

# Capturing Strongholds

26 - Living the Simple Gospel: Philippians  
Church on the Park | Sunday, 30 July 2017

**Texts:** Philippians 2:19-24; Ephesians 6:10-14

**Theme:** Totally envelop your life with truth; then you will stand firm in the battle.

**Intro:** *How can you stand firm in the battle?* Last week we learned that in order to stand you need to strengthen yourself. There's nothing that brings strength like leaning on the Lord, your Beloved. Today, we will see that in order to stand it's essential that you "take up the full armour of God." Each week I'm building on the acronym STAND. First, the 's': strengthen yourself. And today, the 't': take up. Our specific focus will be on truth and in our passage we see Timothy, a man who was true. Timothy did not just know facts about God, but proved himself to be authentic and real.

## 1) Take up the full armour of God so that you can stand firm (Eph. 6:13-14).

- Listen to Paul: "Therefore, **take up** the full armour of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to **stand firm**."
- **Christians** are called to be **warriors**.
  - And in order to be **God's warriors** you must put on **God's armour**.
    - This armour is actually **God's attributes**—his **character** and **nature**—and to **put it on** means to let **God work** his nature into the **core** of your being.
- Let me clear up one of the **myths** regarding this passage.
  - Numerous commentators have said that because the word '**stand**' is used and because of the 'nature of the armour' that this passage is all about **defence**, not **attacking**.
    - Nothing can be further than the truth.
  - The whole **context** of Scripture tells us that we put on the armour because we are an **advancing army**. Standing has to do with standing in the battle as you **take ground**.
    - What I am saying is that the Lord has called us to **capture strongholds**—not merely to **defend** and **stand around** as we constantly get **beat up**.
    - As my pastor would always say, "We are called to **kick in the gates of hell!**"
      - Proverbs 21:22 says, "A wise man **scales** the city of the mighty and brings down the **stronghold** in which they trust."
      - 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 states: "For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses/**strongholds**. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking **every thought** captive to the obedience of Christ."
- *Do you know what the oldest sport in the world is?*
  - It's **belt-wrestling** (see *Belt-Wrestling in the Bible World* by Cyrus H. Gordon).
    - Some of the oldest discovered **statues** are sculptures of two men wrestling, grabbing the belt of their opponent to throw them down.
    - The object of belt-wrestling was to grab your opponents **belt**, bring them **down** and **strip** them of their belt.
    - The winner would **hold high** his competition's **belt** in **triumph**.
- Today you also are in a **fierce wrestling** match with the evil one.
  - **His goal:** to **throw** you **down** and **strip** the **truth** out of your life.
- The enemy wants to strip you of the **belt of truth**.
  - His power lays in **lies**, **deception** and **distortion**.
  - I'm giving you **intel** on the way the enemy works.
    - As I have been reading about **WWII**, I discovered it was the intel that seems to have really won the war. It was the breaking of codes and the information of the spies that gave the Allies the upper hand. The war was won in secret before being won outwardly.
- In Roman times, when a warrior was going into battle, he would **first gird his loins**. It meant he was getting **ready** to fight.
  - "having girded your loins..."

