

How great it is to be in the house of the Lord. I always like to share a little something lighthearted with you at the beginning of the message. Maybe you heard the story about the pastor who stood before his congregation and said, "Next week I'm going to be preaching on the sin of lying. And so that you will better understand that message, I would like to ask for you all this week to read Mark chapter 17. Well, the next Sunday came around and the pastor stood up and he said, "By a show of hands, how many of you all read Mark chapter 17 this week?" The whole congregation lifted their hands up in the air. The pastor smiled and said, "Mark only has 16 chapters. Now I will proceed with my sermon on the sin of lying."

Last week if you were here, we began a sermon series called "Putting on the full armor of God." We talked about being strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. We also talked about who the real enemy is. The real enemy is not your spouse or your ex-spouse. The real enemy isn't your mom or your dad or your brother or your sister. The real enemy is not your church or your teammate. The real enemy is not your boss or your employee or your neighbor. The real enemy is the devil himself. Satan. That's the real enemy.

As a matter of fact, every day there's spiritual warfare that's taking place. We are in a spiritual conflict on a daily basis. That's why we are to be prepared, not if, but when the day of evil comes that we will be able to take our stand. And when we've done everything to stand with the full armor of God on. In our scripture today we see Paul again writing from a prison in Rome. He is believed to be imprisoned in Rome, not because of any crime is committed simply because of his faith in Christ and his message of Christ and his love. And as Paul is in prison in Rome, there's no doubt he saw daily these Roman centurion soldiers walking by, marching by, standing guard, maybe even chained to one of these Roman soldiers.

And as Paul was in prison, the spirit of God compelled him to write this letter, and not only compelled him to write this, but compelled him as he looked at the armor of the Roman centurion and he thought, "I will take the armor of the centurion and I will make it relevant for us as Christians, as followers of Christ. I will take the imagery of this soldier's armor and use it for God's glory, for spiritual things." And he takes this armor. And today we turn to the first piece of the armor. We are supposed to then stand firm with the belt of truth buckled around our waists. The belt was the foundational key piece of armor for the soldier. Why? Because it was too guard or to hold tight the long flowing robe or tunic that would be pulled up and tucked into the belt, so that the soldier might be able to move around freely without hindering his movement.

It was also important because this belt held his sword in place. And so when the soldier wore a belt, it was to hold his tunic up, his robe from tripping him up so he can move freely, and also to hold his sword. It was an important piece of the armor. Today as followers of Christ, as soldiers of the cross, we are to put on the full armor of God beginning with the belt of truth. Now I shared at the early service, growing up, I thought that my dad's belt was the belt of truth. "Did you hit your brother?" "Yes. Yes." "Did you talk back to your mom?" "No." Somehow the truth always came out, but this is not the belt of truth we're talking about today, especially when you know he would make that sound. I'm going to hide it out of your sight so you're not thinking about that the whole service. Get rid of that image right now.

If we are putting on the full armor of God, and we're putting on the belt of truth, then it expresses the truth of our words, the truth of our words. When we hear the word truth, the Greek word is *alítheia*, which actually means to unhide or to hide nothing. And we as followers of Christ ought to unhide or not

to hide anything. We are to speak words of truth. And Ephesians chapter 4:25, therefore we are to put all falsehood and the speak truthfully to our neighbor for we are members of one body. We are to put all falsehood and speak truthfully to one another. Let me ask you, do you speak truthfully to people or do you have a tendency to lie or not to tell the truth?

As followers of Christ, we are to speak the truth and we are to speak the truth in love. We look at Deuteronomy chapter five, verse 20, the ninth commandment of the 10 Commandments is you shall not lie or you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. And Proverbs 19:9 it says, a false witness will not go unpunished and one who pours out lies will perish. He's emphasizing the importance of telling the truth. We read in proverbs chapter six verses 16 and 17 there are six things that the lord hates, seven that are detestable to him. It says haughty eyes and you know what the second thing is? A lying tongue. The word despises, hates, is detestable when we have a lying tongue.

It's my prayer today that we would be people of truth. Speaking the truth. Have you ever wondered or maybe experienced in your own life, why do people feel the need to lie or to speak untruths? Well, it could be number one, fear. People have been doing things they ought not do, going places they ought not go, saying things they ought not say, and for fear of being found out, they will lie about it. They'll tell a lie. It's possible that people, lie because they want to manipulate someone. "I'll say what they want to hear and then they'll do what I want them to do." And so sometimes people lie and in so doing, they're manipulating someone to do what they would want.

People lie sometimes out of pride. We don't want people to know the real us or the real truth behind my life and I don't want to be found out. I'm so proudful that I'm going to just lie. I'm better off to act like I've got it all together, that my life's hunky-dory great, and I know exactly what I'm doing. Pride gets in the way and people can be guilty of lying. But I'll pray today whether you're a young person or a middle age or an older person, that we would be truthful. I still believe that honesty is the best policy. I still believe that God wants us to speak words of truth. Think about Jesus. How many times in scripture do we see Jesus say, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like this little child, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven."

