

I. Introduction

- A. The purpose of the church is to create a certain kind of person.
 - 1. It is first of all, the kind of person who has become a Christian.
 - 2. And then it is the kind of Christian who has become the person described here, in our paragraph of Scripture for today.
- B. *"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."* (Ephesians 6:11-13)
- C. The purpose of the church, a church, our church, is to equip you, mold you, and motivate you so that you may be able to withstand the devil in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Having done all, to stand.
- D. Every church worthy of the name church has that as its mission. That is our purpose. That is the constitution for the church at large, the body of Christ in the world.
 - 1. Any church not working to create that kind of Christian is not following the will of God. Any church that leaves Christians confused about their aim, or comfortable being complacent, is not a church worthy of the name.
- E. We are commissioned by God to create a certain kind of Christian that we might fulfill a specific divine purpose.
- F. So the title of my talk today is:
 - 1. **The Profile of a Champion**
- G. We've been studying the Armor of God. Has this series been profitable to you? Are you learning? Are you growing? Are you changing? My sermon today is Part 16 in the series.

II. Spiritual Warfare

- A. The Bible describes how the devil has launched a war against God by running a war against us.
- B. And then the Bible explains that God has given us supernatural armor to make absolutely sure we do not live as victims but as victors. He describes:
 - 1. The Belt of truth
 - 2. The Breastplate of Righteousness
 - 3. The Boots of the Gospel
 - 4. The Shield of Faith
 - 5. The Helmet of Salvation
 - 6. The Sword of the Spirit = Word of God
- C. And then he adds this:
 - 1. *"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—"* (Ephesians 6:18)
- D. So Paul wraps up the Armor of God with prayer, because prayer is the simplest way to put on the armor. Prayer is the weapon that makes every other weapon work. Prayer is the toggle switch.
- E. This armor, activated by prayer, is how you become the Christian who stands.
 - 1. The devil has not laid down his arms. The warfare has not ceased, and it will not cease until Jesus returns.
- F. God wants you to stand in victory. Elsewhere in the Bible, St Peter expresses the same idea when he says...
 - 1. *"[That you may become] children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."* (Philippians 2:15)
- G. Are you a Christian? Do you call yourself a Christian? That's the Christian's mission statement. It's every Christian's mission statement.
- H. God has an agenda for your life. He has a mission. Here it is.
 - 1. **MISSION: Your mission is to become a Champion of Grace and Truth in a culture of pain and confusion.**
- I. The world needs you. Your friends need you. Your neighbors. Your teammates. Your family. They are trapped in a crooked and perverse generation.
- J. There is so much sadness. So much confusion. So much pain.
- K. So God commissions us, just like he commissioned Jesus, to go out into a crooked and perverse generation to shine as lights in the world.
 - 1. Jesus said, "As the Father has send me, I also send you." (John 20:21)
- L. Champions of grace and truth in a culture of confusion and pain.
- M. That sounds like a very tall order, and it is. It's a high calling. It's a hard thing. Actually, humanly speaking, it's an impossible thing. Except for the little truth that the things that are impossible for us are possible with God.
 - 1. *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
- N. In other words, what I am saying today is good news.
- O. You can actually become the kind of person that God wants you to be... which just so happens to be exactly the kind of person you want yourself to be now that you are a new creation in Christ.... You can actually become that kind of person that in your heart of hearts you want to be. It is not too hard.
 - 1. **1. STRENGTH - A Champion of Grace and Truth finds their strength in the Lord and in the power of His might.**
- P. It's not human power, it's divine power. This is the whole point of the Armor of God. The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God. It's grace, not works. It's faith, not striving.
- Q. I want to bring in an episode in the life of Jesus to make this three dimensional and real.

