied to what I've said before about commitment, we were selected and separated from the rest of the nonsense, both the secular and Christian world, for this day, age, and time for a purpose. That's how you develop in faith in God's Word in your own personal life and also wherever you identify with a ministry. There's nowhere in God's book where we go alone and do it ourselves, unless you are called and chosen to preach and teach. Just as today, we're all individually commissioned for the purpose that God wants in our own personal life and to participate in a ministry, in whatever capacity He has called you.

He selected and separated Jeremiah and goes on to tell Jeremiah at the end of verse 5, ***“and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”***

From this, many believe God was prophesying to the northern kingdom. However, they had already been taken away and carried off because of their continuous worship of false gods and idols. They never turned from their self-seeking ways to satisfy themselves and their false gods, they never repented or came to understand that there is only one true God, the God who delivered them time after time from Exodus forward. They were always falling for the option that didn't require as much commitment and sacrifice. God wasn't talking to the northern tribes here. They were no longer there. Maybe a few were left here and there, but the northern kingdom was gone. Instead, God was talking generally about nations outside of Israel and the southern kingdom Judah. Yes, Jeremiah will prophesy to the southern kingdom Judah in parts of this book, but the word ‘*nations*’ is ***goy*** in Hebrew and it is a general word used to refer to nations at large, particularly gentiles.

So, in these verses, Jeremiah is called, chosen, and ordained by God for two purposes. One was to be a prophet unto the gentiles. The other was to be a spiritual leader to teach and to keep preaching to nations where he would go with the remnant. God would build and plant all over again, taking the king's daughters from the lineage of David with him from Egypt. So, the word ‘*nations*’ is a general word used to refer to the nations at large and particularly gentiles. The Hebrew word ***goyim*** is often used and some refer to pagan nations which surrounded the Nation of Israel. The point is Jeremiah was ordained a prophet unto the nations or unto the nations that weren't part of Israel or Judah. Even though he would prophesy to them, it's important to understand his ministry and commission would not come to completion in that area, or that recognized people at that time. Verse 6 continues,

“Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child. [Some think he was around 11 or 12, approximately 13 years of age when he said this. He couldn't speak because he was too young. No one would stop and listen to him because he was just a child.]

But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I [God] shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Be not afraid [Do not be fearful.] ***of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee*** [The Hebrew is clear; *to snatch you away from them quickly.*], ***saith the LORD.*** [Do not be afraid of them; do not fear their faces. Just when you think they are about ready to devour you, I will snatch you

away and deliver you from their faces.]

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. [God is speaking here through Jeremiah's lips.] See, I have this day set thee over the nations [same word again] and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant,”

This is why Jeremiah is identified as the Weeping Prophet. He prophesied the destruction of Judah, the kings and Jerusalem, the destroying of that nation and its cities, and the city Jerusalem, the City of God. However, he never went back to Jerusalem, and he never went back to Judah to build and plant. If you looked at this on the surface, it seems like Jeremiah is a failure because he never succeeded in the last two parts of the verse: to plant and build, unless he actually did.

Go to Jeremiah 18. This is where many preach about the potter and the clay. It's a wonderful message about how God works with the clay. He puts us on the wheel and He works us and molds us. We might not like the shape that He is forming, but He is in control. He knows how fast the wheel should go around and He knows what He is doing with the vessel He is molding. It's a prize vessel that He is shaping for His purposes. We will read through it, but I will apply it in the context of what God was saying through Jeremiah and how it's applied to a future nation. Verse 1 begins,

“The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. [God is speaking to the house of Israel.] Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it;”

We just read that in Jeremiah 1:10. Here, He is using the potter and the clay as an example that He is in charge, He is the boss. The Lord is telling Israel that they have drifted away, sinned against God, and gone their own way, but now He's putting them back on the wheel. And part of that process is that they will be pulled down and destroyed, and carried away as prisoners to Babylon except for a small remnant. Verse 8 continues,

“If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. [But they never did.] And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it;”

God is saying that if they turn from their ways, He will rebuild this nation and replant it, but they didn't do that. God had to literally carry out that prophesy and drive this remnant away from the

land of Israel to an unknown area, to become an unknown people and start a process which He promised here, not just in verse 10 in Jeremiah, but also here in chapter 18. To look at this point further, God even took the king's daughters in Jeremiah 15:10-11 where we read,

“The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant [God is encouraging Jeremiah after the destruction.]; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction.

