

## **2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters**

### **Sermon Series - The Book of Acts/God's Plan for His Church**

#### **Sermon Title - The Other Battle**

#### **Sermon Text - Acts 13:13**

#### **Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry**

### **Introduction**

"When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace, In ev'ry high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil." Sometimes the darkness that comes with the storms of this life can seem to veil, or hide the lovely face of Jesus! When that happens to you, you have choices! One choice is to trust in His unchanging grace and let Him be your anchor within the storm! By faith we know what is behind the veil! Jesus is there and we trust that even when we can't see with our physical eyes, we trust with our spiritual eyes! Let's pray and we're going to hear from God's Word today as we talk about "The Other Battle!"

We are in the Easter Season. There's so many important things in our Christian faith about this time of the year. There's Good Friday, and then Easter, which I like to call "Resurrection Day!" Yesterday, I was in Baton Rouge for The Louisiana Fallen Firefighter Ceremony, where they honored one of our firefighters, Taylor Bass, by placing his name on the fallen firefighter wall along with seven other Louisiana firefighters. It was a very moving tribute to their sacrifices. On several occasions, it was mentioned that our hope for these fallen heroes is the sacrifice that Jesus gave when He paid the ultimate sacrifice to save us, and the fact that He defeated death and the grave when He rose again! Let's never forget the sacrifices of these public servants and for those who put their lives on the line every day, all first responders, and our military men and women as well! Today is Palm Sunday. Why is it called Palm Sunday? This was the day that Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem! People were excited about Jesus and praised Him and laid out palm branches on His path. Many thought that He would be the Messiah who would restore Israel to her former glory days, and to world power! But Jesus had come to set up a kingdom that was not of this world. He desired to be the king of the people's hearts, not their political king. And when some realized that that was not going to happen, they turned on Jesus! Some who had cried "Hosanna to the King" would days later yell, "Crucify Him!" All of this took place because humankind, beginning with Adam and Eve, had fallen by choosing to believe the lies of Satan and rejecting God! They wanted to be god's themselves and didn't want to follow or serve God. But here's the main reason that all of the events of the Easter season took place: the Creator God of Heaven and Earth decided that even though we had rebelled against Him, He still loved us and wanted to give us another chance to make the right choice! You see in the Garden of Eden the way God gave humankind a choice was by allowing them to eat from any tree in the garden, even the tree of life, all but one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! He basically said, "Trust me, don't eat from that tree, or you will surely die!" He didn't say, "I'll kill you!" He knew the consequences of sin was eventual death and as a loving Creator, He did what any loving parent would do and warned Adam and Eve about the dangers that existed. But Satan lied to them and tempted them and they bought the lies. And thus the fall of humankind. God was heartbroken, but He decided to provide another chance for humanity to make the right

choice. He was alluding to this other chance when He had Adam and Eve replace their fig leaves with animal skins signifying that something had to lose its life to cover their sin! For God to give humanity another chance to make the right choice there had to be another garden, the garden of Gethsemane or the Garden of Olives. And there had to be another tree, one that had been cut down and shaped into a cross. The cross represented both good and evil as well as eternal life. Jesus was the good, perfect in every way. But He was punished for the evil we had done! One thief represents those who will choose God's offer of love and the other thief, those who will reject it. So Satan is still fighting to keep people from choosing God! Last week, Andrew talked about the battle that ensued over the Proconsul's soul. It was a powerful sermon on what to expect when you say yes to Jesus. You can expect a battle. Satan battles for our souls and tempts us to not trust God. The right choice in the Garden of Eden would have been to trust God and reject the fruit on that tree! The right choice today is to trust God and accept the One who hung upon the tree as your Savior and Lord! If you choose to accept Jesus, that will be the most awesome decision of your life! But you must know that once you give your soul to Jesus, Satan will begin the other battle! So let's read our text for today, Acts 13:13, and we'll discover some details about...

### **The Other Battle**

Acts 13:13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

Did you see the hidden message of spiritual warfare in this passage? Upon closer examination and looking at the verse in context of the whole book of Acts we discover another spiritual battle that took place on the heels of the fabulous victory over the Proconsul's soul. It is a battle that every single Christian will face on a daily basis. One that we will fight the rest of our earthly lives. It is one we can win, but we must never let our guard down, not even for a single moment!! The other battle is in fact...