III. Jesus and the Demonized Boy

- A. *"Then one of the crowd answered and said, 'Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit. And wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not.'" (Mark 9:17-18)*
 1. Never underestimate how much the devil hates you. This is not a game. It's called spiritual warfare for a reason. Here is this poor boy, suffering horribly. And the heartbroken father brings him to the disciples of Jesus. But they could not deliver him from the power of the dark side. How does Jesus respond?
- B. *"He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.'" (Mark 9:19)*
 1. The first thing here in the words of Jesus is not anger. But it is a pathos-filled expression of the infinite pain Jesus felt over mankind's unbelief. This is personal sorrow to the max.
 2. What triggers this exclamation from Jesus can be summed up in one word: Empathy.
 - a) **2. EMPATHY - A Champion of Grace and Truth feels heartfelt empathy for the pains of a lost and dying world.**
 3. O Lord, give us tender hearts. O Lord, burden our souls with the same care Jesus felt for lost people trapped outside the streams of grace. Jesus grieves the pains of this man and his boy. He grieves the pains of the world.
 4. He is saddened even more because it doesn't have to be this way. This is a generation that is so unreceptive to the healing streams of grace that could be theirs.
 - a) They are unreceptive to the good news of a full atonement for sin.
 - b) They are unreceptive to the victorious proclamation a decisive defeat of the devil.
 - c) They are unreceptive to the rich and glorious birthright that is theirs in Jesus Christ.
 - d) They are unreceptive to a covenant of grace to displace their worn out covenant of works.
 - (1) And so this generation wallows in needless confusion and needless pain.
 - e) And it's so sad.
 5. This was the Jesus Generation. It's our generation too.
 - a) So here is this aching, heartbroken father whose son is suffering horribly at the hands of Satan, and Jesus aches for him.
 6. But it's another layer sadder for Jesus because his own disciples failed. They failed this father, his tormented son, and they failed Jesus.
 - a) The man brought his son to them, and the demon beat them. The Pain Machine won.
 - b) They tried. They failed. They moved on. Sorry.
 - c) The boy with the demon remains the boy with the demon, that's just too bad.
 7. But Jesus knew it's not supposed to be that way. He said,
 - a) "...I will build My church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)
 8. But the gates of hell did prevail.
 9. Now, here's the kicker. If you back up to the scene right before this scene, you see Jesus taking his core disciples to school.
 - a) There is an event there called the Transfiguration.
 - b) In that event, for one shining moment, God lifts the veil that hides the true glory of Jesus.
 - c) God the Father lets a few disciples glimpse the true glory of Christ for one brief moment. And it is awesome.
 - d) Jesus blazes forth like a thousand suns. He shines with majesty and power and glory and so much that he takes the disciples' breath away. They fall to the ground. For this one moment, they see Jesus as heaven sees him, as the angels see him, and as the demons see him. He is transfigured before their eyes. He is glorious. Frightening. Majestic. Buzzing with power and blazing with light... and then it's over. The Transfiguration is over.
 - e) This was a message to them. This was a revelation to them. This was a giant shout from heaven of the majesty and the victory of the King of kings and Lord of lords.
 - (a) Can you imagine if later today God reached down to you, and carried you up to heaven. He lets you see Jesus, unveiled, on the throne of glory for just sixty seconds. You see mighty angels flying and worshiping, streets glistening with gold, the paradise of God. You see innumerable saints of ages past, now glorified and singing his praise and reigning with him. You see the Lord Jesus, shining in his blinding radiance, ruling and dispatching orders to angels to answer prayers and shepherd the universe.
 - (2) If you could stand there and just watch him for one minute... and then come back to earth and live out your days... would you ever be the same again?
 - (3) No. That would change you forever.
 - (a) That's exactly the experience the disciples had.
 - f) And the very next thing is that a man brings his demon-afflicted boy to the disciples, and they try to deliver him, they can't, and they give up... and they are not changed the way they should have been.
 - (1) *"He answered him and said, 'O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me.'" (Mark 9:19)*
 - g) So Jesus asks how long he has to stay with them. How long he has to bear with them. Why does he ask *how long*?
 - h) Jesus is stuck here until they get their act together, that's why.
 - (1) Jesus could not go away until he had left these disciples strong enough to stand by themselves and strong enough to lay the foundations of the church.
 - (2) He couldn't leave until they were ready.
 - i) And so he gave them a giant boost with a vision of his triumph and strength. So here's another part of a champion's profile.

(1) 3. VISION - A Champion of Grace and Truth will stand strong in the never-fading vision of Christ's majesty, glory, and strength.