Verse 14, ***“And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land [where he would eventually build and plant] which thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you.”***

Most scholars make the mistake in thinking that this land must be Egypt. However, everyone in Israel knew of Egypt; they had probably been there several times. It's not that far and Jeremiah was well aware of Egypt. It wasn't Egypt that God was speaking of here. Yes, after the destruction, they went down to Egypt for a small period of time, but they escaped from that land. In a different chapter of Jeremiah, it literally says they escaped with that remnant. Jeremiah would lead them as their spiritual leader into a land far, far away which they knew not, taking the king's daughters along with him. We see that in Jeremiah 43:6, ***“Even men, and women, and children and the king's daughters....”*** who were of David's line escaped and didn't dwell any longer in Egypt. After their escape, under Jeremiah's supervision and leadership, they went to a land which they knew not.

I'm explaining this because of the verses that state he would build and plant. Again, Jeremiah was known as the Weeping Prophet because of all the destruction he prophesied for the kings and false prophets, which is probably harder to do than it is to prophesy against kings. He prophesied a nation would be destroyed. Not much earlier they saw the northern part of the kingdom, Israel itself, the northern tribes destroyed and didn't take note and use it as a lesson to be forewarned of what would happen to them if they didn't turn from their ways. They probably thought the northern kingdom deserved it, when actually they were doing exactly the same thing God accused the northern tribes of doing. God, through Jeremiah, prophesied the rooting out, the pulling down and the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem and the people taken away in bondage, and it happened. That's why Jeremiah says several times, “Woe is me the day I was born.”

Just imagine that you are called and chosen by God to be a doomsayer, or imagine you walked down the street today prophesying the doom of the United States of America. Whether it's true or not, whether it is biblically sound or not, imagine walking down the street or walking onto Capitol Hill to get an audience with the Congress members to prophesy destruction and doom. You'd be carted away and sent to a mental institution. You'd be characterized as a lunatic.

Put yourself in Jeremiah's shoes. God called him and chose him to be a prophet of doom. In fact, just about all scholars leave him and his remnant (with the king's daughters), in Egypt hiding in fear, dying in Egypt, and never really seeing the building and planting that would take place. If you don't believe that it did take place, then why do you even preach or faith in the Word of God? I take everything literally in the Bible, and if God says that Jeremiah was going to build and plant, then he was going to build and plant, and he did. That is where the lost tribes of Israel come in. Jeremiah would take the king's daughters and eventually meet up with other lost tribes

to a place which I will preach about in the future. After being commissioned to be a prophet of doom and classified as the Weeping Prophet because of all the lamentations, sorrow, hardships, and persecutions from just about everyone, if I were Jeremiah I'd probably complain and do what Jonah did, and run as far as I could before being caught. But that's not what Jeremiah did. God tells him what he will do and He gives him a vision of an almond tree to illustrate what will happen to these kingdoms and also what will happen to the southern kingdom.

Remember from verses 1 through 16, he hasn't gone out yet to fulfil the commission that he was called and chosen to fulfil. None of this has happened yet, even though he was given his marching orders and the instructions to be a mouthpiece. God would deliver him from people that really wanted his life because of what he was prophesying. So, before he goes out, God sets the stage, preparing Jeremiah for his commission. God tells them in verse 17, if you read it in the order it is written, that Jeremiah will root out, pull down, destroy, throw down, and build and plant. In other words, God says, "You have a tough road ahead Jeremiah. It is going to be hard and full of trials and tribulations, but now is the set time where I want you to start fulfilling what I want done. I will be using you as the spokesman and using your lips, and I will accomplish what I want to accomplish." However, before that is done, God wants him to do something in verse 17, which I've been preaching about now for chapter after chapter. That is, we don't go into battle with the spiritual armor of God in Ephesians 6:14 without first girding our loins with truth and that is what God tells him Jeremiah in 1:17,

"Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee:"

Ephesians 6 tells us to stand and withstand and here in Jeremiah to rise up to the challenge that God has placed before us. He has fitted us for the challenge with His spiritual clothing called the armor of God; so rise up, stand. Here, it's saying the same thing; gird up thy loins, Jeremiah, and be ready to do battle not with only the seen forces, but more importantly with the unseen forces that control the seen forces. He goes on to tell Jeremiah,

"be not dismayed [bewildered or confused] at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defensed city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests [the religious establishment] thereof, and against the people of the land."