### **The Battle for Your Life!**

Once Satan loses the battle for your soul, he begins the battle for your life. You see, once you've established a relationship with God by believing and accepting Jesus as your Savior, you are adopted into the family of God, called to be a child of God and once that adoption takes God's Word states in Romans 11:29...

Romans 11:29 for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Satan knows that and since he can't have your soul, he will attempt to steal your life one piece at a time. One piece at a time Satan will try to steal...

Your joy, your witness, your integrity, your dependence on God (you'll depend on your own strength and righteousness,) your fellowship with God and your fellowship with brothers and sisters in the family of God! Where am I getting this? From our text...

Acts 13:13 From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem.

Let me explain. Here's what we find when we dig into the details of this verse where it says: John left them to return to Jerusalem. Something happened that was not positive with this dream team of missionaries. We don't know what it was, but it broke up the team twice! Over in Acts 15 we get a little bit of information about the situation...

Acts 15:36 Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."

Acts 15:37 Barnabas wanted to take John, also called Mark, with them,

Acts 15:38 but Paul did not think it wise to take him, because he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not continued with them in the work.

Acts 15:39 They had such a sharp disagreement that they parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus,

Acts 15:40 but Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

In Acts 13:13, of our text we see that Paul, Barnabus, and John Mark sailed from Paphos to Perga, where John Mark quit the team. And when we fast forward to Chapter 15 we see that there was a major problem. Paul felt like John Mark had deserted them when he went back to Jerusalem. I believe that Satan was angry over losing the battle for the proconsul's soul. The other battle began as Satan knew he had to break up the very effective team of Paul, Barnabus, and John Mark. So Satan went on the offensive! This team was blind-sided by Satan's attack! Their ministry was changing the world by changing lives with the never changing message of God's love which is shown through the sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross! Satan knew he had to do something to stop this team, so he attacked! Why do you think Satan is so determined to destroy souls? Here's the answer: Satan hates God, God loves us, therefore Satan hates us. Satan wants to hurt the heart of God. He knows he can't walk into heaven, pick a fight with God and win, he tried that once and it didn't work out so well for him, so he tries to hurt God by hurting the ones God loves. That would be us. Listen to the description of the fight between God and Satan...

Rev 12:7 And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back.

Rev 12:8 But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.

Rev 12:9 The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down.

Rev 12:11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.

Rev 12:12 Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short."

### **This battle over your life is a daily occurrence!**

Every day before you awake, the forces of evil are plotting ways to discourage you, distract you, deceive you, to draw you away with temptation, all done to destroy the effectiveness of your life in Christ! Remember, if you have received the love, forgiveness, grace and mercy of God through the Cross, then Satan has lost the battle over your soul and he's angry and will do all he can to prevent you from living a life that will bring others to Christ! C.S. Lewis wrote a book called "The Screwtape Letters" where he imagines the conversations between a senior devil, Screwtape and a junior devil, his nephew, a demon named Wormwood. Here's an example from the book where Screwtape says to Wormwood...

"My dear Wormwood, I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. Do not indulge the hope that you will escape the usual penalties...In the meantime we must make the best of the situation. There is no need to despair...All the habits of the patient, both mental and bodily, are still in our favour...Work hard, then, on the disappointment or anticlimax which is certainly coming to the patient during his first few weeks as a churchman."

Satan is crafty and tricky! Here's the question I want to answer today: Once we understand the reality of the spiritual battle raging over our lives, what do we do to win the battle? As we answer that question we will learn two critical, strategic, life saving steps we must take in order to win the battle for our life! We will discover these steps in two places: Revelation 12:7-12, which we just read, and Ephesians 6:10-20. So let's look at the first step we must take to win this spiritual battle...

### **Critical, strategic, life saving step #1 - HEAD TO THE SPIRITUAL ARMORY!**

The only time I scream when I preach is when I put things in all caps! There are things stored in God's spiritual armory that you will need in the battle for your life, things that could save your life! What is available in God's Spiritual Amory? To start with we will look at four overall things we need found in Revelation 12:10. This verse, which we just read, follows the defeat of Satan in Heaven. Right after Satan had been hurled down, we read...

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.

Here's what's available to us from this verse...

#### **Available: Salvation**

Salvation is not just for your soul in eternity, salvation is for your life here and now!! Jesus died not only to free you from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. John puts it this way...