## 2) Truth conquers, therefore strap the warrior's belt of truth firmly around you (Eph. 6:14).

- On the emblem of **Milton State School** is a **torch** and the words 'truth conquers.'
- Specifically today, my focus will be on the "belt of truth."
- The belt Paul is speaking of the **warrior's belt**.
  - It's **truth** that is the **foundation** and **core** of the **rest of the armour**.
  - When Paul says to "take up the full armour" or "put on," he means for you to let the **character** of God become a part of you. Let truth be **worked** into the core of your character.
- The **sword** was **connected** to the **belt** and the belt also **connected** together the other **pieces** of armour.
  - To **remove** the belt was seen as **humiliation** and used in **disciplinary action**.
  - "The truly distinguishing factor of military dress were the sandals and the military belt." (Stephanie Hoss).
  - Without the girding up of the loins, the soldier was restricted and not free to run and battle.
- **Pilate** questioned, "What is truth?"
  - I'd like to look at Jesus' interaction with Pilate just before his crucifixion.
    - "Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?"
    - Jesus answered, "**My kingdom is not of this world**. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. **For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.**" Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?"
  - And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him" (John 18:33-38, NASB).
    - Here is the sad fact: **Pilate 'knew' the truth**, but he didn't **stand in the truth**. He knew Jesus was not guilty, but he chose to give in to the **crowd**.
    - This is the **#1 reason why truth** gets trampled on in the streets: we want to **appease people**, to make them **happy**.
      - Listen to **2 Tim. 4:1-5**
  - Here we see truly what truth is: **truth is God's Word**. Look at **John 17:17**.
    - In the Bible, **truth** has a **stronger meaning** than **our word 'truth.'** We usually think of truth as **facts**. But Scripture sees truth as **reality**—the **essence** and **core**. It is also a word used for **faithfulness** and **integrity**; it means **steadfast** and **firm**. Like a **pillar** it stands.
    - Romans 3:4 says, "Let **God be true** and every **man a liar**"
      - **God himself is true**. God and everything of God.
      - But the **world is not true**.
    - I often hear Christians saying after leaving church or prayer, "**Now, it's time to go into the real world.**"
      - Nothing could be more wrong! **God's presence** and **Word** is the **real world**. The world you are going back into is the **fake** world that is passing away. In the end, it's only God's **Kingdom** that will **stand**.
  - Look at what Jesus said to those who **believed** him in **John 8:31-47**.
    - First, realise that a **good leader** will **challenge** you. Their job is not to constantly affirm you, but to challenge you.
    - **Jesus is challenging** those who **believed**—these aren't 'unbelievers.' Yet, we clearly see there is a deficiency in their faith.
    - It's the **truth** of God's Word that makes you **free**.
      - I'll develop this more tomorrow night at our opening night at **Holy Fire Ministry Training School**.
  - Again, there is a great **psychological warfare** that comes against God's people and the only way to overcome is to know the truth.

### 3) You capture strongholds by standing on the truth (1 Chron. 11:1-8).

- First, before you **capture** any 'outward' strongholds, let **Jesus capture** your **heart** and **mind**.
  - Let Jesus take up **residence** in you and give him **no resistance**.
  - The problem has always been, God's people have got the **order wrong**.
    - We have wanted the **romance of adventure** before the **romance of intimacy with Jesus**. We have wanted to **do and go before** being made **authentic** and **reliable**.
- The reason **David** was able to take the **stronghold** was that he **stood on the truth** of **God's Word** and **God's faithfulness**. **God will always keep his Word**.
  - First, God **promised** the **Promised Land** to **Abraham**. Yet, even after Joshua, **Jerusalem** was still a **stronghold** that was **never won**.
    - So **David** stood on the **promise** given to **Abraham**—the **written word**.
  - David also stood on the promise given to him by **Samuel**—the **prophetic and spoken word**.
- Through both the **written** and **prophetic** Word, he knew the **truth**, and **waged a war** to take back what the **devil** had **stolen**.
- All those years while David was being hounded by Saul in the wilderness, **it seemed God's Word was not true**.
  - By **appearances**, David was **losing**.
    - But never **base** your life on **appearances** and **feelings**.
      - **Appearance** and **feeling** is **often** the **root** of **deception**. **See the eternal**. **See God's Word**. See the Lord on his throne.
- **The Word is true**, not the **physical reality** at the time.
  - Constantly **meditate** on and **remind yourself** of the **truth** of God's Word. Let that be your **reality**, not the **trials** and **temptations** you face. Again, let it **not** be your **feelings**, but the **faithfulness of God**.
- As a church we are called to capture strongholds. The only way we can do that is to build up the strongholds we have. The base is foundational. Without the base being strong, we won't be able to go on missions and expand the Kingdom.
  - The main thing God has put on Anna and I's heart is to guard and build up the base. And this is the season we are in as a church. To guard and build up the stronghold. And when the stronghold is strong, then we will see expansion.

**Conclusion:** When the truth is firmly buckled around you, then you can stand tall, stand strong, stand firm and stand against the enemy.