- j) The church is triumphant when we see Jesus triumphant. Christians are triumphant when we see Jesus triumphant.
 - k) Why did the disciples fail?
 - (1) They forgot Christ's triumph and strength. They forgot the vision of the transfiguration...
 - (2) They barked at a demon, and the demon barked back, and they ran away like sissies. They quit on this kid.
 - l) I get that... but when that happened, they should have known a secret technique...
10. We've already seen that secret technique in our text. I wonder if caught it. You might have. But we'll come back to it.
- C. *"Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth. So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood. And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.'" (Mark 9:20-22)*
- 1. How utterly tragic. This poor boy. This sad, heartbroken father.
 - 2. Satan is an abuser. He is the evil step-father of all abuse. The sheer savagery of this bloodthirsty devil is beyond comprehension. Look at what he's doing to this boy.
 - a) But we know that the devil's doom is sure.
 - b) We know that the God of peace will crush Satan under our feet shortly (Romans 16:20).
 - 3. Notice what the father says and then what Jesus says. The father says, If you can do anything... And Jesus brushes that off. He knows he can do anything. He knows divine omnipotence is at his fingertips. It's not if *he* can do anything...
- D. *"Jesus said to him, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.'" (Mark 9:23)*
- 1. Not if HE, but if YOU... And that's always the case. It's never if God... it's always if you... If you... If you can believe.
 - a) Jesus says, don't ask if I can, ask if you can.
 - 2. Because if your faith lays hold on God's omnipotence, all things are possible to you.
 - 3. And notice, this isn't saying that you can do all conceivable things, like flying or turning invisible or turning your enemy into a frog, that's not the promise.
 - a) The promise is that you can get all things, and receive all things that the promises of God are blessing you with.
 - 4. It is incredible to think that this Jewish peasant named Jesus should plant himself in front of the human race...
 - a) That he could stare in the face the burdened sinful race of humankind, call all people to himself, and pledge Himself...
 - (1) Come to me and I will cleanse your sins. Come to me and I will bear your sicknesses, Come to me and I will be your strength in weakness, Come to me and I will comfort your sorrows, Come to me and I will deliver you from your demons, Come to me and I will give you rest. Come to me. Believe in me. Rest in me. Rest on me.
 - 5. All things are possible... all the blessings, all the promises, all the provisions, and the goodnesses, and abundances, and surprises, and perfections, and transformations, and providences, and joys, and healings, and miracles, and protections, and love, and gifts, and mercies, and liberties, and hopes — all the things of grace are possible to the one who believes.
 - 6. And I'm telling you this today to grow your faith because... hearing — what you're doing right now — hearing of grace in the Scriptures is how your faith grows.
 - a) **4. FAITH GROWS - A Champion of Grace and Truth increases faith by hearing the word of Christ, the gospel of grace, and the promises of God again and again. (Romans 10:17)**
 - 7. A grace based, Christ-filled sermon is a protein smoothie with extra dark chocolate and no gross vegetables in it... and it will put muscle on your faith so that all things are possible to the one who believes.
- E. *"Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'" (Mark 9:24)*
- 1. His faith is so small that the man is worried it is too small. So he says, Help my unbelief...
 - a) He's so worried for his son, that he can't stand the thought that his own unbelief would get in the way of his deliverance.
 - b) This is one of the doctrines of demons, by the way. Oh, says the demon, your faith is not enough. Too bad.
 - c) I'm here to teach you that if you have faith enough to ask, you have faith enough. If you have faith enough to pray you have faith enough.
 - 2. This man is in hand to hand combat with a demon.
 - 3. He has been told that faith is the victory... and he declares it... Lord I believe. He raises the shield of faith.
 - a) But then he immediately fears because the devil whisper his faith is too small.
 - 4. So he pleads, Oh, please, help me in my unbelief.
 - 5. Dear Church... I have good news for you: weak faith is still faith. Even a shaky hand can touch a solid rock.
 - 6. When we say that you are to become a champion of grace and truth, we do not mean that you will never shake, never falter, never doubt, or never fear.
 - 7. We say that in the great conflict of spiritual warfare, you will press through your own doubts and fears. Because there is a great secret the devil doesn't want you to know.
 - a) **5. ASK - A Champion of Grace and Truth can still ask great things from God even with the smallest and shakiest faith.**
 - 8. You don't have to have it all together. You don't have to conquer all of your enemies. You just have to look to Jesus and believe, because faith is not the power, He is. The shield of faith is strong in Him, not in you.
 - 9. And look at what happens.
- F. *"When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, 'Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!' Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, 'He is dead.' But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose." (Mark 9:25-27)*

