

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 6:10-18

Session 78: The Armor of God, part 4

We are looking at the armor of God in Ephesians 6. Twice in Ephesians 6:10-18 we are told to “put on the whole armor of God.” Last week we began by looking at the first piece of the armor.

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore **take unto you the whole armour of God**, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand therefore, **having your loins girt about with truth**, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

When a soldier was putting on his physical armor, the first thing he did was “gird” up his garment around him. Men were not wearing blue jeans but a free-flowing garment; a robe. This loose-fitting garment was not suitable for fighting and moving on the battlefield, so they “girded” themselves with that garment.

Sometimes this was done simply by wrapping and tucking the garment around the body, sometimes the garment was gathered up and confined with a belt, and still other times it was confined to the body by a wide strap, much like a girdle (root word, gird) which not only gathered up the garment, but this wide girdle also served as a support, much like when weight lifters wear a wide leather support belt.

But all of this is a metaphor; a picture of what Paul wants us to do. Just as our warfare is not physical, our armor is not physical. So what are we girding? We gird our minds. And how do we do that? We gird our minds with truth.

To see this, let’s talk about the different ways “girding” takes place in the Bible.

Someone girds their physical loins when they are preparing for some kind of physical action, such as when Elisha sends one of his disciples to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu kind of Israel.

2 Kings 9:1 And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, **Gird up thy loins**, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead:

This means that this servant of Elisha actually reached down to pull up his robes and tuck them under his belt in order to make this journey.

Sometimes in the Bible, to “gird up your loins” is not literal but figurative. In this case it means to “stand up like a man and give an account of yourself,” as God told Job to do on several occasions.

Job 38:3 **Gird up now thy loins like a man**; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

Sometimes the expression to “gird up your loins” was a way of saying, “take courage” or “don’t be afraid,” such as God said to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 1:17 Thou therefore **gird up thy loins**, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: **be not dismayed at their faces**, lest I confound thee before them.

When Paul writes in Ephesians 6, he is using the literal meaning as a metaphor to represent something spiritual.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having **your loins girt about with truth...**

We are not girding our physical loins, (that is the metaphor) but we are **girding our minds**.

The Bible actually uses the phrase “gird up your minds.”

1 Peter 1:13 Wherefore **gird up the loins of your mind**, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

The apostle Peter, speaking to the members of the little flock, tells them to “gird up the loins of their mind.” While Paul is also talking about our minds, what Peter is saying and what Paul is saying are two different things. Can you spot the

difference? Peter tells the little flock to “gird up” the loins of their mind, which in the context, means for them to take courage.

Why would the little flock, living during the Tribulation, need to be courageous? Because they are going through all kinds of trials and sufferings.

1 Peter 1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, **ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:**⁷ That the **trial of your faith**, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be **tried with fire**, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: ⁸ Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

1 Peter 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand **the sufferings of Christ**, and the glory that should follow.

1 Peter 1:13 **Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind**, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

By saying, “wherefore gird up the loins of your mind,” verse 13 is saying to have courage in the midst of your fiery trials. “Be sober” means to remain steady and patient. “Hope to the end” is their “Blessed Hope” (if I can say it that way without confusing the doctrines). Our Blessed Hope is being caught out of this world to be with the Lord when our body will be redeemed; their hope is the Lord coming to them to set up His kingdom, bringing grace into the world.

Don’t miss the point; when Peter tells the believing remnant of Israel (BRoI) to “gird up the loins of their mind,” he is telling them not to faint, but to have courage, and hold on to the “hope” that is set before them. When Paul writes Ephesians 6:14 he does not say to “gird up” anything. Look at what he actually says.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins **girt about with truth**, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

We are not to “gird up” our minds; we are to have our minds “girt about” with truth. What does it mean to “girt about?” It means our minds should be encompassed, circled and surrounded by the doctrinal truths and exhortations that were revealed to the apostle Paul. The truths of the Mystery, the forms of doctrine set forth in Paul’s epistles and the principles of right division should firmly grip our minds, and encircle our minds like a protective wall, or armor.

This guards against the attack against the message. The part of our edification this attack is aimed at is the godly thinking aspect. When we embrace corrupted doctrine, we are no longer thinking like our heavenly Father.

Let me give us a few examples of the kinds of “truth” with which we should surround our minds.

- We should study to learn about God’s plan and purpose during this dispensation of grace (DoG). We should understand what God is doing today, why He is doing it, and what our part in that is (what that has to do with us).
- We should study to learn who we have been made to be in Christ (our new identity), why those things are important, and how to live out of them in our everyday lives (make decisions with our identity in mind).
- We should study to learn how God thinks about things (His viewpoint) and work to make His likes our likes, and His values, our values (conformity to Christ).

The policy of evil (PoE) is determined in its attempt at doctrinal corruption. We need to be firmly rooted in Paul’s doctrine if we are to avoid being deceived by those five main “wiles” of the devil.

