



Summer Family Reunion (Part 5) **Bluegrass and Barbecue Summer**

Alex Himaya

Ted Cunningham -We are continuing in this Blue Grass and Barbeque summer reunion series with a dear friend. He doesn't need introduction, but he has been a friend of our church and friend of mine for about 20 years now. He is passionate about sharing the good news of Jesus and truly is making a difference, not just here in our church and in his Church in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, but truly taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, so would you give a nice warm welcome to our dear friend, Dr, Alex Himaya.

Alex Himaya – I love your pastor and I love this church and it's good to be back with your again. It's the first time I've ever been here with Charles. I know he's a regular and I have requested when he's here, I am here. What an amazing voice he has. And leading us in worship today...You should applaud the talents that God gives.

Let me say this... I can't sing like that at all. And if I were to try, it would be a distraction to all of you, but one of the things the Lord has challenged me on in the last few months is that he has given me a voice, and I am supposed to use the tenor of my voice to sing worship to him.

So now, on a daily basis, every single morning, via an app called Sing, I am singing a worship song to the Lord and it is doing more for my spirit than I ever guessed it would do. So, let me just say to all of the men in the room. You think you can't sing... worship is a weapon. Watching worship is not. But when you use your voice to sing praises to the Lord, it is a weapon in your own heart.

Speaking of weapons, I want to talk about spiritual warfare today. I know when I mention that there are several reactions to that because the people who talk the longest and the loudest about spiritual warfare are from those churches. You know what I'm talking about. Like the ones where the ladies wear jumpers and churn their own butter and wear no makeup in the name of the Holy Spirit.

Or, on the other side of the camp is the ladies that wear so much makeup that they put it on with a putty knife. We don't want to be associated with either of those, right? so, we want to not talk about that subject and I think it's one of the strategies of the devil to convince us that he doesn't exist or if he is invisible, or he's fictional.

Or here's another one. Since he is a defeated foe, then there is no way that he can hurt us as believers, or this one – if God loves us, then he is going to protect us from all things dangers. And you need to hear today that God does love you, of course he loves you. First John 3: says he loves you so much that he calls you his children, his very nature as a father means he loves and because he loves you, of course he will protect you. But that does not mean that he will keep all danger away from you all the days of your life, but how many of you know that he will prepare you for every danger that you do face. He will. And for all the fathers in the room, Happy Father's Day to you today.

So, if you, as an earthly dad know and sense in your heart that part of your responsibility is to love your family and protect your family then surely God, our heavenly father knows that.

But any authority over any spiritual darkness that we have is not based on track record or anything that we've earned. It is based solely on our relationship with our heavenly Father because we are sons and daughters of the King and he has given us authority over all the things that will come against us.

And even if you don't believe every word that this book says about you, your enemy does. He believes every word. He knows you've been forgiven. He knows there is therefore no condemnation on those who are called according to Christ Jesus. He knows that you have been made competent by the Holy Spirit of God. What a shame it would be for your enemy to believe more about your potential than you do. In fact, it's because of what he believes about you that he attacks

you. he knows he can't destroy you as a child of God, so he does everything he can to distract you or to discourage you. But hear me... Just because he is a scared foe doesn't mean he's not a dangerous foe. Sometimes the most dangerous dog you can encounter is a scared dog. And just because he is scared, does not mean he is not dangerous. In fact, sometimes the scared ones are the most dangerous.

I want to ask you his question today... If your enemy is not a danger to you, why did God supply you with armor? In fact, let's talk about the armor of God today. and I want you to hear on the front end that God has given you everything you need for life and for holiness. That's a word we don't say a lot in church anymore. But it's a bible word. And he doesn't just give us the keys and the authority and say good luck, he actually gives us armor to use in the fight and unfortunately, many of us, especially those of us that are a little bit older, those of us who were raised in church... when we think of the armor of God, we think of a Sunday school lesson, a flannel Graff lesson or some children's plastic toy that we buy for our kids that they put on. But that's not at all what Paul had in mind. He had in mind a real Roman soldier who was understanding of, and very familiar, with the severity of war. He had in mind the spiritual assault that he encountered and he knew that we would encounter as well. The lies and the accusations that you are not good enough, you are a failure, not pretty enough, not smart enough, will never change.