1. So the dad has three gallons of unbelief and one teaspoon of faith, and that's enough.
2. Jesus proceeds to do the work which answered both his prayers... to help his unbelief, yes, but even more, to deliver his precious son. This is such a powerful testimony of the way God brings you into your victory.
 - a) **6. VICTORY - A Champion of Grace and Truth is isn't scolded into victory, you're blessed into victory.**
3. Christians don't enter victory by being scolded and lectured and beat up and shamed. That only produces guilt and that only produces hypocrisy.
4. You are blessed into victory. You are "gospelled" into victory — good news again and again.
 - a) More than anything else, my job is to open your eyes to the blessings God has already given you in Christ, so that you will claim your victory, so that you can kick the devil in the teeth and enjoy your blood-bought blessings as a believer in Jesus. Amen.
5. We are talking about a believer who wears the armor of God and who activates that with prayer.
6. We are saying that in this great battle against the demonic hosts of wickedness, against the strongholds of darkness, against the demons and even the devil himself, that you can be a champion of grace and truth in a demon-infested culture of confusion and pain. And this is exactly what Jesus is going to say.
- G. *"And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, 'Why could we not cast it out?' So He said to them, 'This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.'"* (Mark 9:28-29)
 1. I don't want to shock anybody, but the words "and fasting" don't belong here. They are not in this verse in the original Greek.
 2. Those words are a late addition. This words are omitted in the best ancient Greek manuscripts. My hunch is they were added by a legalistic scribe, trying to edit the Holy Spirit, and tying to explain the disciples' failure. Those words are not in the NASB, NIV, ESV, NLT, or any modern, trustworthy translation.
 - a) [Plus, Jesus says that while he is still with them, the disciples cannot fast (Mark 2:19).]
 - b) [Plus, a technical note: the USB4 has the omission at confidence level A, maximum confidence.]
 3. So let's look at just what Jesus said.
 - a) **This kind of demon can come out by nothing but prayer.**
 4. When God put prayer into the hands of his people, he put a nuclear powerhouse on our lips. But wait a minute.
 5. Are you telling me that a hurting man brings a demon-possessed boy to the disciples of Jesus, and they do everything they can think of, but nobody thinks to pray? Really? Is that even possible?
 6. Yes. I think it's possible. I think we make the same mistake they made, and we do it all the time.
 7. If you ever wonder why so many of your prayers bounce off the ceiling, maybe you're making the same mistake the disciples did.
 - a) It's the secret tucked back in verse 19. It's what the disciples failed to do until Jesus told them to do it.
 8. The last four words there. Jesus said...
- H. *"Bring him to me. Then they brought him to Him."* (Mark 9:19, 20).
 1. The disciples did everything but bring this boy to Jesus.
 2. And I'm not saying they had to do that physically... bring him to Jesus in prayer. Bring him to the same one who just a few hours before was blazing in glory and shining in light and proving once for all that he his greater than the devil and the demons and all the evil they can ever spit into the world;
 - a) Jesus said... BRING HIM TO ME.
 3. You know you can pray for a person without bringing that person to Jesus. That's a fatal mistake.
 - a) You can pray for a need without bringing the need to Jesus.
 - b) You can pray for a thing and forget the power of the One who created that thing.
 - (1) **7. JESUS - The Champion of Grace and Truth prays every adversity and opportunity into the hands of Jesus, seated on his throne of grace and glory.**
 4. I don't care if you pray eloquent prayers or stammering prayers.
 5. The power is not in the prayer. The power is the one to whom we pray.
 - a) Bring him to Jesus. Bring her to Jesus. Bring yourself to Jesus. Hand it over. Let it go.
 6. Because no demon, no addiction, no depression, no trouble, no anger, no sadness, no failure, no sin, no dysfunction, no poverty, no devil can triumph when he is near.
- I. Let's wear our armor, and let's be those champions of Grace and Truth in a culture of pain and confusion.
- J. I promise you won't be bored.

IV. Armor

- A. **Almighty God, today, I put on the full armor of God.**
 1. **I put on the BELT OF TRUTH, to understand the times in which I live.**
 2. **I put on the BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, to guard and protect my heart.**
 3. **I put on the BOOTS OF THE GOSPEL, for my mission in a hurting world.**
 4. **I take up the SHIELD OF FAITH, to believe my God no matter what.**
 5. **I wear the HELMET OF SALVATION, to guard my mind from delusion and despair.**
 6. **I carry the SWORD OF THE SPIRIT, to defeat the darkness and lift high the Cross.**
- B. **I declare myself a soldier of the Cross.**
- C. **I stand in the Victory of Christ.**
- D. **I make you, God, my stronghold today.**
- E. **Amen.**