God is telling Jeremiah that he will come against the kings of Judah who want to kill him because they don't like the message, and the people won't like a message that is not hopeful or encouraging. That's a lot for Jeremiah to have against him. Think about it; kings, the religious establishment, and the people, along with the unseen forces controlling all these people and their wicked ways, are against him. If these people were following God the way He wanted them to follow Him, worship Him, adore Him, and acknowledge Him as the only God, they wouldn't be in the position of being destroyed. These were a wicked and rebellious people and now Jeremiah had to come and prophesy against all of them. We see that in verse 19,

"And they shall fight against thee;" Well, that's something to get excited about! I bet he was ready to gird up his loins and go against all these seen and unseen evil forces. He was probably thinking that there was a better way to follow God, but no, there's not. That's why I show you all

these Bible heroes as a pattern to give you an understanding that there is no different way acceptable to God. God wants us to understand that the only acceptable way is for us to go into battle. Just because you're a Christian, it doesn't mean your life is going to be easy. In fact, I'm telling you it is going to be anything but easy. All hell will break loose, but it will not always be that way. There will be times of victory, celebration, and joy, but if somebody tells you that victory, joy, and celebration happen a majority of the time, they are preaching from another bible than mine.

Joy is the understanding of what Christ did for us and how He fully blessed us no matter what you face. Paul could be in prison and be full of joy. He could have his arms in stocks with a bloody back, but he understood the joy that is in Christ. The joy that most Christians are looking for is superficial, not the joy of the New Testament. So, we see in verse 19,

“And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.”

I have news for all my enemies and foes, both secular and in the Christian world, I'm not changing, but if I do, it's because God is changing me. I'm not stubborn about change because there is a lot of changing that needs to be done. Using the potter and the clay story in reference to Israel, I personalize that in my life daily. I'm a creature designed to be molded by the Creator. He is shaping me. If you don't like that I preach commitment, then so be it. I preach that it takes fortitude and endurance to be a real Christian, and I would rather wind up in a muddy pit preaching where people can hear, than a phony and a fake leading people to what Jesus would eventually call wolves in sheep's clothing. I'm going to stay close to the Word of God and keep preaching the way the Word of God was laid down for our example.

Before Jeremiah sets out on his commission, he is to gird up his loins, which is the first thing listed in Ephesians 6:14 about the spiritual armor. This is after we understand it is God's strength that gives us the strength to wear that armor and use those weapons. It's saying the same thing in the Old Testament that it says in the New Testament; gird up your loins and arise, or in the New Testament, stand, because it is now time to go to war against the ones behind all of it, Satan and his minions.

Now, you do have a choice. There's another type of clothing you can wear that I'll touch on. You have probably heard it over and over, not really applying the correct meaning to '*sackcloth*'. Do you truly understand what sackcloth is all about when it is used in both Old and New Testaments? Let's take a look at it, because you can wear a different type of clothing. After all the prophetic warnings that Jeremiah gave to this nation, the southern tribes of Judah, they didn't turn around. They rebelled even further, and once they saw and experienced what happened to them, they went into a state of mourning. Go to Jeremiah 6, which tells what happened after the siege of Jerusalem. We will look at just one verse, verse 26,

“O daughter of my people, gird thee with sackcloth, and wallow thyself in ashes: make thee mourning, as for an only son, most bitter lamentation: for the spoiler shall suddenly come upon us.”

And it did. A mourning garment (sackcloth, *saq* in the Hebrew), was worn during mourning or while in humiliation. These people were girding themselves with sackcloth from mourning over the siege of Jerusalem. They were mourning because of their destruction and having been humbled by God because of pride in themselves, but they were humiliated by Satan and he is laughing at them. The unseen evil forces are laughing at them while they sit in ashes, wallowing away in their humiliation. Satan isn't laughing because God humbled them, Satan is laughing because they have been humiliated by a seen enemy, in this case, what came out of Babylon. Sackcloth was worn in mourning or humiliation.

Jeremiah also wrote or dictated the Book of Lamentations. Go to Chapter 2, verse 10 for another example.

“The elders of the daughter of Zion sit upon the ground, and keep silence [They did not know what to say. They were speechless from this destruction.]: they have cast up dust upon their heads [in mourning]; they have girded themselves with sackcloth: the virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground.”

Once again, they are not girding themselves with the spiritual armor of God, not girding their loins and rising to the occasion and saying, "Unto thee, O God, I have sinned." No, they were girding themselves with sackcloth. That's where Satan wants us. He doesn't want the message of spiritual war and the armor of God, that is fitted and designed specifically just for you, to be preached and taught to the world. He wants us to have our head hanging down. If you don't understand what Ephesians 6:10 through 18 is saying; what Paul was trying to communicate about the Christian armor, Satan will have your head hanging down, whether you realize it or not. He wants us to wear sackcloth, but God wants us to wear His spiritual armor. Don't be caught with your head hanging down; that's where Satan wants us.