1 John 2:12 I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

1 John 2:13 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.

1 John 2:14 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

But there's more available...

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power..."

#### **Available: The Power**

Psa 68:34 Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the skies.

Psa 68:35 You are awesome, O God, in your sanctuary; the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people. Praise be to God!

Isa 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

Isa 40:29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Isa 40:30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

Isa 40:31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

But there's yet more available...

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God..."

#### **Available: The Kingdom of our God**

Rom 14:17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,

Rom 14:18 because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

The Kingdom of God is anywhere God rules. When God rules in a person's life, no matter the circumstances or the heat of the battle, there is still "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Why does it say in the Holy Spirit? Because the Holy Spirit is the way God's presence and power are manifest in our lives!

But there's even more available in the armory of God...

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ.

### **Available: The Authority of Christ**

Mat 28:18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Mat 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Mat 28:20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

In other words, we've been given authority by Christ Himself to enter into the armory for anything we might need for the ensuing battle and we've been given the authority to enter the spiritual battlefield where a war is raging for people's souls! Jesus said to go and make disciples, to baptize, to teach. If I might borrow from military language...Our unit has been activated! We are going into battle! We've been given authority to enter the armory and get prepared and then to enter the battlefield! So the first critical, strategic, life saving step is to head to the spiritual armory! And you might say, "Okay Pastor Larry, you've talked about big picture things in the armory, like salvation, power, the authority of Christ, and the Kingdom of God, can you give us some practical application? Yes indeed. There's spiritual gear, or equipment that comes along with salvation from God, the power of God, the Kingdom of God and the authority of Christ! And here's where it gets really practical and applies to your life...

### **Critical, strategic, life saving step #2 - USE THE GEAR!**

You must understand that even though you have been given full access to everything in God's spiritual armory, if you don't use it, your spiritual life will be severely wounded and maybe destroyed! Remember, Satan can't have your soul, if you've admitted your need for Jesus, believed He died for you, and have called on His name, but Satan will not stop fighting to destroy your life! Firefighters use what is known as PPE, Personal Protective Equipment, turnout gear, helmets, air packs! Our Police Officers use PPE, like bullet proof vests and our military members have PPE including vests and helmets and other protective gear! They understand the importance of this gear and most wouldn't think of heading out to do their jobs without this lifesaving gear! They know you don't just need to have access to the gear, you've got to use the gear! When it comes to the spiritual warfare we're involved in, it's critical, strategic

and life saving to use the gear that we have access to in God's Spiritual armory and Paul gives us some additional compelling reasons to do this in Ephesians 6:10ff...

Eph 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Eph 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

Eph 6:12 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.

Eph 6:13 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.

Why do we need to use the gear?

Eph 6:11 Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

As I said earlier, Satan is always scheming against us! Always. While you're awake and while you're asleep! But when we put on the full armor of God we can take our stand against the devil's schemes. And another reason to use the gear, the spiritual armor of God, is because...

Eph 6:12 ...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.

In other words, there's a host of spiritual powers and forces that come against us! We can't fight or defeat these enemies on our own. We must have the protection and the power of Almighty God and that protection and power are available to us through the Armor of God. The next verses of this passage talk about the spiritual body armor that you must use. It's gear for life! Let's take a look.

### **The Gear - The Belt of Truth!**

Eph 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist...

The belt holds things together. The belt is a place where important pieces of gear can be attached, carried and easily reached. The belt is centrally located. Why is the belt of truth so crucial? There is a war in the spirit world. The battle is for the souls and lives of humankind. The battle for truth is at the center of this war! There are two sides in this battle.

### **Side One: The Enemy, the Liar (Satan)**

Jesus said of Satan in John 8:44...

John 8:44 "... He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies".

Paul said this about Satan...

2 Cor 11:14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.

2 Cor 11:15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

Without the belt of truth, you'll fall prey to the lies and when you accept the lies and reject the truth, Satan wins the battle. For some it is the battle for their soul, and for believers, it is the battle for their life here on earth. In this war the enemy will attack the truth. Today, the truth of the Bible is under attack. Its integrity is constantly called into question. The world has elevated the opinion of the individual above the authoritative Word of God! The truth of God's Word is subject to conjecture and opinion. "Well I believe this, or that!" Some say all that matters is that you are sincere! But let me remind you that you can be sincerely wrong! Don't buy the lie! Remember I said there were two sides to the battle for truth?