He knew we would encounter all of that. he knew in our world we would encounter injustice and racism and abuse and all of those things and it's from the that perspective, by the way, that we read Ephesians:6 If. you have your Bible, open it to Ephesians:6. If you don't have it, we will throw the verses on the screen for you, but look in verse 10 where he says a final word or finally. In other words, after five chapters of telling you who you are in Christ, what you have in Christ, isn't it interesting right after he talks about husbands and wives and parents and all that, he talks about the armor of God. Finally, after all of that, be ***strong in the Lord and his mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all of the strategies of the devil.*** Paul is **making** clear he believes spiritual warfare is real and it's for us and is legitimate, part of the life of a believer.

He also makes it clear that the devil has strategies and schemes that he is using against us, not one or he wouldn't use the word *all*, right? All means at least two wouldn't use the word all. All means at least two strategies. But really, it implies a whole lot more than that. He is very strategic and Satan is not all knowing. Of course not. But he is very observant. And he's been around a long time and he's watching you. He watches what discourages you, what distracts you. He watches what it is that makes you vulnerable. He knows what it is that makes you anxious or feel isolated. He knows what pushes you towards spiritual laziness. And in Verse 11, that word, *Strategies*, literally means, in the Greek, *scheming* He is scheming against your weaknesses. He is studying your weaknesses.

You say, "I don't know if that's true." How is it the thing that tempts you the most shows up at the moment you are most tired. Do you think that is a coincidence? No, he's studying you and he knows you.

When I was child, elementary school, probably 1st through 6th grade, the neighbor that lived a few doors down from me, His name was Doug Johnson. Doug and I were best buddies. His birthday was October 31. It was on Halloween. All through elementary school, his birthday party was us loading up in his grandmother's van and taking about a dozen boys to the haunted houses in town. Does anybody remember haunted houses? We would get in this van and we would go. Here's the problem. There was one of the boys... I'll not call his name in case he's watching this, who was afraid to the nth degree afraid. maybe he knew more than we knew at that time, but he was afraid to the point of crying and snotting and sobbing in the van every single year. Every year we thought this is the year, we are like 6th grade, this crying is over with. And we would show up and we would be in line to buy the tickets. The mom would buy the tickets for all of us and he just couldn't do it.

So, every year, she would go in and tell the people what was happening. We have one of the boys who is terrified and they would work this deal for us where we would go through on a private tour of the haunted house with all the lights on and all the curtains pulled back and all the masks off in their heads. All of the frightening things are shaking the hand of this little boy, giving him a hug. As we walked through, they would point out there is no blade on the chainsaw that they are coming after us with and it was a whole different experience altogether. But

then we would go around and do it again and it wasn't quite the same having seen behind the curtain.

Here's the point I'm trying to make. You and I need to pull the curtain back. and what this word is trying to teach us to do is to pull the curtain back because there is always something you can't see affecting what you can see. And we cannot spend our whole lives fighting only that which we can see, so we need to pull the curtain back, but we need to put on the armor. And hell studies patterns, but he supplies power and the armor and you are fully equipped for life and for holiness and these are things that we have in Christ, but Paul says it this way. Put IT On. Having and owning the armor does nobody any good. Putting it in your closet and hanging it there does not help you and does not make you protected. You can have it but still be exposed.

Now look at Verse 14 because beginning in this verse, Paul gives us six different pieces of armor that he wants us to put on.

Look at Verse 14. It says, ***Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth.***

Now Roman soldiers would put on this belt and they would tighten this belt and much of the armor, the rest of the armor was actually fastened to the belt. It was the center piece of what they were putting on. The *sword* of the spirit would hang from this belt, but they would tighten it up for agility and for speed.

How many of you remember in the 90's when kids would wear their pants hanging down below their waist. The belt would be like right under the butt cheek. Anybody remember what I'm talking about?

I was a youth pastor in the 90's when I encountered those kids on the street I would be like, "Hey, man, you want to race? Because their legs are tied together with a belt. In the 90's we called it fashion. Romans would call it a tactical failure. In fact, you should write it down that you can't fight spiritual battles holding your pants up. In this story, they would put this belt on to make them agile where they could jump over the enemy and jump over obstacles and they were ready to go at every point.