Go to Isaiah 3:24, where God is speaking about how He will judge Judah and Jerusalem. This was written about 100 years prior to Jeremiah,

“And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet smell there shall be stink; and instead of a girdle a rope [not a rent]; and instead of well set hair baldness; and instead of a stomacher [or the fine clothing] a girding of sackcloth; and burning instead of beauty.

Thy men shall fall by the sword, and thy mighty in the war.

And her gates shall lament and mourn; and she being desolate shall sit upon the ground.”

That is a very sad story and very sad circumstances. They decided not to wear God's clothing, which is the finest clothing you can wear, that spiritual clothing that God gives to you, and chose to wear sackcloth, because they lacked the ability to see how Satan was getting to them and why the destruction came as preached here in Isaiah.

We will go to one more example and then go back to Jeremiah. Go to Ezekiel 7:15. This prophesy is of the pending judgement.

“The sword is without, and the pestilence and the famine within: he that is in the field shall die with the sword; and he that is in the city, famine and pestilence shall devour him. [Once

again, not a pretty picture.]

But they that escape of them shall escape, and shall be on the mountains like doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, every one for his iniquity. [There is mourning because of their iniquity.]

All hands shall be feeble, and all knees shall be weak. [Just where Satan wanted them and all of us today.]

They shall also gird themselves with sackcloth, and horror shall cover them [mourning, humiliation, horror, feebleness, weak knees]; ***and shame shall be upon all faces, and baldness upon all their heads.***”

In those days, baldness was a symbolism of the shame that was brought upon you. This is where Satan wants us. This is where Satan wants God's people, Christians who have been called out and chosen as soldiers of Jesus Christ. However, you will only get under Satan's grip if you don't understand what is required in Ephesians 6:10 through 18.

Returning to Jeremiah, we know we have a choice. God chose Jeremiah for a difficult, laborious task. In some cases, with death knocking on the door many times over I am sure, but before He sent him on his mission, He said, ***“Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise...”***

I finish with Ephesians 6 that tells us, ***“Stand therefore,”*** and don't even think twice about not doing it, because God gives us the strength, His force and His might. He will give us and keep giving us the understanding and the knowledge of Satan's methods. He will make us aware of the enemy. He will energize us in the weapons. He will design a suit for us to wear to stand, having our loins gird about with the truth; the understanding of what is being discussed up to this point.

You have a choice to wear God's armor, the perfectly designed spiritual suit for you, or go around in sackcloth in mourning and humiliation. Even though that might seem a tough choice, do you want to put on God's clothes or Satan's? The armor or sackcloth; the choice is yours.

The Girdle of Love

I've been preaching through Ephesians 6 starting with verse 10, and now we are at the first part of verse 14, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”*** I've covered what that truth is. As I said, most commentators and scholars will give a brief explanation of what that truth is and just write it off as the Gospel. No, if you understand what that word is and what it's saying here in this verse, it's really *the truth of the matter under consideration*. What is being written and communicated to the Ephesian church is spiritual warfare and the Christian armor, and why it's important to always have this armor on because of the evil forces we face. You won't be able to stand or withstand any of them without that spiritual armor. So it is *the truth that is under consideration*, that Paul was saying here when he structured this particular sentence in Greek; ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”*** I've been spending a lot of time on the phrase 'loins girt about with truth,' and I'll spend more time on that particular verse in this chapter.

With that, I want to actually take a look at some of the different verses in the New Testament where this Greek word *perizonnumi* is used before I move on to the rest of this verse. As I said earlier, in the Old and New Testament there are two girdles. Most of you have probably never even heard anything like that. ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...”*** I have been talking about one specific girdle that we are to wear. Without God strengthening and empowering us through His force and might, we won't stand a chance without all the pieces of this weaponry as discussed here in Ephesians 6:14 through 18. That includes the last one, prayer, which most scholars leave out for some reason. Verse 14 begins, ***“Stand therefore, having your loins girt [perizonnumi in the Greek] about with truth.”***

First, go to Acts 12:1 where Herod has already figured out who he perceives as the troublemakers; the ones spreading the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were marked men and Herod knew all about them. He wanted to silence them and he was successful to a certain degree, and verse 2 begins listing who they were.

“Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex [to harm and do evil] certain of the church.

And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. [Not the half- brother of Jesus.]

And because he saw it pleased the Jews [Especially the religious sect of the Jews; the Pharisees, the Sadducees and others], ***he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.)***

And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him... to bring him forth to the people.”

