TITLE: Does the Armor fit?

TEXT: Ephe. 4:22-24; Gal. 12;20; Jn. 17:20-23;

Ro. 8:1-9; Ephe. 6:12-13

INTRODUCTION: Today I want to talk about how our struggles in this life are not against flesh and blood; against our fellow man. Our real struggle isn’t with each other. If you find that your marriage is struggling--Husbands your real struggle is not against your wife and Wives, your real struggle is not against your husband.

 If you are struggling in your job—your real struggle is not with your employer or the other employees.

 If you are struggling with your neighbors, your real struggle is not the people who may live next store.

 The Apostle Paul says in:

**Ephe. 6:12 But our real struggle is against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms**.

 All our struggles, all of our battles are first and foremost spiritual. Their true origin is spiritual in nature.

 A couple weeks ago we talked about how if we are going to fight spiritual battles we need to do it with spiritual weapons. We talked about our need to put on the full armor of God.

**Ephe 6:13 (NIV) Therefore put on the full armor of God--the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the gospel of peace, the shield of faith. The helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God--- And prayer.**

The analogy that Paul is using is that of a Roman soldier.

 A Roman soldier’s armor was fitted to his body.

In order to put on his armor he needed to first take off his street clothes, otherwise the armor would not fit properly….

 If we are going to fight and win spiritual battles, tear down the spiritual strongholds of the enemy in our life, we will need to do it with the spiritual armament and weaponry that God has placed at our disposal….

 If we are a Christian, if we have asked Jesus to be the lord and Savior of our life then God has placed all these things at our disposal. God has guaranteed that if we put on His armor that the battle will be ours…We will prevail.

 As A Christian, If we find that we are losing the battles of this life or that our life is full of struggles that we just can’t seem to overcome, then the answer is simple…

 We are not putting on the armor of God..

 Most probably the reason that we are not putting on the armor is because we find that it does not fit. It is not comfortable to wear…

 The reason that it doesn’t fit or that it feels un-comfortable to us is because, often, we try to put it on over the old clothes of our sinful nature…

 Paul tells us how we must prepare ourselves in order for the Armor of God to fit --

**Ephe 4:22 (NIV) You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;**

**23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds;**

**24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**

Often, as Christians we try to put on Gods righteousness over the old self, over our sinful nature. And what We find is that it is uncomfortable, it is even convicting so we take it back off because it doesn’t fit, it feels uncomfortable to us..

 The reason that the breastplate of righteousness feels so uncomfortable is because we haven’t fist taken off our old garment of the flesh and we find that we can’t wear both at the same time.

Righteousness and holiness are parts of Gods armor that we are to put on but before we can put on the righteousness of God we first must put off our old self, our sinful nature.

 **You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;**

**23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds;**

**24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness**.

 Before we can put on the new self which is created (or re-created when we come to Christ) to be like God in true righteousness and holiness, before we can put on the armor, such as the breastplate of righteousness, we must first put off the old self. The old self which is full of corruption and selfish and sometimes even evil desires.

 The only way that we can put off the old self is to kill it, destroy it.

 It is what Paul meant when he said---

 **Gala 2:20 (NIV) I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

 Before we can live for Christ we must first die with Him…

 Paul says I have been **crucified** with Christ..

 Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment.

 Its purpose was to destroy, to kill, and it was very effective!

 No one ever walked away after being crucified..

 No one came down from a cross alive…

**4717 stauroo {stow-ro'-o}**

**1) to stake, drive down stakes) to crucify**

It speaks here to crucify the flesh in order to utterly destroy its power.

We are to be crucified **with** Christ

**4862 sun {soon}**

**a primary preposition denoting union;**

 In order to be crucified with Christ we must first be united to Him.

 That is what Salvation is all about! When we come to God, sorry and repentant for our sin and ask Jesus to forgive us our sin and come into our heart and be the Lord and Savior of our life we are creating a union with Him.

 The Holy Spirit of Christ then comes and indwells our hearts.

 Through that indwelling we become united with Christ Jesus.

 His Spirit now resides, now lives, within us..

This is what Jesus was talking about when He prayed in:

**John 17:20 (NIV) "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,**

**21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.**

**22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one:**

**23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**

Jesus was speaking of a coming time when the comforter, the Holy Spirit would physically indwell the Church to unite the Church, unite us as individual believers to Himself!

 It is only through this union that we will be able to crucify the flesh…

The first step in living a sanctified life in Christ, a life free from sin, is realizing that we can't keep from sinning. That may seem like a strange first step toward righteous living, but it's true.

 Consider this question: If we could keep from sinning, wouldn't we have done it by now? How many times have we committed the same sins? Let's face it, rededication to not sin won't work. If it did, we wouldn't find it necessary to keep rededicating ourselves. Many of us have struggled with sin for one reason: We have focused on our performance more than on Jesus Christ. We have tried to keep from sinning, but the Bible teaches that effective Christian living doesn't come by trying. It comes by trusting Christ to express his life through us. He is the only One who can successfully keep us from sinning.

 Before we can be effective in righteous living, become promise keepers, we must first become promise receivers.

 The Bible is clear about God's promise: the One who has given us his life will be the One who lives it for us.

