

“The Belt of Truth”

Ephesians 6:14

Introduction:

1. Whenever you shop for a car, truck, van or SUV, at some point the salesperson will tantalize you with all the features of that particular vehicle: safety features, sound system, comfort package, etc. All this is an attempt to convince you that particular model will be just perfect for you.
2. All believers are in union with Jesus Christ, and so we already have the perfect spiritual protection package. In this section the apostle Paul uses the illustration of the armor an ancient soldier to help us grasp all that we have in the Lord Jesus. However the apostle is not trying to sell us this spiritual protection. Like a good salesperson who shows you how to use all the features of your new vehicle when you pick up the vehicle, Paul shows the various features of our spiritual blessings in Christ, in order that we might engage in spiritual warfare successfully.

Exposition:

- I. What spiritual reality is represented by the phrase “the armor of God”?
 - A. Three alternatives
 1. The parts of armor signify various aspects of a godly character or lifestyle developed in a believer.
 2. The parts of armor stand for various spiritual blessings that we have in Jesus Christ.
 3. The parts of armor represent both of these ideas.
 - B. Reasons for choosing the second alternative
 1. It best expresses the idea that these are parts of the armor **of God**. I find it difficult to see how they could be character traits or way of life actions that we develop, because then they would only be as protective as far as we mature in godliness.
 2. It best maintains the consistency of thought, because some of them, like the sword and the helmet) are clearly direct blessings from God. It seems rather arbitrary to take the others as characteristics of a believer.

3. It best conveys the certainty of victory. For example, consider this remark by Hodge about the breastplate of righteousness. “What is that righteousness...? Many say it is our own righteousness, integrity, or rectitude of mind. But this is no protection. It cannot resist the accusations of conscience, the whispers of despondency, the power of temptation, much less the severity of the law, or the assaults of Satan. What Paul desired for himself was not to have on his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith; Phil. 3:8, 9. And this, doubtless, is the righteousness which he here urges believers to put on as a breastplate.”

II. What spiritual blessing does the “belt of truth” symbolize?

A. General comments about this picture

1. The belt was important to a soldier because “it gathered his tunic together and also held his sword. It insured that he was unimpeded when marching.” [Stott]

2. Putting on the belt prepared a person for action, or as here, it was the first step in getting dressed for conflict. Compare 1 Pt 1:13.

B. Truth does not refer to objective truth, the Scriptures, because that is the sword that we are to take.

1. “But it means truth subjectively considered; that is, the knowledge and belief of the truth.” [Hodge] This blessing was given us at the time of salvation, when by the Holy Spirit we were taught the truth that is in Jesus (4:20-21; cf. Mt 16:17; Jn 6:45). When by grace we receive Jesus the Lord, we also receive the knowledge of God, one of the basic blessings of the new covenant (Heb 8:11).

Apply: This is the reason Christians ask people, “Do you know the Lord?” By this we do not mean knowledge of the facts about Christ or knowledge about worship skills, but knowledge of the Lord himself.

Point: This is where the essence of our protection in spiritual warfare begins. You cannot be strong in a Lord that you do not know. You cannot find protection from one to whom you are a total stranger. Does the Lord know you? Do you know the Lord?

2. “This is the first and indispensable qualification for a Christian soldier. To enter on this spiritual conflict ignorant or doubting, would be to enter battle blind and lame. As the girdle [belt] gives strength and freedom of action, and therefore confidence, so does the truth when spiritually apprehended and believed. Let not anyone imagine that he is prepared to

withstand the assaults of the powers of darkness, if his mind is stored with his own theories or with the speculations of other men. Nothing but the truth of God clearly understood and cordially embraced will enable him to keep his feet for a moment, before these celestial potentates. Reason, tradition, speculative conviction, dead orthodoxy, are a girdle [belt] of spider webs. They give way at the first onset. Truth alone, as abiding in the mind in the form of divine knowledge, can give strength or confidence even in the ordinary conflicts of the Christian life, much more in any really ‘evil day.’” [Hodge] Compare Col 2:1-10.

III. How do we put on the belt of truth? In other words, how do we establish our minds in the knowledge of God that the Lord Christ has given us?

A. We must aim at sincerity of heart in embracing Christ by faith.

1. The Lord must be sought and loved, and not merely the gifts and benefits that we may receive from him. Do you **want** to know the Lord? **Ph 3:7ff**

2. Some develop instability in the inner person of the heart by fickleness. One moment they seem to want to be totally for Christ, but then they flirt with the attractions of the world, the flesh and the devil. 1 Tm 1:5-6; 2 Tm 3:5

B. Pay attention to the ministry of the Word (Eph 4:11-16).

1. Though the ministry of the Scriptures is not a sacrament (a means of conveying grace to the heart by participating in some ritual), the Holy Spirit does use the Bible to develop and perfect correct ideas about Christ our Mediator in our hearts.

2. This means that we cannot “channel surf” in our minds when the Spirit by the Scriptures is presenting doctrine to us. Some think that practical preaching is hearing some “how to” program, like “Seven Steps to Successful Family Living from Zephaniah 2”. However, what can be more practical than knowing more about my God and all that he is?

C. Do not enslave your mind to any person or party (1 Cor 3:4-7). Evidence from God’s Word, not a polished or dynamic preaching style should convince your mind. There is a great difference between profiting from a pastor or teacher and idolizing one. Follow me only as far as I follow the Lord Christ.

D. Beware of curiosity (2 Tm 4:3-4). Many are lured into Satan’s trap out of a plausible desire to understand error. “I want to know what it is, so that I can refute it.” To borrow from the style of Bunyan, Ms. Seducing Spirit can pretend to be Mrs. Honest Inquiry.

1. Before you begin the study of error, make sure that your mind is humble before the Holy Scriptures and that you don't have any loose threads of thought that the evil ones can grab hold of. Some matters are best left to very mature teachers, who "by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish truth from error" (Heb 5:14).

2. If you do have to study error, make sure that you cleanse your heart with the truth of the Scriptures after examining falsehood. Don't give the devil a foothold in a tired mind.

E. Humbly seek a settled, established mind from God (Eph 1:17f; Ps 25:4; 119:18,34). To paraphrase William Gurnall: Keep this deep in your heart. God who opens our eyes to know the truth must also give strength to hold on to truth (2 Tm 1:14).

F. Don't stumble over differences in opinion that you see among people who profess to know the Lord (cf. Rm 14).

1. Many things can cause a difference of opinion: pride, personality conflicts, ignorance, sin not put to death, twisting of the Scriptures, etc.

Illustration: All the clocks in town will strike twelve together before all the Christians in this world, or even this local church, will agree together.

2. Be more concerned about seeing the power of the clear truth that you do know working in your heart than about how Christians disagree about the millennium or other minor matters.

Apply: Everyday we must rely on this basic grace of knowing the truth that is in Jesus. This is where we start our preparation for the day's conflict. Approach life from the position that the living God has made himself known to you. Don't play around with other ideas. Make a fresh commitment in your heart to pursuing the knowledge of the Lord. Only as you know the Lord are you ready for battle.