The same idea is found all over scripture actually, With this phrase of gird up your loins. But when we wrap the truth around our waist, it's not *our* truth, it's not scientific truth it's not moral truth, it's not ethical truth, it's God's truth. In fact, Isaia 11 explains truth as God's covenant he has made with us. That it, his faithfulness and his commitment to us and that's what we rely upon and that's what we fasten around our waste.

Paul Continues.

Look at Verse 14. ***Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteous.*** Some translations call this the breastplate of righteousness.

Here is a question. What is righteousness? Righteousness means right standing before God. It's that part of our identity that is fashioned by God within us after we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. But because on our own, we are not righteous. But Jesus Christ, who, knew no sin, became sin on our behalf so that we could stand blameless before God. That's our identity; it's who you are at the core and it's where your enemy will attack you.

I live in a fairly rural neighborhood in Broken Arrow Oklahoma and I live on amount three and a half acres with about 100,000 trees. I used to love trees. They are like children, right? You love them and then you resent them. That's the way it is with trees because you have to take care of them. It's like a child. You have to trim them and take care of them and nurse them back to health and all of the things with trees.

But we also have a swimming pool. So, it is not an option... period to not cover the pool in the fall... not an option. Meridith wants it uncovered and pretty all winter long. Not going to happen as long as I'm alive. I did it two times and both years, I got out six pickup truck beds of wet leaves and I will never, ever, ever, never do that ever again.

But here's what I know. Every March or April I go out there to uncover the pool for the spring and summer. When I pull that cover back, every year, something is going to crawl out, hop out and, God forbid slither out.

Here's what I want you to hear. I never have to send an invitation to the critters in the woods to come get under the cover of the pool. That dark, wet, uncovered, out of the light environment is invitation enough. I never have to emboss an invitation and seal an envelope and send it to the woods say come and take refuge in my pool during the winter. That Dark, wet, damp gross environment is invitation enough.

Here's what I want you to hear today as I talk about this environment is that righteous behavior is uncovered, in the light living. And it invites the sunlight of God's favor and blessing upon your life.

An unrighteous, covered up, dark behavior not befitting of a son or daughter of a the king means you don't have to invite the enemy into your life. Just keep living in the darkness, covered up and that environment alone will leave you unprotected from the enhanced attacks of the enemy.

And, of course, if you are living in the light, he's still going to attack, but when you're in the light, he has to attack in the light and here's what I know. Jesus wins in the light every time. But your enemy, in an uncovered fashion, will beat you like tom toms all day, every day. And it does not matter how many days you begin on your knees praying. When you're planning sin on your calendar, the enemy will be all over you. and will be after you on a regular basis. But God's not just concerned... by the way, about our righteousness. That's why we see in the next verse, for shoes put on the peace that comes from the good news so that you will be fully prepared.

Some of you are parents. You know what I'm talking about. Any of you ever take your children somewhere, and find out when you get there, we don't have shoes?

One time, we went three or four hours to a soccer tournament with no cleats. My wife was like, 'I'll run to Academy or Sports Authority and buy some cleats. I said, No, you will not. He will sit the bench the whole tournament. Why? Because we are not teaching irresponsibility. He has to bring his own cleats. And by the way, if you are the one who goes to get the cleats, you ain't setting that kid up for success. In fact, after that, every tournament that was coming up, that kid would sleep with his cleats on.

Ladies, imagine showing up to a formal event where you have slaved over this dress and over this outfit and not having the proper shoes to go with that outfit.

By the way, I love bluegrass. I don't know if you notice or not because of this ledge right here, some of these shoes up here don't fit Bluegrass. I don't know if you saw that, but I saw that. there was one pair of boots over here that were perfect for it, but then there was a pregnant girl... I know you are not supposed to guess pregnant or not, but she's pregnant and she had thick cushion shoes because she's walking for two, so appropriately so. And then we had Charles' \$500 camo shoes which really don't fit bluegrass either. He was offended when I said that. he's like they are more than that. And then right here we have Dorothy. Did you see the sparkly boots that were like amazing. Beautiful, ,but not bluegrass. The shoes are supposed to be appropriate for what you do and where you are going and what you are about to do. These Roman soldiers didn't just show up in sandals or Crocks. And if you have some of those, throw them away. fashion tips today. Just throw them away

They had boots that had nails on the bottom of them that were for gripping. And it wasn't just defensive by the way, it was offensive. They were taking ground and moving into the place.