- 1) Philosophy – which undermines the authority of the word of God by making it subject to human opinion and judgment, instead of the other way round.

Philosophy exalts human opinion above the word of God, making God’s word subject to “what makes sense to me” (human reason). By this wile, Satan gets

people thinking, “Here is what God should be doing, and I don’t agree that God should do that, so I don’t believe that, even though it is in the Bible.”

2) Vain Deceit – which promotes the mishandling of the word of God.

This would include things like taking verses out of their context, failing to follow sound principles of interpretation, and ignoring the normal laws of language and communication. This would include failing to employ the principles of rightly dividing the word of truth, confusing the two programs with doctrines which are contrary.

3) Traditions of Men – which are man-made ordinances, customs, practices, rituals and ceremonies.

By these things, which find their authority in the fact that they have been practices for so long, by so many, these things undermine the truth of who we are in Christ, and adversely affect our godly living.

4) Rudiments of the World – which are the fleshly and physical ordinances of the Law which God employed with the nation of Israel.

This would include things like the dietary commands, and the calendar of holy days, Sabbaths, and the like.

5) Extra-biblical Revelations – which consists of things like messages from angels, dreams, visions, still small voices; basically anything outside of the written revelation of scripture.

All of these wiles are used by Satan to produce doctrinal corruption. Why is it so important to know the truth, to have our minds girt about with truth? Because it is impossible to detect the falseness of one of Satan’s wiles, if the truth is not known. Lies cannot be recognized for what they are if the truth is not known.

If we do not know the truth, then “good words and fair speeches” can successfully persuade a Christian to believe things that they ought not to believe. The only remedy for this to have our minds “girt about with truth.”

For one who has girded himself with dispensational truth, teachings that do not rightly divide the word of truth, that ignore the context of a verse, that string

verses together from all over the Bible, or violate the natural meanings of words or grammar are easily recognized as teachings that should not be trusted or accepted. No matter how good or fair they sound, no matter how enticing they are, no matter what spiritual phenomenon accompanies them, with our loins girt about with the truth from Paul's epistles, we will not be deceived. With this piece of armor put on, the word of God honestly handled is the supreme and final absolute authority, as it should be.

I get the idea that we are continually working on this piece of armor. With each form of doctrine we learn and put into practice in our lives, we are girding our minds with truth. But, I can also see how Paul would exhort us to have our minds girt about with the truths that are given to us in the book of Ephesians. If we take it this way, we are not waiting for doctrine we don't yet know, but we are putting into practice that which we do know.

Again, having our loins girt about with truth is the primary piece of armor designed to enable us to withstand the first line of attack in Satan's policy of evil.

But there is something else we need to know about the importance of girding ourselves with truth; how it affects the children in our family.

Ephesians 6:14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, **and having on the breastplate of righteousness;**

The next piece of armor listed in Ephesians 6 is the breastplate of righteousness.

As we learned last time, Satan is looking to speak reproachfully of us in connection with his phase 1 attack against sound doctrine. But it is not just our doctrine he is hoping to corrupt, but our conduct as well. When we behave inconsistently with 1) who we are in Christ, or 2) with regard to the mystery program in this DoG, then we give Satan the opportunity to reproach us.

Therefore, in connection with our behavior in this world, we are given two more pieces of armor, the first being the breastplate of righteousness.

The breastplate of righteousness protects us from Satan speaking reproachfully of us because of our participation in, or our fellowship with, the course of this world. Paul describes this righteousness in Ephesians 2:10.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus unto good works**, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

The breastplate of righteousness is the functional righteousness that we exhibit in our daily lives. When we fail to respond as God's workmanship, when we fail to produce the good works we were created unto, when we choose not to walk in those works which God has ordained we should walk in, then we have given "place" to the devil, which means he now has the opportunity to speak reproachfully of us. By this, Satan means to affect our godly living – our implementation of the doctrine with godly love.

So, what does the breastplate of righteousness do? How does it protect us? The breastplate is made up of the doctrines which remind us of who we are in Christ. The doctrines of our justification and sanctification make up the breastplate of righteousness, for they tell us who we are positionally in Christ and how to function in accordance with that. These are the doctrines which tell us how to deal with sin.

The exhortations to "walk as children of light" and "present our bodies a living sacrifice" are part of the breastplate.

Ephesians 5:6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.⁷ Be not ye therefore partakers with them.⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: **walk as children of light:**⁹ (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰ Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.¹¹ And **have no fellowship** with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **reprove them.**

As we temper our conduct by godly love and charity; as we live the doctrine in front of our family; other believers and even the lost world; that is the breastplate

of righteousness. In a nutshell, when a Christian values the things of God over the things of this world, he is putting the breastplate of righteousness on display.

The third piece of armor is the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Ephesians 6:15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

At first, it may seem odd that Paul did not just say, “our feet shod with the gospel of peace.” Why include the phrase, “the preparation of?” What does that mean?

