

Put On Your Armor! (2)

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“Stand firm, therefore, having girded your loins with truth...” (Ephesians 6:14a). The girding of one’s loins gives strength and stability. After all, if our legs and hips are not protected, we will not long stand in the heat of battle. Traditionally, it is understood that the belt worn around the loins was a key component of ancient armor, and held other pieces in place. It served as a lynchpin of sorts to the rest of the battle raiment. What this means is that we must protect our most vulnerable parts with truth:

- We all have areas of our lives that are sensitive, or vulnerable. We often try to hide these places, these dark secrets or regrets, with a veneer of lies. This exhortation seems to be telling us to confront our vulnerabilities with truth, and protect them from attack. Satan would love nothing more than to use a bad relationship, a seedy past, or some kind of sensitive situation to his advantage. Gird them in truth and he will not be able to do so!
- Paul is a good example of a man who used truth to turn his weaknesses into strengths. Even though he was formerly a blasphemer of Christ, he never tried to hide it from his detractors (**Galatians 1:22-24**). He knew he was a sinner (**1 Timothy 1:15**), but used that fact to grow closer to God through grace. *“When I am weak, then I am strong,”* he was known to say (**2 Corinthians 12:10**).
- The truth is also God’s truth of salvation in Jesus Christ alone, the veracity of God (**Romans 15:8**). The Gospel truth brings light to our lives and eliminates darkness in the soul. Truth turns night into day, and brings refreshment to the weary soul.

“And having put on the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:14b). Righteousness is the standard on our chest, the first thing people see glistening in the sun as we march across the battlefield. Do you wear righteousness like a breastplate? Or do you forget about it, leave it at home while you are at work, or allow the breastplate to become tarnished? Wearing our righteousness means more than just harping on falsehood, or expressing mere rhetoric. We must practice it consistently! Consider what is written in **1 John 3:7** and **1 John 2:29**.

“And having shod your feet with the preparation of the Gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15). The Christian warrior must not leave his feet unprotected, or else his steps may falter. Like the psalmist, we occasionally *“walk through the valley of the shadow of death”* (**Psalms 23:4**). I would hate to think of traversing that terrain barefoot! If we prepare ourselves for the battle that lies ahead, we will not be surprised by much that comes up. Perhaps being shod with the preparation of the Gospel means:

- Knowing in advance how we will deal with our children when they are disobedient or rebellious;
- Deciding in advance that we will avoid situations that are sinful;
- Making a conscious effort to break sinful habits, rather than treat them lackadaisically;
- Knowing how we would answer a Bible skeptic before we are hit with difficult questions;
- Always being ready to make a defense for what we believe (**1 Peter 3:15**).

“In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish the flaming missiles of the evil one” (**Ephesians 6:16**). The shield in question would likely be four feet long and nearly three feet wide, large enough to protect the entire body if needed. When soldiers worked together, they would interlock these shields and march forward with a nearly impregnable protective wall. Our faith, likewise, is our greatest defense. To increase our faith we must study the Bible (**Romans 10:17**), and learn to practice what we preach and believe. Backing up our convictions with daily action will allow faith to breathe life into aspect of our character. Faith extinguishes every attack, no matter how violent. Simply read **Hebrews 11** to see the great pantheon of faithful men and women who marched onward in spite of hatred, weariness, lies, persecution, and even death (**Hebrews 11:32ff**). Your faith will accompany you through marital problems, discipline problems, financial troubles, illness and death, and even temptation. By faith we overcome all these things. We overwhelmingly conquer (**Romans 8:37**). By faith Christ dwells in our hearts (**Ephesians 3:17**). By faith righteousness is reckoned unto us by God (**Galatians 3:6-9**). Faith is the working, functioning expression of salvation in our lives (**1 Thessalonians 1:3**).

“And take up the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (**Ephesians 6:17**). Salvation is that which adorns the Christian. He wears it in glory on the top of his head, like the crowns of the elders in **Revelation 4:4**. Salvation is not just a gift from God, but a protection from our enemies. The other great gift, the Word, serves as both a defensive and offensive implement. Consider the great messages in scriptures like **Hebrews 4:12** and **Luke 21:15**.