At this time, Peter had four guards on him and Herod intended to keep him alive until after Easter, with certain death after. Now, just imagine what was going through Peter's mind. He saw James, the brother of John, killed by the sword. He knows Herod's intention is to please the people. It vexed him, but it also pleased the people and Herod was a people pleaser so he seized

Peter. Peter was probably thinking that this is what the Lord was saying to him back in the Gospel of John, chapter 21, when Jesus said to Peter, “If thou lovest me, then feed my sheep.”

“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself [girdedst is a different word here], and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old [or in this case, older], thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.”

Here Jesus is saying to Peter that when he was young, he had the freedom to do what he wanted to do and to walk wherever he wanted. Scholar after scholar has written about this particular verse and they're right. In verse 19 Jesus tells Peter how he was going to die,

“This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

In other words, Jesus tells Peter, “I'm going to tell you how you are going to die and that is the path that you will take. You are not going to choose this type of death, but if you follow me, it's going to lead you to that destination.” And here He is saying, ***“...thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shalt gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not.”***

He is telling Peter they will carry you there ***“whither thou wouldst not”*** or “This is not a path or a final destination of your choosing, but this is what is going to happen to you Peter.” Now, I could understand that is the way he should glorify God through his death. I have no problem accepting that. In fact, I agree with it, except there is another purpose for this verse besides what the scholars have written. They just give a description of what happened to Peter, now that we have the history of what happened to him and how he died. So, it's easy to say in a sense, that this is what the Lord meant in this verse. My point is that Peter, now imprisoned, saw James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. Peter, with all these guards watching over him, was waiting to be brought forth to the people, who would only want and be satisfied with one thing, and that is Peter's death. They wanted him to be killed, slaughtered, just like James. That's what is happening as we pick up the story in Acts 12:5,

“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made [instant and earnest prayer] without ceasing....” Without ceasing should be translated *with continuing intensity*. The ones who knew that Peter was now imprisoned and facing certain death were praying with intensity. They didn't let up because they had the faith that even though James, the brother of John, didn't escape from the sword, Peter would. Reading on to verse 6 we see,

“And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison. [Peter was surrounded, bound with two chains with soldiers sleeping on his left and his right.] And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up...”

Notice that Peter was sleeping, so this verse could be interpreted in two ways; either Peter had total confidence at this time that to be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord and he

was fine with that, or, as I like to believe, he had no problem with insomnia. I will stick to the latter part even though the first explanation was probably also true. I think that Peter never had a problem with insomnia. He didn't need any sleeping pills and could sleep through anything. I see this proven in the Gospels over and over. For instance, in the garden, Jesus said to Peter, "You could not even watch and pray for one hour." Peter didn't have a problem falling asleep no matter what the circumstance or situation, and I believe he was the same even while he was chained. I'm sure Peter thought that he would die, and this is what Jesus meant, as it wasn't a path he would have taken. The guards had bound him, they had girded him (the same word used in John 21) and now he didn't have a choice. So, Peter may have thought, "Why lose sleep over it." I'm convinced that he thought his time had come, so he wasn't going to lose any sleep. Look at the contrast between Peter and Paul. In his case Paul was beaten, in stocks, and with another servant of God, but they sang praises and hymns to God when the walls came tumbling down. Perhaps the same thing would have happened to Peter if he had just stayed awake, keeping communication going with his Lord. But no, God had to send an angel and wake up this sleepyhead. In verse 7 the angel,

"... raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself [Once again, perizonnumi], and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me."

Of course, they went through the prison without a problem, and as soon as they got outside the prison, the angel disappeared. Again, the angel of God said, "Arise [or stand up] and gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals." (This verse also sounds like Ephesians 6:14, "***Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth,***" meaning the matter that is under consideration.) Here in Acts, the matter under consideration was, "Your time isn't over Peter. You still have a lot of work ahead of you. It's not time to be sleeping and it's definitely not time to be caught and killed by Herod just because it pleases the people." No, that's not what happened. God wasn't through with Peter yet in this world, so the angel told Peter, "Gird thyself up, arise quickly. Stand up quickly and gird thyself." How many times and places could I show you from the Old and New Testament that the first thing you must do daily in your life when you start communicating to God is putting on that girdle of truth; and the truth of the matter is what we are called and commissioned to do here on this planet until He calls us home or comes for His church. Part of that consists of a spiritual fight with the unseen realm that doesn't want us to carry out our commission. That unseen realm doesn't want us to participate in anything that involves getting the Word of God out; it wants us to do just the opposite.