So many times he prefaced what he said by saying, "I tell you the truth." Because Jesus Christ modeled the truth. We too. Parents do you ever put your children in this predicament? The phone rings and of course today with the Caller Id, it's hard to say you don't know when somebody's calling and then somebody calls you, you say, "I'm not here, I'm not here. Tell him I'm not here." Or how many times do we tell that little white lie? What's that old saying? How many lies do you have to tell to get out of the one you just told? What is it, nine or 10? Has anybody heard that saying you've got to tell nine lies to get out of one? Did I just dream that up?

When I was in college, I was a communication major over at Georgetown College and I had a kind of a smorgasbord of all these different classes that fell under the communication, whether it's public relations or acting or all these reader's theater. I had a smorgasbord of all these things that fell under the communication major. Well, I had an acting class. One of the very first exercises, if you're getting ready to go up to college, I don't recommend you try this unless your professor is teaching a class and tells you to do this, but in our acting class, one of the very first exercises of the semester, we had to bring in a brown paper sack, a brown paper bag. All of us the exact same kind of bag with an item inside the bag. And they were all placed in part of the classroom in the floor.

So here was our exercise. When our name was called upon, we had to walk over, pick up the bag, go in front of the class and whatever we pulled out, if that item was yours, then you told the truth of what that item meant to you. But if it were someone else's, then your job was to lie and make the rest of the class think that item was yours. What does that say? We were practicing lying. And most of the people in the class were able to fool the rest of the class and make people think that... Just kind of like that show now, it's a remake, that old show to tell the truth. Where they bring in these three people and they're trying to make you believe that they were the gymnast, or they were the founder of this whatever invention.

I bet you all want to know what I did. I'm not going to tell you what I did. It doesn't have anything to do with the message. But the fact is if we are wearing the belt of truth, then we are to speak words of truth. But then we should also live the way of truth. We should live the way of truth. In Ephesians 4:20, Paul said, "You however, did not come to know Christ that way. Surely you heard of him and were taught in him the relevance of the truth that is in Christ." You did not come to know Christ the way that these people, if you read in preceding verses that were living a false kind of life and and hiding their sin in darkness and insensitivity to the spirit of God. He said, "You did not come to know Christ that way."

And then he goes on to say in Ephesians 4:22 and 23, "You are taught in regard with your former way of life to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by deceitful desires and to be made new in the attitude of your minds and to put on the new self, which is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." To put up the old self with its deceitful desires, to be corrupted by its deceitful desires, and to put on new attitude and put on the new self-created to be like God. Let me ask you, if you know Christ, then why are you still... and we talked about this last week, why are you still living your old way of life? If you've got on the belt of the truth, then why are you still doing some of the things you did before you knew Christ? Why are you still talking like you're talking, walking like you're walking, living like you're living? There's to be a real change in us, when we had the truth of Jesus Christ and his spirit living in us.

A passage we shared last week, Romans 12:2, do not be conformed any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind or spirit. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the father except through me." So we know salvation comes through Christ and his way is better than the world's way. Then there should be a mark difference and true righteousness and holiness. We've talked about it. What does holiness mean? To be set apart, to be different than the rest of the world. Students as you go back to school, would you be bold enough in your faith to be different than all those other kids that are walking down the hall?

What do I mean by that? You don't have to talk like them and do what they're doing to fit in or to be accepted. Don't compromise your faith for popularity or just to fit in. I don't know how many times, sometimes students... What kind of witness would this be? I'm active at Forks of Elkhorn Baptist Church in the student ministry and yet you go to school and nothing comes out of your mouth except obscenities, bad talk, and then you'd go in the bathroom, you start vaping and doing all kinds of craziness and then people say, "I think I saw them." You'd go, "I think I saw them at church. Are they a Chr... I don't know if they're a Christian or what is. I'm not sure."

Adults, same for you. What if you're telling off color jokes at work, or you're doing things that you ought not be doing, lying or saying things or doing things. Look, it's not about just talking the talk, we must model what it means to walk the walk. We are the light of Christ. We are to walk in his way, and his way

is better. So many times we put on a front when we're with this group, when we're with this group, we are to be the same as followers of Christ wherever we go. And look, we're all sinners saved by God's grace. I shared this Wednesday night and I'll share with you. So many times we say, "Well, at least I don't do what such and such does. At least I don't go where such and such goes. At least I'm not as bad as that person."

Let me tell you something. Our measuring stick, our standard is Jesus Christ, and compared to him we all fall short. He's our standard. I'm not comparing with you and you and you and you. We compare ourselves, "Am I living the way Jesus would have me to live? Am I really following his way?" When we read and John 8:32, he said, "You will know the truth and the truth will make you free." The truth of Jesus Christ and the price he paid on the cross, breaks the chains of slavery to sin and the world and we have forgiveness, freedom to walk in his steps and his spirit to be the true.

