



I'LL BE READY | DOUG WENKENMAN

START

To get things started, go around the circle and answer these two questions:

If you could compete in both the Summer and Winter Olympics, which sport would you want to do in each and why?

SHARE

Welcome to our series "Battle Tested." Throughout this series we are taking a look at some stories of people in the Bible who were battle-tested. We all go through battles at different times and for different reasons. As we walk through these stories, our hope is that we can learn from each one and gain a better understanding of the wisdom, strength and sustaining power of God.

In the word of God, we find stories where God makes a promise to an individual or to a people, and then many times there is a gap between the time the promise is made and the time it is fulfilled. There are also times where God's people received a promise, yet that was just the beginning of the fight. We can find ourselves fighting battles when times are tough; and also when we are experiencing success, we can be faced with brand new fights and pressures we never imagined.

As we go through this series, allow God to speak to you about your life and the battles you might be facing. What God calls us to is always worth the fight. Maybe your battle is working tirelessly on building a better marriage, struggling to live a life of purity, fighting to be ethical and honest at work, digging deep to forgive someone ... Whatever the fight might be, we must always cling to the promises of God and remember that He can lead and sustain us.

This week, Doug talked about what it means to be ready and expectant for God's activity in our life. There is obviously nothing we can do to make God move, but we can be expectant and ready for when He does.

Those who are battle-tested know you need to be dressed for battle. If we believe we are going into a battle, we don't wear board shorts and flip flops. Far from it! We step into battle dressed appropriately for what we are expecting to encounter. As believers, we need to ask the questions...what am I getting ready for each day? How do I need to prepare if I believe that God desires to be active in my life and in the lives of those around me? As followers of Jesus, we need to step out the front door or from wherever we happen to be ... strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. We need to be ready.

Let's read Ephesians 6:10-20

When we think of our struggles in life, we tend to think of the physical world. What does Paul tell us we really struggle against?

What is the significance of each part of the full armor of God?

Specifically, what do you think it means in everyday living for believers to have their “feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace?”

GROW

“What comes to our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. The history of mankind will probably show that no people has ever risen above its religion, and man's spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God.” - A.W. Tozer (Knowledge of the Holy)

If we are to be expectant and ready, we will have to be purposeful about our thought life. What goes through our minds when we think of God is of utmost importance to how we live our lives. If our thoughts are that God is distant, weak, or very much disconnected from our everyday lives, then we will falsely believe those things and live accordingly. We will live with a sense of feeling powerless, with a lack of love and despair which makes it impossible to view ourselves or others as loveable and valuable. However, if our thoughts are focused on the truth that God is strong, loving, active and continually at work in our lives and those around us, then we are going to live quite differently. Keeping our thoughts continually on the truth of God will free us to think and live differently, defying our natural gravitation toward selfishness, powerlessness, and despair. God is calling us to be ready, expectant, and to be a people of influence in our culture. This starts with how we really think.

Let's read Philippians 4:4-9

In Anders, M. (1999). *Galatians-Colossians* (Vol. 8, p. 262) we look at how these qualities in our thought life apply to our every-day lives:

Continuing his strong imperative style, Paul suggested what should occupy our minds rather than anxiety and worry. Paul understood the influence of one's thoughts on one's life. Right thinking is the first step toward righteous living. What is right thinking? It is thinking devoted to life's higher goods and virtues. Thus Paul picked up a practice from secular writers of his day and listed a catalog of virtues that should occupy the mind. Such virtues are not limited to the Christian community but are recognized even by pagan cultures.

True is that which corresponds to reality. Anxiety comes when false ideas and unreal circumstances occupy the mind instead of truth. Ultimately, thinking on the truth is thinking on Jesus, who is the truth (John 14:6; Eph. 4:21). **Noble** refers to lofty, majestic, awesome things, things that lift the mind above the world's dirt and scandal. **Right** refers to that which is fair to all parties involved, that which fulfills all obligations and debts. Thinking right thoughts steers one away from quarrels and dissensions to think of the needs and rights of the other party. **Pure** casts its net of meaning over all of life from sexual acts to noble thoughts to moral and ritual readiness for worship. Thinking on the pure leads one away from sin and shame and toward God and worship. **Lovely** is a rare word referring to things that attract, please, and win other people's admiration and affection. Such thoughts bring people together in peace rather than separating them in fighting and feuding. **Admirable** is something worthy of praise or approval, that which deserves a good reputation. Pondering ways to protect one's moral and spiritual image in the community

leads away from worries about circumstances and possessions that project a different image to the community and which thinking cannot change.

The catalog of virtues Paul sums up in two words: **excellent** and **praiseworthy**. The first encompasses what is best in every area of life, the philosophical good for which every person should strive. Here it is especially the ethical best a person can achieve. The second term refers to that which deserves human praise. The catalog of virtues thus reflects the best life a person can live and the best reputation a person can thereby achieve in the community.

If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

In reading this passage, is there one area of your thought life that needs to change? If you're comfortable sharing what this area is, do so and tell the group why you think it needs to change.

MOVE

As God's people, we are to put on the armor of God daily and to be ready and expectant for God's activity in our lives and in the lives of others. That means that we continually dig into God's word and grow in our relationship with Jesus and our understanding that we are new creations. As new creations, we get to represent God as his ambassadors in a world focused on self. We are called to engage in the world around us, to be different and to think differently.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

What tends to stand in the way of you believing the truth that you are a chosen ambassador of God? How are you currently making an appeal to those who don't know Jesus?

If shame, fear, or insecurity were gone from your life, how would you interact differently with people who don't know God?

How can you, as Christ's loved and chosen ambassador, bring hope or encouragement to someone in your family, work, or community who doesn't yet know that God loves them?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other and the struggles we all face.

TO GO

Philippians 3:12

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.