That's why he tells Peter to get up. "Stand up quickly and gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals." How many times have you seen those two together? And so Peter did. You can read the rest of the Book of Acts to find out where Peter was used, but at this time, he wasn't finished. He was commissioned to accomplish a certain purpose that God had called him for. For some reason, James, the brother of John, completed his time, but not Peter. Peter still had to keep girding himself up daily, with his sandals on, which in some sense means, "There is no stopping here Peter. Keep your girdle on, fasten that belt; keep your shoes on your feet until I tell you to take them off." Peter had to stay prepared and ready to move wherever God commissioned him to go to preach the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at another place where this word is used. Go to the Gospel of Luke, chapter 12, starting at verse 35. If you back up to verses 22 to 34, this is where Christ warns against earthly anxiety. (I covered Matthew 6:25-34 to a certain extent, and it's right after the "Where Is Your Heart" message that I preached on giving and how God will take care of you.) Just the same, Luke 12:22 tells us,

“Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.”
It goes on to say in verse 27, ***“Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”***

In other words, God is saying that we are more precious than anything else He has created. See if He will not take care of you if you put Him first. Then in verse 31 He says,

“But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

It finishes in verse 34 with, ***“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also,”*** which I have already preached on. This chapter then immediately goes into the story of the watchful servants, just after instructing His disciples to not have earthly anxiety. Here Jesus continues in verse 35,

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;”

The word *girded* here is the same as used in Ephesians 6:14 and Acts chapter 12. Here Jesus is speaking, not Paul. Paul was just reiterating what Jesus was saying because we have a commission to fulfil. Also, a better translation for ***“and your lights burning”*** would be *your lamp consumed with fire*. They didn't have electricity, so the lamp had to be filled with oil. Here, your light, your spiritual oil, the Holy Spirit, is consumed with fire and the lamp signifies the Word of God. Psalms 119:105 says, ***“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”*** The lamp is the Word of God there, and also in Luke 12:35. Let your lamp, or the Word of God consume you with fire, or be filled with the Holy Spirit. Verse 36 goes on,

“And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding [the wedding feast or banquet]; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.”

They were expecting Him at any moment and doing what He had commanded them to do and they were given charge while He was gone. There was to be no slacking in their responsibility. He is coming back for you and me and for His church, so we are to keep our lamps burning, our lights burning. We must keep ourselves consumed with fire because He knows we will need our loins girded. If you have the kind of attitude that so fills you with the Holy Spirit that nothing consumes you more than the Word of God and your commission to get the Word out to others, you'll get an onslaught of unseen forces coming upon you, more than you can ever imagine. They want to put a stop to the commission and the obedience you have to your Lord and master that is required until He comes back for us.

“Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching:”

Blessed in the Greek is *makarios*, which some of you are very familiar with by now, and it's not blessed or happy, but *fully satisfied*. I have always told you the King James actually got this right. *Fully satisfied are the ones bathed in the blood* of Jesus Christ. In the Book of Revelation the ones dipped in the blood of Christ will have eternal life. It is the most important baptism of all. This verse is telling us, ***“Fully satisfied and bathed in the blood are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching:”*** They're not doing their own thing, although that doesn't mean we don't carry out our responsibilities in life. It doesn't mean to quit our jobs and be gooney birds for Jesus, looking for the next opportunity to preach to somebody down on the street corner, of course not. It means that whatever we have been called to do in our occupation, we're not to forget the Lord. We're to understand, and never forget, that our responsibility is still to carry out His commission, which I have described over and over. Read verse 37 again with that understanding,

***“Fully satisfied and bathed in the blood are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching* [Instead of doing nothing for the Great Commission that we were called to participate in. We are watching, doing what God wants us to do.]: *verily I* [Jesus] *say unto you, that he shall gird himself...*”**

Christ is speaking to the ones that He finds watching, the ones whom the Lord is well pleased with because they didn't slacken in their responsibility and commission that they were called to fulfil. The word *gird* here is the same word and Jesus is the one who will be doing the girding, but look at this. Those of you who have been Christians for a while have probably read this verse over and over and never realized, and neither do the scholars. Probably the disciples did not get that also. *Christ will gird himself*. Read that verse again,

“Blessed [or fully satisfied and bathed in the blood] are those servants, whom the lord when he [Jesus Christ] cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself [Christ will gird himself], and make them to sit down to meat [have a meal], and will come forth and serve them.”