### **Side Two: Our Savior, who is the Truth (Jesus Christ)**

Listen to these things Jesus said about truth in three places in John's gospel...

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

John 8:31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.

John 8:32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

So there's the belt of truth, but there's also...

### **The Gear - The Breastplate of Righteousness!**

Eph 6:14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

A physical breastplate protected vital organs like the heart. The breastplate of righteousness protects vital areas like your spiritual heart. Paul put it this way in Ephesians...

Eph 4:22 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;  
Eph 4:23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds;  
Eph 4:24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

We're not talking about self-righteousness! Paul said...

Phil 3:8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

Phil 3:9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Those who are seeking to live a life filled with the righteousness of Christ will find the following life saving benefits...

Phil 1:9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,

Phil 1:10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,

Phil 1:11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.

Talk about practical! Talk about personal protective equipment!

Knowledge, Depth of insight, Discernment, Purity, Blamelessness, Filled with the fruit of righteousness

And have you ever thought about this? Jesus is the armor we've looked at? He is the truth and He is our righteousness! And the next piece of gear is also associated with Jesus...

### **The Gear - Army Boots!**

Eph 6:15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

Can you imagine going into a battle without shoes on? If a soldier doesn't have his or her boots on, they are not ready for battle. Can you imagine a firefighter going into a burning building with flip flops on? That would be insane! The boots represent being prepared and ready.

The word gospel means...

Good news of Jesus Christ

Early English translations used the word

“Godspell” - The story about God.

Jesus was God in the flesh! And this story about God coming to earth to save us is one of the most basic pieces of gear that we must have if we are to go on the offensive in the spiritual war against Satan and his lies! Did you notice that it says our feet are to be fitted with the...

“Readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”

Our readiness comes because of the peace the gospel of Christ has brought into our lives! We know that our sins are forgiven and heaven is in our future even if we die in battle! We know that God has a plan for our lives and nothing can take us out until that plan is fulfilled! I love the way Paul said it in Philippians...

Phil 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

And our readiness comes because we have a passion to share that same peace with others! We have a mission and the boots of the Gospel are vital. Paul said...

Eph 6:19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,  
Eph 6:20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

And you certainly wouldn't want to forget...

### **The Gear - The Shield of Faith**

Eph 6:16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

Once again, Jesus is front and center to our spiritual PPE! Christ is our shield because Christ is who we put our faith in! Listen to Paul's powerful confession of faith...

Gal 2:20 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.

And don't forget that you have the...

### **The Gear - The Helmet of Salvation**

Eph 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation...

When you know by faith that you have salvation through the work Jesus did on the Old Rugged Cross, then your confidence remains super high no matter what this old world throws at you. The helmet of salvation protects you from those nagging doubts and fears. Here's a confidence booster for you...

Ephesians 2:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,  
Ephesians 2:5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.  
Ephesians 2:8 ...and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—  
Ephesians 2:9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

And then there's this very important piece of Spiritual PPE...

### **The Gear - The Sword of the Spirit**

Eph 6:17 Take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

The sword of the Spirit is an offensive piece of gear! It's like the firefighter's ax, or the hose which delivers water to extinguish the fire! The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God, the Bible, to give us the resources to fight and win the spiritual battles that Satan will wage for our lives. The writer of Hebrews said...

Hebrews 4:12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

The Psalmist wrote...

Psalm 119:9 How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.

Psalm 119:10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands.

Psalm 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Don't neglect the precious Word of God! It's the gear you need for life, every area of life! Don't just read it, believe it, live it, share it! And the last piece of spiritual PPE is to...

### **The Gear - Pray in the Spirit**

Eph 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

I could preach a whole series on prayer, but let me just remind you of this one thing...prayer is simply talking to God and even when you don't know what to pray, just meditate on Him and His Word, being open to His will, and here's what will happen...

Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.

Romans 8:27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

As you face spiritual warfare this week, remember...

**Buckle on the belt of truth**

**Suit up with the breastplate of righteousness**

**Wear the boots of the gospel of peace**

**Take up the shield of faith**

**Strap on the helmet of salvation**

**Grab the Sword of The Spirit, the Word of God**

**Pray in the Spirit!**

Let's pray!