Paul mentions shoes. Paul mentions shoes because we are on the move.

Isaiah, 52 – ***how Lovely are the feet of those that bring the good news.*** He was telling people about Jesus and beautiful just like the sparkly silver that's the beautiful in the eyes of heaven. When you and I, are bearers of the King, are ***sharing the good news and on the move.***

And spiritual war fare is not only defensive, it's also offensive. And according to Revelation 12:11, we win this thing. And we beat the enemy. How do we do it?

We do it with ***the blood of the lamb, our salvation, and the word of our testimony. Sharing your faith is actually engaging in the battle, reaching lost***

He fighting on the front line. Helping people come to know Jesus is an affront to the enemies plans. And if you are not involved in telling somebody about Jesus, you are not taking ground for the kingdom.

This is why he continues in Verse 16. In addition to all of these other ones, ***hold up the shield of faith that stops the fiery darts of the devil*** and if the picture of the shield you have is something you got from the movies that looks like a frisbee attached to the Romans forearm, that's not the shield that Paul is referring to here. Maybe that existed in battle. In fact, the Greek word for shield here is the very same Greek word for the word *door*.

This was a 2 foot across by 4-foot-tall shield that they could actually get behind. By the way, the Romans weren't big in that time. If you ate the barbeque sandwich and the doughnut, you might stick out from behind the shield. But this was the shield that he was talking about. And this shield was made of wood, but covered in oil, leather and then they would take that wood covered in oil and leather and dip it in water. Why would they do that? Because the strategy of the enemy was to shoot these flaming arrows that Paul references here. Where they would put the arrow, dip in in oil or dip it in pitch, light it on fire, then shoot hundreds of them at one time. And when that arrow would hit that shield, that oil on fire would splatter and fire would go everywhere and the tactic was to create panic. So, they would dip their shield in water to put out those fiery darts.

What is a fiery dart of the devil, biblically? What is that?

Proverbs 26 explains the fiery as lies. Lies and accusations are the main weapon of your enemy. And when Satan hurls these flaming arrows at our lives, at you, when you are washed in the water of the Word of God, it is far easier to put those things out. In fact, that's been the strategy of the devil since the very beginning.

Do you remember what he said to Eve? "Did God really say...? The strategy from the very beginning was is to get you and me to doubt the very Word of God.

Look at Verse 17 – ***put on Salvation as your helmet***. Some of you have seen the pictures of the helmet where it comes down over your ears and over your temple, and even down in between your eyes and it's protecting your head, and all of that is a picture of God saving us from our very own thought life.

Paul says over in Romans that we are transformed by the renewing of our mind. I want to point this out and I just caught this this morning in study that the Greek word in Verse 11 that I talked about a minute ago, that is translated into English, *put on* for the first parts of the armor. Is an entirely different Greek word than the word translated “put on” in Verse 17.

The one in 11 is our action and it is the action we are taking to put the armor on. The one in Verse 17 does not put on like you and think I put on. It actually means to receive. Isn't it interesting that we receive salvation. We don't put it on. We don't work it up. It's not about our effort or our energy, it's God's mighty power in us.

And then he says, “***And take the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God.***”

When my boys were little, had a Bible Man outfit. I don't know if Bible Man still exists.

They had this plastic armor and one of the swords you would push a button and it had a voice. In this spooky voice it would say, “And the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God.” Our Boys would do that all the Time. “The sword of the spirit, which is the word of God is the It was a the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God. a little frightening.

But every time I read that verse, I think about that sword. The sword of the spirit which is the Word of God. And in this illustration that Paul is giving in that day, he had in mind that sword that the Roman soldiers would carry and they were about 18 inches long. It was more like a knife or a dagger. And the point is that battle was up close and personal, meaning there was no cruise missile that you could send across an ocean. There was no sniper rifle that you could use. There was no drone attached that you could do from a joystick. You had to get up close and personal. Here's what I want to tell you today. your enemy is going to bring it into your business and he's going to bring it right into your face and it is going to be personal. And there are no rules of engagement with him, and nothing is out of bounds with him. And he will get very personal and up and on you.