I have read some arrogant know-it-all scholars who state that Christ never meant that He would serve us. Are they so full of themselves that they can never correct the error in their ways and thoughts? Christ has already served us more than we can ever imagine by dying on that cross. He didn't have to. It was His choice, just as it was His choice to wash the feet of His disciples to demonstrate what a true servant of God is to be like. It will be His choice, for the ones that are found watching, to serve them a meal and, in this case, to sit down, and in my opinion, at the feast of the marriage supper of the lamb ***“and will come forth and serve them.”*** He will gladly do it and He isn't relinquishing His authority. This is true love and you will never understand this kind of true love until I take you to another part of the girdle. Before I go there, go to Revelation 1:12, where Jesus is talking to John.

***“And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;
And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man [Jesus], clothed with a***

garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.”

These verses go on to describe Jesus' other features, now go to Exodus 28. I'm making a point with this so stay with me. By the way, just before that Exodus 28, how ironic it is that Exodus 27:20 and 21 talks about how we are supposed to take care of the lamp.

Verse 20 tells us, ***“And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always [to ascend up always].”***

Compare that to what Christ tells us, ***“Let your loins be girded about and your light burning consumed with fire....”*** By the way, always.

Now in Exodus 28:4, he goes on to describe and define what the priests were to wear, starting with Aaron and his sons.

“And these are the garments which they shall make; a breastplate, and an ephod, and a robe, and a broided coat, a mitre, and a girdle [This spiritual armor goes all the way back to Exodus 28]: and they shall make holy garments for Aaron thy brother, and his sons, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.

And they shall take gold, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen.

And they shall make the ephod of gold, of blue, and of purple, of scarlet, and fine twined linen, with cunning work.”

Then in verse 8 we read,

“And the curious girdle [or embroidered girdle is a better translation] of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen.”

It goes on to explain in more detail what was to be put on this ephod. But there are two types of girdles: the embroidered girdle that went around right underneath or below the armpits (but not where we sweat) that the high priests were to wear. And also if you go back to verse 4, there was another girdle that was worn to hold up the coat that was not part of the priests clothing. So return to Revelation 1:13,

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps [the breasts] with a golden girdle.” Christ is girded about the *paps* with a golden girdle.

Back to Luke 12:37,

“Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself [However, Christ does not need to gird His loins, we need to gird our loins.], and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”

Let me read something:

“As the high priest was with the girdle of the ephod, which was made of gold, of blue, purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, and with which the priests were girt about the paps, or breasts, as Christ is here described: it is said of the priests in Ezekiel 44:18, ‘they shall not gird themselves with anything that cause sweat’; which some render ‘in sweating places’: and so some Jewish writers interpret it, which will serve to illustrate the present place’

‘says R. Abia (upon citing Ezekiel 44:18) they do not gird themselves in the place in which they sweat; according to tradition, when they gird themselves they do not gird neither below their loins, nor above their arm holes, but over against their arm holes; the gloss says, upon their ribs [I agree.], against their arm pit, that is, about their breast, or paps; and which is still more plainly expressed by the Targum on the above place, which paraphrases it thus,

‘they shall not gird about their loins, but they shall gird, ‘about their heart’.

So Josephus says, the high priest's garment was girt about the breast, a little below the arm holes. Christ's girdle, as a King, is the girdle of faithfulness and righteousness, which is about his loins; and his girdle, as a prophet, is the girdle of truth; but, as priests [In this case high priests.], it is the girdle of love.’ ”

Christ is serving us. That's why it is so important in I Corinthians 13 to understand when Paul lists three things; faith, hope, and charity, [or *agape*, love] of those three things love is the greatest. That's because love is what is carried on throughout eternity. Hope is not needed any longer because hope is based on the salvation that gives us hope to have eternal life.

“ ‘...it is that which has constrained him to put himself in the room and stead of his people, to assume their nature, give himself a sacrifice for them, and intercede on their behalf: this is like a girdle, round from everlasting to everlasting; is said to be ‘golden’, because of excellency, purity, glory, and duration of it; and because it is very strong, affectionate, and hearty, it is hid to be a girdle about the paps, near where is the heart, the seat of love; and this may also denote the power, strength, and readiness of Christ to assist and help his churches in every time of need.’ ”

We're to gird ourselves according to Christ in Luke 12:35; gird our loins about, keep our lights, (or lamps), the Word of God burning inside us, filled with the Holy Spirit, and consumed with the fire of it, the energy of it. We're to keep watching as a faithful servant. Don't slack off to the point where an ‘out of sight, out of mind’ attitude develops because He is not around to see. Be more diligent while He is gone because Christ sees all. Whether we believe it or not, He sees all and how we react to what is written here in the Word of God. That's why we are told in verse 37,

“Fully satisfied and bathed in the blood are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself....”