So students, adults, as you go to work, may people say, "What's different about them?" Not a holier-than-thou, a judgmental, I'm-better-than-you attitude. I love you and I'm concerned for you and you don't have to do what everybody else is doing to be accepted. We are to be different than the rest of the world, to be the light and love of Christ. But then not only do we talk about the truth of his way, lastly the truth of his word. The truth of our word in Christ, the truth of our word. In First John 3:1, how great the love the father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are, the children of God. How great is the love the father has lavished on us that we should be called the children of God.

I want to tell you today, you don't get your work and meaning by what you do, you get your work and meaning through your identity in Jesus Christ. That too gives our life purpose and meaning. And not only are we a child of God, we are warriors of the cross, soldiers of the cross. We sang about, "Stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross. Lift high his royal banner, it will not suffer loss." I love what the Lord said in Isaiah 54:17, "No weapon formed against you shall prosper. No weapon formed against you shall prosper. This is your heritage, that you are servants of the Lord." What does that mean, no weapon formed against you shall prosper?

In other words, the Lord is saying the battle's already been worn. The devil can try every which way, no matter what fight you're going through, no matter what struggle you're going through, no matter what battle of your mind you're dealing with, no matter what situation you're in, the devil has already been defeated. The fight has been fixed. We already know that Christ is the conqueror. No weapon can defeat you today. And you claim that. When you feel like your enemies are closing in on you, you claim victory. When you feel like that your heart and your flesh are letting you down, you claim victory. When you feel like you have no hope and you can't go on, you claim victory. When you feel like that you're lost without salvation, you claim victory in Christ. Paul said in First Corinthians 15:57, "Thanks be to God. He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

As the choir sang, "We are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus who loved us." Why is it that we as Christians walk around in defeat like we're on the losing team? We need to walk with our shoulders back and our heads held high, we're a victory in Christ. We're walking in victory, not in defeat. Not judgmental again or holier-than-thought, but in love and compassion and joy. And all the fruits of the spirit would be displayed. I don't know about you, but I'm ready to get the belt of truth on today, to start putting on that armor of God. As you go back to school, put on the armor. As you go back to work, put on the armor. As you go to the store, put on the armor. As I go to the gym, I put on the armor. As I

go to church, I'm putting on the armor. Wherever I go, I'm putting on the armor of God, so that'll take my stain from Jesus.

There's some of you here and you've been contemplating a spiritual decision for a while. And in a moment we're going to have a time of commitment or decision. I'm just asking you if you'd be to stand in front of a few people and say, "I want Jesus Christ in my life. I want to have a personal relationship, a love relationship with Jesus Christ." Would you be willing to come and take a stand for him who was willing to die for you and for me, then he rose from the grave to show we have victory over death and victory over sin? Would you be willing to do that in a moment?

Or maybe you're a Christian, you've gotten out of the game. You've, you've gotten out of the battle. You're nowhere on the battlefield. You're not on the radar. And maybe today you're going to say, "I want to re list. Sign me up to be a part of the army of God. I'm not ashamed of the Gospel and I'm not ashamed to walk down the halls at school, to be on my team, to be in my group, to be at work and let people know that I am a follower of Jesus Christ. Give me the strength to renew my commitment, my vow. I'm relisting to get back to serving the Lord who's done so much for me.

Or maybe you want to be a part of a church that's a field hospital for seeing sick, hurt and wounded, for people that are struggling. We're all fellow strugglers, but I love you enough as your pastor and I love the Lord enough that I want to help you heal and be made whole and get back to serving the Lord. We're not perfect, but if you want to be a part of a church that's trying to make a difference, we dropped the ball many times, but we are trying to make a difference for the king. We'd love you to be a part so you can help nurse people back to health and spiritual vitality. We'd love for you to be a part of this family. So aren't you ready today?

Don't worry about what a few people think. I had a couple that joined the church after the service, at the early service. They want to be a part of what God is doing. They brought me their membership cards and joined. But would you be willing to just a moment to" say, I'm not ashamed, I'm not embarrassed." And I'm going to pray God's going to give you a holy boldness to do what he's leading you to do as we pray together. Father, I pray right now in the stillness of this moment that if there are any folks here that have never made a public profession of faith, that this might be the day that they would accept Christ, ask for forgiveness of their sin. Father that they would begin a put off the old self and begin putting on the new self in Christ, and what acknowledge you before man today.

Lord, maybe there are Christians that have gotten off track and the world has pulled them away from you. Lord, I pray that they would decide right now whose team they're on. And they would make a decision to follow Christ, and Lord, that they would renew their vow of commitment. Lord, maybe there are folks that have been visiting and they feel your Holy Spirit here, and they feel drawn by your presence. And yet we've allowed Father, Satan to lie to us, to deceive us, or think that we're not worthy or we're not good enough, or we're not talented enough or smart enough. And father, we know that you give our lives worth and meaning through Christ. And Lord, I pray some folks would join this imperfect church that's trying to fulfill your perfect plan and to glorify you. So God, may our prayer be right now, Lord, have your way in me. Your way, not my way. And that we can praise Jesus, not My will, but your will be done even now, in Jesus name. Amen.