Anytime we are in “preparation” of something, it means we are in a state of readiness and eagerness to do that thing. It means we are prepared to take some kind of action. In this case, it means we are ready and eager to proclaim the gospel of peace. The “gospel of peace” is not just the gospel of the grace of God, although it certainly includes that. The gospel of peace is a larger message which we will define later on.

But, since it includes the gospel of the grace of God, let’s be clear about what that is. The gospel of the grace of God, or, the gospel of Christ as it is sometimes referred to, is the message of how we can have eternal life with God once this life is over.

In order to be saved, there are four things that need to be understood and affirmed.

1. I am a sinner. Sins are all the things we do which are wrong. The Bible says that everyone has sinned, that none of us are perfect.

Romans 3:23 For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God;

All have sinned, which means I have sinned and so have you. I don’t have to know anything about you to know that you have sinned because the Bible says we are all sinners.

2. My sin will send me to hell.

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:**

Romans 6:23 **For the wages of sin is death;** but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The payment for committing sins is death, not just physical death, but once our body has died on this earth, our soul and spirit also experience death. The real “you” is not your body, but your soul and spirit constitute the real you. The body is the container for the soul and spirit, which allows us to interact with the physical world. Physical death, the death of our body, separates us from this physical world. (See chart: Body, Soul, Human spirit)

Death for our soul and spirit does not mean we cease to exist, but it means we are separated from God for all eternity, not in a place of bliss, but in a place of spiritual torment. Therefore, when the Bible talks about salvation, it is talking about being saved from the penalty (wages) of our sin, which is to be in hell, separated from God. That is the spiritual death that sin condemns us to. This “death” is described in Revelation 20.

Revelation 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death.**¹⁵ And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Do you see the “second death?” The first death concerns our body, the second death concerns our soul and spirit in eternity. Again, this death does not mean to cease to exist, but it means separation from God in the lake of fire.

This is really bad news; since everyone is a sinner and our sin will send us to hell that means everyone is bound for hell and not heaven. But now comes the good news; the Gospel.

3. Christ Died For My Sins

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, **Christ died for us.**

You can put the gospel on five fingers: Christ/Died/For/Our/Sin

God loves us and wants everyone to spend eternity with Him. God knows about our predicament, and He made a way for us to be saved, so we could go to

heaven. To do this, God had to send His Son into the world to live a perfect and sinless life, and then to die on the Cross, to pay for the sins of the world.

When Jesus was on the Cross, God placed upon Him, the sins of the world. Every sin you and I have ever committed was placed on Jesus and He paid the price for our sins as our substitute.

Because God is perfectly just, He must punish sin. God hates sin. It is the very antithesis of God, who is perfectly righteous. Knowing that God must punish sin, Jesus volunteered to take our place, to take our sins upon Himself, and to suffer the punishment for our sins. And now that you know that, you have a choice to make.

4. I can accept (or reject) Jesus' payment for my sins

In order to accept Jesus' payment for our sin, the only thing we need to do is to trust what Jesus did as sufficient to satisfy God's justice. God is offering us salvation by grace, which means that we are not asked to earn it, work for it, or deserve it; it is offered as a free gift.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

God is offering us eternal life as a free gift of grace. How do we receive God's gift of eternal life? By trusting in what Jesus did as sufficient to satisfy God's righteous justice. In other words, put your faith in what Jesus did for you.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Do not trust in your good works to get you to heaven, they cannot save you. Do not trust in some ritual or ceremony to save you. Joining a church will not save you, being a preacher will not save you, getting baptized will not save you. The only thing that can save you is faith in Jesus: that is "saving faith."

Saving faith is trusting in what Jesus did, and only in what Jesus did, to save you from the penalty of sin. And how did Jesus do that? He did that by dying on the Cross, taking on the sins of the world. The evidence that God accepted Jesus'

sacrifice of himself on the Cross was that after Jesus was buried, He rose from the dead on the third day. It is that same resurrection life that is promised to us.

Our body may die one day, but if we have trusted Jesus as our Savior, our soul and spirit will immediately go to heaven, to be with the Lord for all eternity. Not only that, in eternity, we will be given a resurrection body to house us, and that body will last forever without ever growing old, getting sick or suffering injury.

So, how does this work exactly? To be saved, you make a decision to trust Jesus' work on the Cross as the only thing you need to save you. It is quite natural that we feel like we need to actually do something, but this is a spiritual transaction that takes place.

Presenting the gospel is an important part of our life because we are ambassadors for Christ, showing people how they can be reconciled to God.

Now, let's bring this back to our study on the armor of God. The only thing we have done here is to describe the gospel of the grace of God. But Paul is talking about the preparation of the gospel of peace. As I have told you, the gospel of peace includes the gospel of Christ, but presents it within a larger message. We will cover this next week in detail.

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The Most Important Decision