The Lord will gird himself with the girdle listed in Revelation 1:13 that we get just a glimpse of in Exodus 28. That is, He is girded about His paps with a golden girdle. This golden girdle is described not only in Ezekiel, but also in Exodus which describes the everlasting to everlasting, round about, eternal part of the symbolism of the girdle, meaning Christ's love will never fade away for the faithful, the watchers, the ones who keep their lights burning and their loins girded

about with truth in this case. Christ will not gird His loins, but He will gird His paps, or breasts, with that eternal love and salvation that He will gladly let us join and participate in forever and ever and ever.

It all starts, in my opinion, with the marriage supper of the lamb when He serves us; not with the type of servant attitude that we think of as going to a restaurant and serving us, but with a service out of love, as His response to our faithfulness and diligence that we have given His Word and His commission. I will never quite understand the full meaning of love, but I can get glimpses of it. I will finish with I Corinthians 13:13 that Paul wrote,

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

Yes, we need *faith* and we need to keep faithing, but we won't need it in eternity. In the Greek, *hope* is *elpis*, *the expectation of eternal salvation*. And *charity* is *agape*, which is the greatest because our love for our Lord and His great love for us will keep burning throughout eternity, everlasting to everlasting. He will gladly serve us at the marriage supper of the lamb, because I believe at that table, He will say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You did what I have asked you to do, not only to keep the burning desire, the consuming fire within your life through the Word of God, keeping it a lamp unto your feet so He can light the way, but you also did it for others to give them an opportunity to see and hear what you have heard.” And, by the way, I'm sure the Lord will point out others around that table, “You see them down there? Because of you, they are here joining us.” What a great reward that would be in itself to know the Lord has said that a person at that table is there because we decided to give something to the ministry that we received the Word from, and it gave them the opportunity to listen. It couldn't happen if we never gave that offering. And He will say, “Yes, good and wise and faithful servant. It is because of your participation that they are feasting along with us.”

This is the type of love that is sometimes hard to comprehend, but God's love is everlasting to everlasting; Christ's love is everlasting to everlasting, and I believe someday we will trade in the girdle that we girded about our loins and receive the golden girdle. By the way, angels wear it also. You'll find it in other places in the Book of Revelation. We will trade in our girdle for the girdle of love and probably at that point we will have a full understanding of what that girdle of love is all about. We will be able to relate to it and experience it throughout eternity. That's why Paul said, ***“But the greatest of these is love.”***

We need faith to get through the spiritual war that we're in. We need the expectation of eternal salvation, which is through the Good News of the Word of God and through the blood of Jesus Christ. Finally, we need to understand more about love, and more importantly how Christ loved us. If we start understanding more and more about how Christ loved us, then we'll be able to understand how important it is to understand that type of love. That is why it is the greatest and why it is not by accident that Paul started in Ephesians 6:14 talking about the girdle of truth under that particular subject matter. Jesus was straightforward about it; when we are consumed with the fire of God's Word in our life and consumed with the commission of getting it out to others, we'll need our loins girded about, ready to take on the onslaught of the enemy that is displeased in our reaction to God's Word.

But keep faithful, stay bathed in the blood of Jesus Christ, fully satisfied, knowing that you are doing what the Lord has asked you to do to be one of those that He finds watching. Then we too will sit down and join Him in the marriage supper of the lamb and experience what true love is; the true love that is girded about Christ from everlasting to everlasting, an unbroken circle of true love forevermore.

Take what you want out of this message, but hopefully you understand why I have been so adamant and focused on the first part of this verse because it needs to be said, it needs to be taught and it has been ignored long enough. There's a reason Paul said it and there's a reason Jesus said it. It's to get our attention and get us prepared, for not only what lies ahead in the battles down here, but what is still yet to come when we trade in girdles and get the girdle that will go with us throughout everlasting. That excites me, hopefully it excites you too!

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In 2 Corinthians 9:7 it reads, “God loveth a cheerful giver.” The Greek word for cheerful is Hilaros which means when someone is prompt to do something; they are ready in mind, with a joyful heart. In the Septuagint, it also means to cause to shine. Today I am looking for Hilaros Givers who are ready and full of joy for the opportunity to cause others to shine by hearing, learning, and growing in God’s Word. Join with us today and participate as a Hilaros Giver. If you wish to participate, use the following link <http://www.teachingfaith.com/giving>

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530 S Lake Ave #701

Pasadena, CA 91101