And the sword is the Word of God, which is why we must read it, meditate on it, memorize it, deposit it in our heart, in our brain so that at any moment, we have

written on our lips, ready to go. Because it's the hook that the enemy has given us and we can actually respond to the lies and the accusations with No... what God's Word says is... fill in the blank.

He has equipped us, church. with the belt of truth, with the breastplate of righteousness, with the shoes of peace, and the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit. Jesus never promised he would remove us from the battle. In fact, he promised we would be in the battle, but he did promise you would never face it alone.

Listen to me today.

You have his authority, you have his armor, you have his spirit, his Word, you are not abandoned, you are not exposed, you are not defenseless. And Hell may come against you, but heaven will stand behind you. And it is not a matter of if the battle comes. It is when the battle will come. And without the authority and the armor of God, you will be exposed.

It's so interesting that this passage starts with this whole illustration of putting on the armor of God, with put on the belt of truth first.

Did anybody get dressed this morning and begin with a belt? That doesn't make any sense, until you realize that truth is not a thing, it's a person and his name is Jesus, and he is the way, the truth, and the life. And today, if you are here and you've never trusted Jesus as your Lord and your savior, I would love to lead you in a prayer helping you do that today. You've come to the right place.

And in the sovereignty of God, he saw to it that you would be here today where this invitation would be given for you to respond and give your life to Jesus. Because without Jesus, you're not covered by the blood. Without a relationship with Jesus, you have no armor available to you.

In fact, the bible says you are possessed by the enemy, owned by the enemy at that point. But today, I want to help you transfer the deed from one kingdom to the kingdom of light.

Dear God, I know I'm a sinner. Today I ask you to forgive me for all of my sin. Jesus, would you come into my life to be my Lord, my Savior, my forgiver. In the best way that I know how, I turn my back on my sin and I trust you alone, Jesus, to save me. Thank you for saving me.

Now before we say amen and before we look up, if you just prayed that prayer and you meant it with all your heart, can I just say to you congratulations. Welcome to the family of God.

Charles mentioned during the worship that no doubt in a church this size, that on every row, probably, there is someone facing a battle where it feels like it's a very difficult battle. It's not just the run of the mill, everyday battle. It feels like intense warfare. If that's you today.... You are child of God. You know Jesus, but you are in a battle and it may feel like it's very, very significant I would love to pray over you. would you just raise your hand if that's you it's just a minor confession to say Lord, he's praying for me right now

Father, I pray for all the hands that are raised, those that I can see and those that I can't . and today, what I want to pray over each of them is the helmet of salvation on their head. I pray you would protect their very thought life and father; we thank you that salvation comes from Jesus and Jesus alone, may they receive that salvation and receive that helmet today. That they would protect their minds and protect all that they think. Today, I pray on them the breastplate of righteousness that you would protect their heart in a sense all the things they care about and and feel emotional about. And thank you that you care that we can cast our cares on you because you care for us. So, the things that we care for, you care for. and I know we are not righteous in and of ourselves but I thank you that we get to be riveted into the very righteousness of Jesus Christ put on each of them the breastplate of righteousness today. and around their waist, would you apply the belt of truth and may they believe the truth and stand on the truth and run to the truth and away from lies. And all the lies of the enemy would you meet them with the truth. And I pray on their feet the shoes of the gospel and peace and preparation. May their feet run to tell the story of the goodness of God. May it run to share the gospel, may it run to talk about Jesus walking with them in the midst of this battle. And father, on one hand I pray the shield of faith. Give them big, big god sized faith, beyond what they could work up on their own, not in faith, but in the faithful one.

And in the other hand, may they take up the Word of God which is the sword of the spirit and would you put a verse, a scripture, a word in each of their hearts today. not just a log off the general word, but a specific Word. And I pray that over all those who lifted their hands in the midst of battle today.

In Jesus name we pray

Amen