 Only Jesus Christ can effectively live the perfect life. As Believers He lives inside us and wants to reveal His perfect life through us.

 This is what Paul meant when he said:

 **Gala 2:20 (NIV) I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**

 This is the only way that we will ever be able to put on the breastplate of righteousness, to live righteously and truly live apart from sin…

 We need to crucify self on the cross of Christ and then allow Jesus to live His life through us…

 We need to come to that place where we say, and mean: I Terry, I Pam, I Randy, I Cathy have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Jesus Christ now lives in me as I allow Him to live His life through me…

**Crucified with Christ**

A young man approached an older Christian with this question: “What does it mean as far as this life is concerned to be ‘crucified with Christ’?” The believer replied, “It means three things: (1) a man on a cross is facing in only one direction; (2) he is not going back; and (3) he has no further plans of his own.

 ” Commenting on this, T. S. Rendall wrote, “Too many Christians are trying to face in two directions at the same time. They are divided in heart. They want Heaven, but they also love the world. They are like Lot’s wife: running one way, but facing another. Remember, a crucified man is not coming back. The cross spell **finis** for him; he is not going to return to his old life. Also, a crucified man has no plans of this own. He is through with the vainglory of this life. Its chains are broken and its charms are gone.” In the light of these truths, would you say you are acting like a “crucified” Christian? - H.G.B.

 We will never be able to live up to Gods righteous requirements, live lives free from sin--- but Jesus can!

 That is what the Lordship of Christ in our life is all about.

Lordship is asking Jesus to come in and then allowing Him supremacy, allowing Him to live His life through us.

 That is how we put off the old self, our sinful nature and put on the new self that is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness!

 Jesus is the new self that we are to put on!

 How many times have we said: As hard as I try I just can’t seem to live up Gods commands? As hard as I try I just can’t seem to live free from sin!

 That is the problem? We can’t live up to Gods commands; we can’t live free from sin by trying! We can only do it dying and by trusting! Dying to self and trusting in Jesus to live His life through us as we allow Him to do that!

**Roma 8:1 (NIV) Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,**

**2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.**

**3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,**

**4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.**

**5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.**

**6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;**

**7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.**

**8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.**

**9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.**

 Did you catch that?

**3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,**

**4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.**

 God gave the law but there was a catch!

 The law tells us what Gods righteous requirements are, but the law has no power to help us keep them! The law is therefore weakened by our sinful nature! You see our nature to sin is a more powerful force then the letter of the law…

 But what the law was powerless to do, enable us to keep the law, God did by send His own Son to be a sin offering…

 **And so he condemned sin in sinful man,**

**4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.**

 The only way that we can “not sin”, stop living according to our sinful nature, is to put that nature to death. Kill it; crucify it on the cross with Christ..

 The only way that we can go on and live a righteous life is to then allow Jesus to live His life through us..

 That is what it means to live according to the Spirit..

 It is not merely asking ourselves “WWJD--What would Jesus do” but it is asking ourselves the question and then doing as Jesus would do…

 And Church it is not impossible for us to do it! God has given us the ability through Christ to do it!

 Let us call a spade a spade here this morning:

 When we say that there is a sin that I can’t

“not do”, a command that I can’t keep”, a bad attitude that I can’t overcome we are deceiving ourselves….

 The fact is that what it boils down to is that they’re a part of our life that we won’t give to Christ..

 There is a part of our old nature, our flesh that we refuse to crucify.

 And what it boils down to is that we are still living according to our sinful nature and what its desires are..

**5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.**

**6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;**

**7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.**

**8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.**

**9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.**

If the Spirit of God lives in you, is alive in you! If it has been activated within you!

 The Holy Spirit is activated, made alive in us through submission! Submission of our will to His will….

 As we submit our sinful nature to the Holy Spirit of Christ within us..

 Submission is not doing what we want to do but doing what we don’t want to do, would rather not do.

 If we want to do something it doesn’t require an act of submission on our part to do it..

 Example: Husband tells his wife to go out and buy herself a new dress---wife does it-- it is probably not an act of submission on her part!

 If the same husband tells his wife the toilet needs cleaned and she willingly does it then that is an act of submission!

 If a wife tells her husband to just take the day off and go fishing and the husband does it, it probably is not an act of submission on his part. But if she says go shopping with me for new curtains and he willingly does it then it is most likely an act of submission to his wife’s will.

 Folks,

**Ephe 6:12 (NIV) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.**

**13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.**

Every battle that we face as a Christian is Spiritual in nature.

 In order for us to fight and win these battles, whatever they may be, we will need to first put on the spiritual armor that God has for us to put on.

In order for us to put on the armor we need to first take off the old clothes of our sinful nature so that the armor will fit and we will be able to fight the good fight..

We do that through crucifixion. By crucifying self on the cross of Christ..

 This is our preeminent act of submission as a Christian…

 It is only when we submit all of self to Christ that we are truly crucified with Him.

Have you taken up the armor of God?

 Does your spiritual armor fit?

If not, do we need to take off the old clothes of self and crucify them on the cross with Christ?

 Can we say with the Apostle Paul this morning?

 **I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me and through me?**

Again, being crucified with Christ means three things: (1) a man on a cross is facing in only one direction; (2) he is not going back; and (3) he has no further plans of his own.”